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Great Castles of Europe

Course Guidebook

Victoria L. McAlister, PhD

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Castles for Defense and Château Gaillard

Castles are some of the most enduring symbols of the Middle Ages, and scholars can use them as windows into this era. Castle studies is an interdisciplinary field that incorporates history, archaeology, architecture, art, literature, and other areas. In this course, you'll take a deep dive into the historical, political, economic, military, and social forces that drove the evolution of castles. This lecture explores some common defensive features of castles and tours Château Gaillard in France to highlight some examples.

THE CASTLE STORY

This journey begins by first addressing a popular but misleading narrative around castles. In this story, castles are associated with high and late medieval Europe, between about 1000 and 1500 CE. The earliest castles, according to this story, came from France and were made of earth and timber rather than stone. These early prototypes, known as earthwork castles, were supplanted by masonry castles as soon as it was possible to invest the time and money to do so, around the 9th and 10th centuries. Castle design then continued to develop, with medieval lords competing to build progressively bigger, stronger, and more defensible designs. The apogee of this castle arms race was reached in the 13th century. By this time, the most effective architecture was constructed as a result of lessons learned during the Crusades to the Holy Land.

Then, everything changed in the 14th century. With the devastating effects of plague, religious turbulence, and the Hundred Years' War between England and France, feudalism and the social structures that supported castle building in western Europe began to disappear. And the decline of feudal society was supposedly reflected in castle building. In the more decentralized and disordered societies on the frontiers of Europe, lords continued to build defensive strongholds, while in the stable and more central parts of Europe, castles were abandoned as the Renaissance got underway. By then, they were seen as old-fashioned and uncomfortable building styles, and with the advent of artillery and handguns, the static and solid defense presented by the castle became redundant. By the 17th century, castles had become historical curiosities and romantic symbols of a bygone era.

Castellologists, people who study castles, have concluded that for a castle to be a castle, it needed to serve three key functions—defense, administration, and residence.

This story is a popular one to explain the rise and fall of castles, but it's not necessarily accurate. For instance, many castles were evolutions of premedieval fortifications, and some remain occupied to this day. And from the beginning, castles could be built from timber, stone, or even brick; stone castles did not replace earth-and-timber ones. Moreover, the story tells history from a very narrow perspective that views castles primarily as fortifications and tools of warfare. But castles played a much broader and more nuanced role in medieval society, and it's important to consider them within their wider contexts.

DEFENSIVE FUNCTION OF CASTLES

Defensive features are usually the most recognizable parts of castles that come to mind. And that's no accident—a castle's appearance was in many ways more important than its actual defensibility. Throughout the Middle Ages, a great deal of architecture—elite, religious, and even civilian—had a fortified appearance. Consider Lisbon Cathedral in Portugal or the Palazzo Pubblico in Siena (below), which have towers with battlements on them but are not remotely what scholars would call castles. On the flip side, not all castles were effective tools of warfare. Rather, they showcased power, authority, and dignity through their architecture.

Of the countless thousands of castles built across Europe, very few ever experienced direct warfare or besieging. And the vast majority of them were not built during periods of warfare. In the Middle Ages, pitched battles were not that common and were usually entered as a last option. And when major clashes did occur, the majority were fought on the battlefield and not at castles.

Laying siege to a castle could be a long, costly, and unpredictable exercise, and it was as dangerous for the besiegers outside as those besieged inside. Those camped outside were just as vulnerable to a disease outbreak as those trapped inside. A besieging force also had to deal with supplying food and water while maintaining morale and discipline. Meanwhile, those inside the castle could stock up on supplies in advance to prepare for such a situation.

CHÂTEAU GAILLARD

Château Gaillard, which overlooks the river Seine in France, was built between 1196 and 1198 by King Richard I of England, better known as Richard the Lionheart. At this time, he held huge tracts of land in France thanks to the ancestral holdings of William the Conqueror and a lot of beneficial marriages. Indeed, Château Gaillard is in Normandy, which is where Duke William came from before winning the English throne.

Richard had been on Crusade, and the French king Philip Augustus had used the opportunity to take some of the English king's lands in France. In response, Richard spent a large sum of money to secure the region from French invasion. Château Gaillard was the result, and by 1198, he had spent £11,500 on building it. By comparison, he spent less than £7,000 on all his English castles throughout his entire reign. But Richard had a big statement to make. He had lost some of his best Normandy castles to the French, including Château de Gisors in 1193. Château Gaillard is a fantastic example of how fortification could be used to send a message of both power and lordship. It was built at a height above the surrounding river valley, which wasn't just militarily advantageous—it also made sure people could see the castle from miles around.

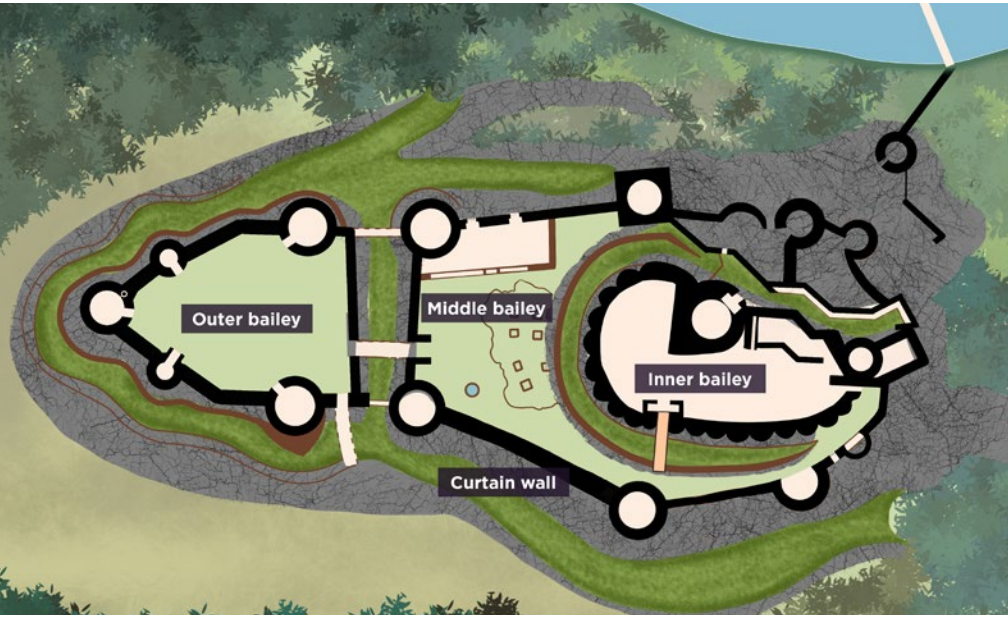
CHÂTEAU GAILLARD

CURTAIN WALLS AND MURAL TOWERS

The first part people encounter as they reach the castle proper is the external walls, or curtain walls. The area enclosed by castle walls is variously called the bailey, bawn, or courtyard depending on the castle and its location. Château Gaillard has three baileys enclosed within its impressive stone curtain walls.

Château Gaillard is an early example of a concentric castle: It has three encircling enclosures and a moat. Concentric defenses provided extra layers of fortified obstacles to an attacker. They also deterred mining—known as sapping—in which a besieging force tried to dig a tunnel underneath the walls as a way to breach the walls or destabilize the foundations and cause a section to collapse. But mining castles was rare. Successfully holding out against a besieging army often depended more on being well supplied than on having fancy defensive architecture. Richard learned this the hard way: Château Gaillard has no well inside the main structure.

As a general trend, earlier masonry castles tended to focus architectural attention on the main tower, which is called the keep or donjon. Later, the emphasis shifted to the enclosing walls. A curtain wall could be plain, or it could have strategically placed mural towers—towers added to the curtain walls. Château Gaillard has mostly circular mural towers, but it has some square ones too. These towers could provide flanking cover and act as watchtowers, but their presence could also deter opportunists. They could also be used as guest accommodations, barracks, guard houses, kitchens, storage towers, or water cisterns.



ENTRYWAYS AND OUTWORKS

Like curtain walls, the gate entrance to a castle could be very plain or very elaborate. The main gateway could be a straightforward entrance cut through the curtain wall, or it could be a gate tower—a passage through a mural tower. By the early 13th century, it was popular to build two circular or D-shaped towers with an entrance between them to form a gatehouse.

Château Gaillard has an early example of a gatehouse, controlling access to the inner bailey. This gatehouse is only one part of the complicated approach to the castle, which also employs outworks, or fortification features exterior to the castle proper. One such feature is the barbican, an outer defensive structure beyond the main entrance of a castle—almost a miniature castle defending the gate.

Murder holes were often built above a castle's entrance so that missiles and objects could be dropped on an unassuming head below.

Outworks and entranceways at castles were highly varied in design and execution, but they needed to complicate entry to the castle, whether that was to protect its most vulnerable point or to show off at the place where most people first encountered the complex. It is no accident that some of the most famous castle features, such as the drawbridge and the portcullis, are found at the entrance.

CRENELLATIONS AND MACHICOLATIONS

As people approach a building, they naturally see things at a height first. For this reason, concentric castle designs like that at Château Gaillard were arranged so that the keep was still visible even as the innermost part of the castle. Atop the keep and the walls were the crenellations—the uneven wall continuations made up of solid parts, called merlons, and gaps, called embrasures, which give castle skylines their characteristic appearance. Crenellations could provide protective cover for soldiers at roof level, while archers and missile troops could fire through the gaps. Crenellations sat atop the parapet or battlement, which was the wall that ran along the top of the tower to protect those who patrolled up there. The crenellations were accessed at roof level from the wall walk, or the pathways running along the rooftop to the different parts of the roof.

Crenellations were highly symbolic and among the most important emblems of the castle to a medieval person.

Château Gaillard had crenellations, and it also featured an early instance of machicolations—which, in this case, were slots in the battlements through which missiles could be dropped. Machicolations later became popular and could take several forms, such as boxes with slots in the bottom that projected from the roof level or arches with a gap behind them. If this feature is found at the apex of two corners, it's called a bartizan. Bartizans look like turrets, but they don't extend all the way to the ground. Machicolations and bartizans are usually placed above an entranceway as an extra security layer.

Because castles tend to be the most ruinous at their roof levels, people today often do not see the crenellations, battlements, and machicolations that a medieval viewer would have. What may still be visible, however, are the corbels, which were like brackets embedded into the wall to support the projecting arch or box.

Another defensive feature within castle walls are arrow slits—vertical slots that allowed an archer to fire outward while being protected from return fire. By the late medieval period, crossbows were becoming more popular, and the openings changed from vertical to cross-shaped ones. If there's a rounded or somewhat triangular-shaped opening in a castle wall, that means it was used by people armed with handguns who converted it to a gun loop.

WHAT BECAME OF CHÂTEAU GAILLARD?

A few years after Richard the Lionheart died, Philip II of France attacked the castle in 1203. For more than 7 months, the French laid siege. Eventually, they reached the inner bailey and surrounded the keep, where the English, running low on supplies, surrendered. With Château Gaillard captured, the door to Normandy was open, and it fell to the French shortly afterward. They used the castle as a prison and warehouse for a time, but it soon fell into disrepair and, like many castles, became a romantic ruin.

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2

Castles for Residence and Enjoyment

When looking at castles, it's easy to get overawed by their defensive-looking architecture and forget that people made their lives there too. Castles could be home to many types of people serving all sorts of roles. This lecture takes you behind the walls and parapets to explore the residential functions of castles. You'll see how every facet of a castle could have multiple purposes and many meanings to onlookers then and today.

CHALLENGES OF STUDYING CASTLES

In recent decades, castellologists have increasingly focused on understanding how castles fit within the wider medieval cultural and social context. The idea that castles could serve many purposes at the same time complicates things for scholars today as they try to understand how castles were used or the motivations behind their designs.

Foremost, castles were homes for the elites of medieval society, and some scholars have said that castles were part of a "chivalric package." Chivalry was the supposed knightly code of conduct, but it applied more widely to medieval aristocratic culture. Castles would have acted as a visible testament to their owner's noble status. The wealthiest and most powerful would not have relied on just one castle for this message; they would have held multiple castles. And they would have traveled with their retinue between these homes periodically. The very act of doing this also sent a clear message of power and pomp.

Part of the obfuscation surrounding how castles were used in the Middle Ages is because castle books and documentaries tend to be dominated by the best preserved and most visually stunning examples. Those built by kings and queens were usually the grandest of their day and were more likely to stay maintained because they remained royal residences, like Windsor Castle in

WINDSOR CASTLE

England. Others, because of their historical importance, were converted into museums, like Gripsholm Castle in Sweden. But these superelite examples probably don't represent the experience of most castles. Unfortunately, only a small percentage of medieval castles survive in good enough condition to be studied, and it's even rarer to find examples with well-preserved interior spaces.

The truth is that scholars know little about the lives of the vast majority of castle dwellers. They don't even know the names of most of the castle builders. This doesn't mean that medieval people were illiterate or careless but just that a lot of documentation about ordinary things from daily life hasn't survived.

HALLS, HEARTHS, AND KITCHENS

Much of the communal activity centered around the main residential space of a castle—the hall. Halls were a central feature of medieval residential architecture, and even wealthy peasants and merchants might have had one in their homes. By the later Middle Ages, a popular plan for houses was the tripartite plan, which had rooms on either side of a larger central hall space. The side room at the upper end was where the family slept, while the wider household slept in the hall itself. The lower end was used for services and storage like the pantry and buttery.

The hall could be within the central tower of the castle—called the keep or donjon—or it could be a stand-alone building within a bailey or courtyard. The benefits of having an external hall were that it could be a larger space that could hold more guests and that guests stayed at a distance from the more private castle spaces. An external hall could be easier to heat and closer to cooking sites as well.

Halls were a kind of all-purpose space, but one of their most important uses was for communal dining. Feasting was an integral part of medieval lordly life and could involve lots of attendees.

Before fireplaces became the norm, an open hearth would have been a dominating feature in a hall. Smoke needed somewhere to go, and prior to chimneys, the obvious answer was through an opening in the roof. Unfortunately, castle roofs were usually made of timber, and so most haven't survived for present-day examination. Those that have survived indicate that hall roof timbers were carved and painted. This is because the rising smoke would have drawn guests' eyes upward, so pretty ceilings provided an opportunity to show off.

Fireplaces with chimneys became common later in the Middle Ages. They allowed heating in more rooms than before—previously, heating was largely restricted to where the hearth was located. This transition is how privacy and social hierarchies became more spatially possible. In the era of open hearths, people of all social ranks (and even some of the animals) needed to eat, socialize, and sleep where the warmth was, especially in winter, and sometimes that place was just the central hall. Fireplaces allowed smaller individual spaces, like bedrooms, to be safely heated and thus allowed less mixing of the people in the castle.

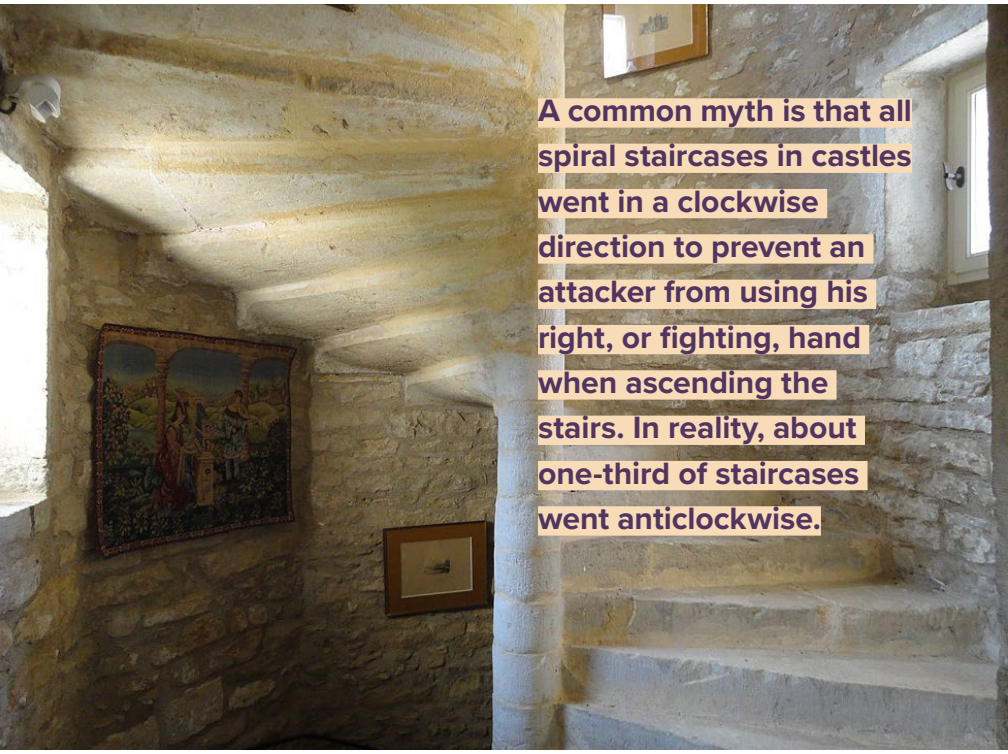
Kitchens were usually external and located in a bailey where they were accessible but also distant from other buildings because they were a fire risk. Having a kitchen visible and accessible from an external hall also allowed castle lords to showcase how well they met medieval ideals of hospitality. Some external great halls had an undercroft or cellar for storage, which was useful for preserving food in an era before electric refrigeration.

CONTROLLING ACCESS WITHIN THE CASTLE

Access to and within a castle keep was especially controlled. To get to it, a person would have to first navigate any external walls and any gate tower or gatehouse, and then they would have to navigate through a bailey past other buildings. Once the person reached the entrance doorway to a keep, their route in the building was tightly controlled by stairways, corridors, and doorways.

Later in the Middle Ages, a great chamber became popular. Functionally, it was very similar to the great hall, just smaller in size. In German castles, a similar concept was the knight's hall, which was a smaller, better-heated, and more ornately decorated space that was less public and for more important guests.

Controlling access to parts of a castle could be for defensive or social reasons. Access depended on how close a person was to the resident family as well as the person's social status—a servant or peasant laborer would not have used a showy entranceway designed to impress visiting lords. Servants and deliveries probably came to the back entrance that provided more direct access to the lower-status parts of the castle complex.



A common myth is that all spiral staircases in castles went in a clockwise direction to prevent an attacker from using his right, or fighting, hand when ascending the stairs. In reality, about one-third of staircases went anticlockwise.

TYPES OF ROOMS

The lord's spaces were typically the most central and architecturally impressive parts of a castle, which was often the keep. Rooms would be contained within a rectangular, square, or sometimes circular or polygonal keep, which might also have projecting towers and turrets. Such projections make the building exterior look interesting, but they also served practical purposes. They were often reserved for the garderobes—that is, the castle latrines.

The rooms at the bottom of a keep had the smallest windows and openings, which could have been for defensive or practical purposes. These rooms would have been the darkest and dankest. Scholars think these rooms would have been used for storage and for servant sleeping spaces. The main residential chambers for the lord and his family would have been higher up in the keep, and there might be multiple rooms at each level. In rooms higher up, windows and openings often had ornate and carved stone surrounds. Excavations have shown that some castle windows used glass.

By the 16th century, private bedrooms and parlors were popular. The parlor was used for domestic purposes, meals, and private entertainment. It might have been lower in the building than a bedroom since it needed to be more accessible to those outside the family. Female space might have been more secluded within the keep, but scholars are unsure about this.

Rooms would have had fewer furnishings than most rooms today, but they wouldn't have had bare stone walls. Instead, walls were covered with wood panels, wall paintings, frescoes, and textiles. Floor coverings, such as woven mats and rugs, were used, too, and in Ireland, they covered floors with rushes in winter for extra insulation. All this would have given medieval residences a cozy and comfortable atmosphere. Some castles have private bed chambers with secluded access to rooftops or galleries as well as direct access to a personal garderobe. This was all for the castle lord. But many more people than just the lord and his family lived in a castle.

Beds, especially those in castles, were considered high-status items in the Middle Ages and were often specifically mentioned in wills.

SERVANT RESIDENCES

Not all servants and estate workers would have lived in the castle itself. Many had their own homes and commuted to work. These homes could have been among the ancillary buildings in the castle complex or in an adjacent settlement. If a servant lived at the castle, they might have had their own bed in a space that was similar to a dormitory. If a bed wasn't provided, then they would have slept anywhere that could be made warm and comfortable.

Male and female servants would have slept in segregated areas. Becoming a servant was a common occupation, though it could be a financially unstable one. They might stay in a particular employment for 5 to 10 years or move between houses every year or two. Their tasks varied widely, and they would have received on-the-job training. There is documentation of some lords providing for their servants after they were too old or ill to remain working, and some servants remained friendly with their lord after they left his employ.

Castle gardens served as vital spaces between the home and the rest of the world. They produced plants that provided spiritual, fragrant, and medicinal benefits as well as plants needed for cooking and daily household tasks.

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3

Castles for Administration and Slot Loevestein

Castles were deeply embedded in the political, economic, and legal landscape of medieval Europe, and their administrative role was just as important as their residential and defensive roles. The elites of society who owned castles had lands and tenants to manage, military obligations to their lord or monarch, and sometimes broader responsibilities, such as dispensing justice, collecting taxes, or managing infrastructure. The Netherlands produced some of the most administratively and economically focused castles, and so this lecture will explore several Dutch examples, including Slot Loevestein.

TENANTS, WORKERS, AND BUILDINGS OF AN ESTATE

A castle lord was not just lord of the castle but also of the surrounding land, estates, settlements, and resources that all combined to support the castle and provide the income necessary to build and sustain it. A lord's holdings would principally be worked by peasants, who paid some type of rent in exchange for the right to live on and work some part of those holdings. How that rent was paid varied depending on the peasant's legal status. Commonly, particularly in the early Middle Ages, peasants would give the lord a share of whatever they produced from the land, perhaps a percentage of harvested crops or some other agricultural product. They would then sell or consume the rest to survive.

Castles were the administrative hubs of a lord's estate, so tenants would have visited them at various times for all sorts of reasons. A lord used his castle to receive, store, and administer estate payments and to allocate peasant labor to various projects. A leading tenant who organized the other peasants and divided up the fields among families for grazing and cultivation would visit the lord to discuss these plans. One of the duties of freemen tenants would have been serving on a manorial court that the lord ran. Therefore, castles served as courthouses for the surrounding community. They were also places of refuge for the peasants, whom the lord was usually obliged to protect in times of war or brigandage.

Castles also served as the economic centers of agricultural estates, and the broader castle complex might include any number of buildings that oversaw the collection and processing of raw materials. Most medieval calories came from bread, so a big chunk of lordly landholdings would have been set aside for grain cultivation. Thus, mills were common sights on estates. Mills were great moneymakers for lords because they could force their tenants to use the mill and then charge them a cut of whatever they had ground there. Peasants could also grind their grain by hand, but that was time-consuming and exhausting. Another common sight would have been granaries in which milled grain could be stored.

Animals such as cattle, sheep, oxen, and horses were also commonly needed on estates, as were barns and stables. In castle landholdings, the space is usually represented by meadows and fields. In southern Europe, wineries might have been part of the castle complex. In Scandinavia, forestry products like wood and resin might have been collected, so a sawmill might have been built. Medieval estates were fairly self-sufficient, so a castle complex also often provided spaces for skilled workers, such as blacksmiths, farriers, carpenters, and coopers.

FACILITATING ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL TRANSACTIONS

Castles served as a symbolic space in which the medieval hierarchy was affirmed, for it was within the castle that oaths and allegiances would be sworn. Oaths were very important in medieval society as a public way of proclaiming loyalty or obligation. Peasants and knights would swear fealty to their lords and lords in turn to their overlord or monarch. To complement this important social function, reception rooms and other spaces were created inside castles.

The great hall was also the central space for administration. Its size and significance made it perfect for holding the manorial court or collecting tenants together when it came time for them to pay their rents.

Naturally, the more important the guests, the more elaborate and ornate the great hall might be to receive them. The Binnenhof—constructed by the counts of Holland in The Hague in the 13th century—is about as fancy as it could get. Though built primarily as a grand residence with modest defensive features, the Binnenhof originally included many smaller halls and reception areas in the central keep for the counts to receive guests and conduct business. The complex was progressively expanded as the counts of Holland grew richer and more important. In the late 1200s, a large outbuilding, the Ridderzaal (Knight's Hall), was constructed as an external great hall, capable of accommodating hundreds of people at a time. It was built on the orders of

Today, the Binnenhof is the home of the Dutch Parliament—a rare case of a castle holding on to its administrative role into the modern day.

Count William II, who served for a time as Holy Roman emperor and thus needed an impressive space to receive foreign dignitaries and entertain the nobility of the empire.

FACILITATING GOVERNANCE AND JUSTICE

Castles and their lords frequently played broader roles in the governance of their local area. Medieval monarchs often found themselves fighting wars, quashing rebellions, or setting out on military campaigns, sometimes for years at a stretch. War and instability could be of financial and personal benefit to a canny lord. With central government otherwise occupied, tasks that were usually administered by the crown, such as road and bridge building, might be taken over by local lords, who would also collect the tolls and keep the profits.

TRIFELS CASTLE

King Richard the Lionheart of England was captured by Leopold of Austria and handed over to Holy Roman Emperor Henry VI, who held him at Trifels Castle, today in southern Germany. The king's huge ransom was paid after he'd spent more than a year in captivity.

Castles were also important in the administration of justice, often providing space for prisons and dungeons. Some castles even became infamous prisons, like Colditz Castle during World War II. The word *dungeon* comes from the word *donjon,* which is the technical term for a main residential tower. And while there are identifiable prison rooms at some castles, the number is much lower than most tourists tend to think; many spaces actually provided storage for goods. A good indication of a prison room is if the door locks from the outside and the room is more difficult to access.

In many Western medieval legal traditions, imprisonment was not a punishment. Instead, it lasted only until the person went to trial, which often wasn't very long. Those imprisoned over the long term were almost exclusively of high rank, and the goal was to ransom them rather than punish them. As such, they would have been provided with comfortable accommodation. Castles rarely served as locations for punishments like torture. Indeed, most of the implements found in so-called medieval torture museums are figments of modern imagination. But when final justice was dispensed in the form of execution, it was often conducted on castle grounds or nearby.

Because they served so many administrative functions, castles often formed the focal point of settlements. One castle that has survived with most of its administrative outbuildings intact is Stargard Castle in Mecklenburg–West Pomerania, Germany, constructed mostly from brick in the 13th century. However, the keep is missing due to a 17th-century fire. Seen in this arrangement, the castle does look like a little town center. The surviving outbuildings include a chapel, a magistrate's court, a dungeon, a treasury and mint, and other buildings used for storage or perhaps commercial purposes.

SLOT LOEVESTEIN

One example that showcases the many administrative roles a castle could play is Slot Loevestein, which is located on the junction of the Waal and Maas Rivers. Water is central to Dutch geography and history, and castles were frequently used to control waterways. Dirk Loef van Horne, the builder of Slot Loevestein, attempted to use this to his advantage. In the 14th century, his family—seated at Castle Horn in Limburg—held several lordships around the Netherlands, including Altena, the historical holding in which Loevestein sits. Dirk's older brother inherited these lordships when their father died. When that brother died suddenly in 1357, Count William V of Holland named Dirk the new lord of Altena and various other estates. Some historians have speculated that Dirk manipulated the count to have the succession favor him rather than his brother's son.

Dirk began construction of Slot Loevestein later that year. There was already a castle at Almkerk, but Loevestein's position on the intersection of several local rivers meant that Dirk could control and toll the movement of goods through the district as well. Originally, it was just a single rectangular tower, which forms the corner of the castle as it stands today. A hall was added after 1361 as well as a second tower around a central courtyard. Additional stories were added to these buildings later.

Dirk's stronghold over the rivers quickly got him feuding with local nobles and villages, and documents suggest neither the castle nor its tolls were authorized by his liege lords. By 1368, he'd become such a nuisance that he was dragged before the new count of Holland to arbitrate. The verdict declared that Dirk had extorted money from Altena through illegal tolls and rents and that he had forced locals to wrongfully swear oaths of loyalty to him. Many of his lordships were stripped from him and handed to his nephew.

Dirk kept Loevestein, but it was taken from him later and entrusted to a castellan. Castellans were appointed officials, rather than nobles, who were charged with administering a castle and its district. They had a wide range of duties that they fulfilled on behalf of their lord, from maintaining a castle garrison to hearing court cases to collecting taxes. The castle was reinforced and expanded to include a curtain wall and a brick gate tower, and its current layout was largely in place by the end of the 15th century.

Many Dutch castles feature moats, ponds, canals, and other water features. These can serve as defensive features and as tools of water management and drainage, and they can also house a steady supply of fish for consumption. Loevestein is in an area known as Munninkenland, which in the 13th century was swampy and very vulnerable to flooding. Originally, Slot Loevestein had a square moat connected to the river via a canal, which would have helped manage flooding and drainage. In the 16th century, there was a large overhaul of the outworks, and a second moat was created.

Dutch castles are generally made of brick rather than stone, which was expensive and difficult to come by in the largely flat Netherlands.

In the 17th century, Loevestein served as a state prison. It was specifically set up for two prisoners—Hugo Grotius and Rombout Hogerbeets. Both were lawyers and statesmen who were controversially convicted for treason in 1619 and sent to Loevestein for life. Because of their unusual life sentences and prominent status, they were allowed to take their wives, children, and even servants to live with them at the castle. Grotius, who would become one of the most famous jurists and philosophers in Europe, wrote several influential treatises while in the castle and was allowed to receive books. In 1621, he squeezed himself into a small chest that was supposed to be full of books that he was returning, and he was unwittingly carried out of the castle, whereafter he escaped to Paris. Despite this, Loevestein remained a prison for political detainees until the 18th century, when it was turned into a military outpost.

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4

Hen Domen and Earth-and-Timber Castles

Today, most earth-and-timber castles look unimpressive, but in their heyday, they were known across the world. There must have been thousands of them originally. However, only a small number of them survive even as earthworks today, and it can be really difficult for scholars to work out how these castles looked to medieval people. Despite the challenges, such castles are no less fascinating than their stone counterparts. In this lecture, you'll explore a perfect case study of this issue at Hen Domen, a castle in Wales that was built by one of William the Conqueror's top followers soon after their arrival.

MOTTE-AND-BAILEY AND RINGWORK CASTLES

Scholars describe earth-and-timber castles as such because the only parts that can be seen today are the earthworks that the castle was built upon, as the wooden parts have all rotted away. These castles can be divided into two subtypes: motte-and-bailey castles and ringwork castles. *Motte* means "mound" in Old French, and it's a partially or fully artificial mound of earth on which a wooden castle would be built. The distinctive shape of mottes helps scholars distinguish them from the surrounding landscape. They have tapered sides and a flat top, which provided a base for palisades, wooden fence stakes, and a keep. Most often, this was a tower made of timber, though it could have been made of stone. They were usually round or ovoid, but some square and rectangular ones were also built.. Mottes could be up to 60 feet high, though most were around 15 to 20 feet tall.

The bailey, which was usually attached to the motte, was often lobe-shaped and enclosed with banks and ditches topped with palisades and other defenses. On rare occasions, there might have been multiple baileys. The bailey is where most of the castle complex would have been located. Descriptions from the time record that there were towers, watchtowers, houses, chapels, and many other buildings either on the motte or in the bailey.

The most important building in the bailey would have been the hall if it wasn't located on the motte. The hall was the ceremonial center of the castle and had multiple purposes. There also would have been other areas for sleeping, services, animals, and more.

Over time, the earthen foundations of motte-and-bailey castles have been vulnerable to destruction, particularly from building development and intensive agriculture.

Ringwork castles looked rather different than mottes. Their distinctiveness lies in their defensive banks and ditches. At the center of a ringwork castle was a circular or subcircular platform. Most were between 120 and 170 feet in diameter. Originally, the banks and ditches would have been topped with palisades. Unlike mottes, it's not common to find ringworks with an attached bailey, though some did exist. The lack of baileys might be because more of the castle complex could fit within the ringwork compared to a motte. Like the motte-and-bailey castles, a ringwork castle's key structure would also have been the tower or hall. However, a gate tower or gatehouse would have been very important as well because an entrance to the castle complex had to be cut through the banks and was thus the most vulnerable point.

Because ringworks didn't have an artificially raised mound, they could be built faster than mottes. For this reason, they may have been preferred as campaign castles or for consolidating recent victories. That said, the two categories can get blurry, as some creative castle builders might have used combinations of motte and ringwork features.

Earth-and-timber castles are often cited as the earliest forms of castles, but as far as scholars know, both masonry and timber castles have been built since the beginning. Efforts by archaeologists to find the starting point for castles have focused on England, France, and Germany. They know that castles absolutely boomed after 1000 CE, and their sudden explosion in numbers makes tracing their origin difficult. In this pursuit, they are not aided by medieval record keepers, who were very fast and loose with the terminology they used to describe castles.

Ringworks were a quick way to adapt earlier defended towns. They were also built as siege castles, counter-castles, and adulterine castles (those constructed without royal approval).

Most of the focus on the earliest castles has been on France, particularly the Loire valley. This area has very good structural survival, which might contribute to a bias. But in France, both timber and stone castles emerged around the same time. Some of these sites have been dated

through archaeological and scientific means to close to 900 CE. Many of the earliest castles are evolutions from premedieval fortified structures, such as hillforts or oppida, which were fortified settlements built during the Iron Age.

But because ringworks have an emphasis on circles of defended banks and ditches, that might mean they're the earliest type of castle. In England, for example, it is very probable that there were ringwork castles before the Norman conquest in 1066, but there's little evidence for mottes before that time. At the other end of their chronology, timber castles were still being built well into the 14th century.

Earth-and-timber castles should not be thought of as the poor man's castle. Their period of construction and use overlapped with that of stone castles, and there were many reasons why a lord might choose to build one type rather than another. In fact, people went back to defensive earthworks in the early modern period as they realized their strength against gunpowder artillery.

REBUILDING ON PREEXISTING STRUCTURES

For scholars, the real problem with earth-and-timber castles is preservation. Certain soil conditions are required to preserve any timber in situ, and these are rare. Furthermore, many medieval building techniques didn't require much digging, so there's not much under the ground for excavators to find. Lastly, even if all this goes well, they're still seeing only the foundations.

Some of the best-preserved examples of mottes survive only because they were later rebuilt as stone fortifications. Launceston Castle in Cornwall is a good example. In the 13th century, Earl Richard of Cornwall rebuilt what had been a motte-and-bailey castle with stone so that his guests could enjoy scenic views of the royal deer park around it. Because it was rebuilt for aesthetics rather than occupation, it may give scholars a rough sense of what the original motte castle looked like.

LAUNCESTON CASTLE

Using preexisting structures not only saved the builder time but also enabled them to associate themselves with whoever put the original structure there. Very popular for these purposes were Roman sites as well as banked ditch fortifications from the Iron Age. For example, the ringwork at Silchester in Hampshire, England, was constructed out of the Roman amphitheater associated with their town of Calleva. Even if long deserted, these earlier structures would have still looked prominent in the landscape and may have held significance to the local population. And even if there was nothing old to build directly on top of, locating one's castle close to an earlier prominent site could help to project the image of aristocratic power.

HEN DOMEN

Hen Domen, in Wales, is located on a site with little from an earlier date immediately surrounding it. The lack of existing historical monuments to tap into might be because this area—the border between England and Wales—had been contested and was not being used for agriculture before the arrival

of Roger de Montgomery. A powerful lord, he was a close ally of William the Conqueror, duke of Normandy, and came with him in 1066 as part of his conquest of England.

Hen Domen is Welsh and means "old mound." Back in the 11th and 12th centuries, it was known as Montgomery, after its lord, and only became known as Old Montgomery or Hen Domen after its abandonment. Seen from above, it looks like an unassuming small hill surrounded by dense tall trees, but these trees hide layers of banks and ditches.

The motte-and-bailey castle was begun around 1070, which shows how far the Normans had gotten by this time; it was in the Welsh borderlands, and its location by a crossing point on the Severn River offered direct access into the heart of Wales. It was also close to the 8th-century linear earthwork known as Offa's Dyke. This ditch stretched hundreds of miles and was created to demarcate the boundary between Wales and the early English kingdom of Mercia. This was still the border by 1070, and it ended up hosting one of the highest densities of motte castles.

Roger de Montgomery was made earl of Shrewsbury, a title he held from 1074 until his death 20 years later. He was very wealthy and well connected, and his choice of a motte and bailey must have been viewed at the time as cutting edge.

In the first phase of its life, the castle was used by Montgomery as a base for Norman ambitions in the area, and it passed into his heir's hands after his death. One of these heirs went into rebellion against the king and lost, so it was seized into royal hands at the start of the 12th century. It was soon granted to the de Boulers, a local noble family. During this phase, the castle was an important residential and administrative center, though it didn't lose its defensive role. When the de Bouler family died out in the early 13th century, it went back into the king's hands. Soon after, it was reconquered by the Welsh and then abandoned sometime in the 13th century.

Hen Domen is the best-investigated timber castle in all of Europe, having been intermittently excavated between 1960 and 1992. Still, only about half the bailey was ever excavated, so there is still much unknown about the site.

The motte is almost 30 feet high, 130 feet in diameter at its base, and around 20 feet in diameter at its top. The bailey is small, covering about half an acre. It was heavily defended with double banks and deep, mud-filled ditches.

The excavations showed that the bailey was jam-packed with buildings. None of the superstructures of these buildings have been recovered, but scholars can make educated guesses about them based on the foundations. For instance, no roof tiles have been found on the site, and since thatch was a serious fire hazard, shingles were most likely the roof covering. In the bailey, a huge building was found that is thought to have been the granary. Another large building, dated to the Montgomery phase, controlled access to the motte and may have been the major residence of the earliest castle.

The bailey was given a largely new layout under the de Boulers. It was more built-up, and the bailey was split into two halves by a row of buildings. This busy place was surrounded by ramparts and towers as well as the ditches, which meant that Hen Domen likely looked like a concentric castle in its heyday. At its center was the motte with the tower atop. Here, scholars have to be more cautious, as the motte was badly eroded before excavation started. The tower may have been two floors high, and it would have provided residence and served as a watchtower. Few artifacts have been recovered at Hen Domen, but excavators still have not found the trash pits, which are the best places to find artifacts that reveal more about people's lives in castles.

After the de Boulers died out, Hen Domen was not as intensively occupied. In 1223, the decision was made to rebuild, and a totally new castle site was chosen about a mile away on a rocky prominence. The large masonry Montgomery Castle was built there before 1232. It has a ruinous appearance today because parliamentarians pulled it down after the English Civil Wars in 1649.

Hen Domen disappeared from documentary view when Montgomery Castle was built. The archaeology shows that it was reoccupied at this time as a military outpost to control crossings over the Severn; this occupation lasted for about 50 years. Hen Domen was eventually abandoned and forgotten. Like so many timber castles, over the centuries, its materials were repurposed or rotted away, and its earthworks began to erode into the landscape.

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5

Spanish *Castillos*, *Alcázares*, and *Alcazabas*

Medieval Spain has a fascinating and complex history that is unlike any other in Europe, and learning that history will enhance your understanding of Spanish castles—known as *alcázares*, *alcazabas*, and *castillos*—in their proper context. This lecture dives into the tumultuous and multicultural landscape that proved to be fertile ground for the building of castles that share a lot of similarities with their European counterparts but have their own unique twists.

MUSLIM ARRIVAL TO THE IBERIAN PENINSULA

Spain is a modern term of convenience. It's not accurate for the Middle Ages, when over many centuries, several Christian kingdoms and Islamic emirates vied for control over the Iberian Peninsula. The peninsula is divided by mountains and united by rivers, and this basic geography means that it could be split into smaller territories, delineated by topography. And at the dawn of the age of castles, Iberia was indeed divided. After the fall of the Roman Empire, a Germanic peoples called the Visigoths had asserted their dominance in the region by the middle of the 5th century.

It didn't remain unchallenged, though. In the 550s, the Eastern Roman Empire, or Byzantines, invaded and reclaimed part of the peninsula and weren't expelled until the 620s. Periods of civil war broke out throughout the 7th century, triggered by disputed successions and a rapid turnover of kings, which split the Visigoth kingdom into factions. It was with this backdrop that the Muslims arrived.

The Muslim conquest of Iberia began when the Umayyad caliphate landed from North Africa in 711 and rapidly began subduing the quarreling Visigoth kingdom. By 718, most of the peninsula had fallen under Muslim control, and that area came to be known as Al-Andalus. Only the mountainous regions to the far north remained in Christian hands, and the kingdom of Asturias that formed there claimed to be the successors of the Visigoths. Around this time, a frontier between France and Spain called the March was also established. A march was a kind of militarized territorial zone between two competing powers.

It's estimated that 75 years after the conquest, 10% of the population in Al-Andalus was Muslim. Throughout most of the Iberian Peninsula, Muslims, Christians, and Jews would all live side by side. Most people in Al-Andalus remained Christian and were called Mozarabs. The Jewish population was small but influential—it tended to be urban, educated, and wealthy. *Convivencia* is the term used to describe the culture of Al-Andalus and the largely peaceful coexistence between these three groups.

The word *alcazaba* comes from the Arabic term *al-qasaba*, which means "fortress" or "citadel." Casbahs were common features of North African cities. They housed the local ruler, the military garrison, and various other residences, workshops, and civic structures.

The term *alcázar* comes from the Arabic term *al-qasr*, which means "castle" or "palace." This term tends to be used to describe more luxurious fortified palace complexes associated with the caliphs and emirs of Al-Andalus.

Christian-built castles in Spain tended to be known as *castillos*. However, castles were occupied and expanded by both sides, and later Christian lords sometimes used Andalusi terms to name castles built long after the Muslim period.

CÓRDOBA, MÉRIDA, AND ALMERÍA

The Umayyads established the first capital of Al-Andalus at Córdoba, basing themselves at a former Visigoth palace located in the southwest corner of the walled city. It and the surrounding area were added to and altered over the centuries. While little remains of the Alcázar of the Caliphs today, the nearby Great Mosque of Córdoba has survived and is a truly stunning example of Islamic art and architecture in this period.

GREAT MOSQUE OF CÓRDOBA

Beyond Córdoba, Al-Andalus was organized into smaller regions with fortified cities that played a big role in establishing and securing the new regime. Across Spain, earlier Roman and Visigoth fortifications were often reused for this purpose, and old fortified settlements were upgraded to assist in state building. In addition to reusing sites, new palaces and fortifications were constructed that were the defenses, administrative sites, and residences of the new urban elite. One of the very earliest examples is the Alcazaba de Mérida, which was constructed in 835. Mérida was an old Roman city, and both Roman and Visigothic walls were repurposed in the new fortification. Though little remains of it today, the ruins nonetheless reveal that the *alcazaba* was designed to house a garrison of more than a hundred troops, and it featured a large cistern for the storage of water.

Castles like these could usually be found in a corner of the town's walled defenses, and they could become little cities within cities. One of the best-preserved examples is the Alcazaba de Almería, built by the Umayyads in the 10th century. Built on the uppermost corner of the settlement, it was once part of a larger network of city walls and mural towers that surrounded Almería.

The *alcazaba* was divided into three enclosures with distinct functions. The innermost enclosure was primarily defensive, as it was where the military garrison was stationed. The next enclosure had residential and administrative functions and was really a tiny town unto itself. The third enclosure was a later Christian addition from the 15th century that provided space for more modern military needs, like larger barracks and artillery.

Al-Andalus in the early centuries quickly became prosperous, with new crops imported from elsewhere in the Islamic world and new trade routes established across the Mediterranean. Meanwhile, the first Christian kingdom, Asturias, appeared in the north in the 8th century and became home to many Visigoth refugees from the south. Devout Catholicism became a defining feature of the kingdom. At Santiago de Compostela, the tomb of Saint James the Apostle was discovered, and a new town and monastic complex were soon built. Unlike Al-Andalus, Asturias was not a very urban place. Scholars think that the power centers of the kingdom were focused around hillforts, many of which were built in the Iron Age.

EVOLUTION FROM SETTLEMENTS TO CASTLES

Beginning in the 8th century, tower-based settlements in the northern areas were built to deter raids. Over time, they started to form larger defensive networks. Towers were particularly focused on river valleys, as they were key communication, transport, and defensive routes.

In this early period in the north, towers and fortifications were being called *castrum*—the Latin term for castle—but clear differences exist between the simpler, defensively focused structures that first appeared in the Spanish March and the larger castle complexes that some would evolve into. So, at what point should these early structures be considered castles? Further complicating the situation, the development of both castles and settlements often occurred side by side in this region.

In Zaragoza, a major town and strategic settlement on the Ebro River near the Spanish March, a tower was first built by the Umayyads in either the late 9th or 10th century. Today, it's known as the Troubadour Tower, but that's certainly not what they called it then. Structural examination suggests it was only a defensive watchtower when first built, but modifications from the 11th century onward suggest that it took on residential functions, turning the tower into a keep. At the same time, the site was completely transformed into a much larger fortified palace complex known as the Aljafería. Scholars have found similarities in its layout to castle-palaces from previous centuries in Syria and Jordan.

CONTESTED LANDS

The fragmentation of Al-Andalus presented opportunities for the Christians to the north, who were able to stage more unified attacks. As the Christians made gains and moved farther south, they often built fortified settlements in newly captured areas to help them secure the area.

In 1085, a major victory for the Christians occurred at Toledo. A big player in this was Alfonso VI, king of León, Castile, and Galicia. Toledo had been the Visigothic capitol, and it was also the seat of the primate of the Catholic church in Spain, so its capture was a huge boost to the Christians. But in 1086, the leaders of Al-Andalus—with assistance from Morocco—won a decisive victory against the Christians at the Battle of Sagrajas. Over the next 2 centuries, Al-Andalus would be reunited, first under the Almoravids and then the Almohads.

Alfonso VI wanted to protect the Christian-controlled lands and launched massive royal programs of construction. Ávila, for instance, is still famous today for its walls, which were built in phases beginning in the 11th century. These walls were built not just to defend the territory but also to provide some reassurance of safety—many settlements in central Spain had massively depopulated as fearful residents fled from contested areas.

The famous crenellated walls are about 40 feet high and 10 feet thick. They enclose a trapezoid shape with irregularities due to rocky outcrops. Ávila has 9 high gates flanked by 2 towers, and 86 half-cylindrical mural towers. The

cathedral's apse was later built over a preexisting round mural tower and thus gave it a very fortified appearance, which enabled it to become part of the town's defensive circuit.

Many castles were also built along the new border areas of central Spain. Spanish castles tend to be found as integrated clusters, unlike in other places in Europe, where castles often appear in isolation. In Spain, groups of castles could collectively play a defensive—or even offensive—role, particularly around important geographic features.

This was done in both Christian- and Muslim-controlled areas. The Almohads built dense concentrations of fortifications in the 12th and 13th centuries around Valencia and Alicante on the east coast of Spain. This cluster of castles was far away from the frontier with Christian Spain, and it was the sea that influenced their distribution.

ROYAL AND NOBLE CHRISTIAN CASTLES

It is hard to tell royal and noble castles apart based on building surveys, which also means it's hard to distinguish castles with private uses from those with more communal roles. "High castles" that dated from an earlier period and provided defense and sanctuary tended to have irregular plans, as they were often deliberately sited on rocky outcrops.

Castle plans generally got more elaborate over time, though a popular layout was a square with corner-flanking towers and gatehouses. It depended on the site's topography and who built the castles. State- or royal-built castles tended to have more complex layouts and features and use a more expensive wall construction. Yet, in some areas, particularly in Al-Andalus, rural elites or even peasant communities might band together to construct fortifications themselves, in which case their layouts and features might be very simple.

In theory, castles built by Christian kings were more public oriented, and from the 12th century onward, they founded new walled towns to attract settlers to their newly conquered lands. Building such sites also helped to concentrate political and economic functions in one place. Because the Christian kings had so many royal castles, they tended to process between them, accompanied by the court. This had the benefit of showing off their power in all corners of the kingdom.

Many royal castles were later taken over by nobles, which complicates scholars' efforts to uncover individual castle stories. Very few early royal Christian castles are well preserved in their original forms.

ALCÁZAR DE SEVILLA

The Almoravids didn't build many fortifications, but the Almohads did; their defensive building was focused on transportation routes and borders. Ruling from the mid-12th century to the early 13th century, the Almohads also renovated a lot of castles, and their designs may have been influenced by the experience of the Crusades. The Almohad rulers also invested in urban fortifications. Until the 11th century, urban castles and walls tended to be on the site of fortifications from the Roman period.

Seville, which the Almohads made their center of power in Spain, had an irregular oval plan that had been adapted to the course of the Guadalquivir River. When the Umayyads took over in the 8th century, they constructed a quadrangular *alcázar* at the corner of what were the old Roman walls of the town.

The Almohad caliphs greatly expanded both Seville and the *alcázar* in the 12th century until it became the largest walled city in Al-Andalus. The city had 12 gateways and was surrounded by an outer wall and a water-filled ditch after 1220. One polygonal tower—the Torre del Oro—was a watchtower that was intended to help defend the city from river attack, and it was an anchor point for a large chain that could be used to block the river.

The Umayyad-era Real Alcázar de Sevilla, located on the corner of the now much larger urban fortifications, was also completely transformed, with many palaces on the site from previous centuries demolished. The new palaces were reoriented within a large area containing 11 enclosures that also held other elaborate buildings.

The only area of the *alcázar* that has been kept largely accurate to the Almohad period is the Patio del Yeso. Its central pool, arched doors, and elaborate plaster latticework give a taste of what the *alcázar* would have looked like at that time. However, in later Christian renovations of the Alcázar de Sevilla, the courtyard layout continued to dominate, with a complex of buildings that served different functions. The Christian kings also borrowed the highly decorated walls and ceilings of Andalusi palaces—as a result, visitors can be easily fooled into thinking that many other areas of the complex date to the Almohad period.

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6

Norman Donjons and the Tower of London

While castle building did not originate with the Normans, castle construction did boom under them. The Normans also played a big role in the spread of castle technology—their influence can be appreciated in the designs of castles across Britain and beyond. This lecture dives into the iconic castle architecture of the Normans, including two representative examples: the Tower of London and Colchester Castle.

THE NORMAN CONQUEST

The term *Norman* comes from a word meaning "Northman" and refers to the culture that arose as a result of occupation by and intermarriage with Vikings. Vikings had long been raiding the French coast and using their navigable rivers to strike far inland. In 911, Charles III, king of the Franks, surrendered what was to become Normandy in northwestern France to Rollo and his Viking followers. His reasoning was that he'd bring these problem raiders to heel by ennobling them, making them settle down and instead defend their new possessions against other Vikings. These newly ennobled Norman rulers then built earth-and-timber castles, particularly the motte-and-bailey design.

In the 11th century, the Normans would take stone castles to new heights. In 1066, King Edward the Confessor of England died without issue, and a dispute over the succession led William of Normandy to seize the English throne. He became William the Conqueror when he defeated Harold Godwinson at the Battle of Hastings and crowned himself king in London on Christmas Day 1066. William then spent many years subduing the country, with particularly strong resistance in the north.

The Bayeux Tapestry is a unique primary source that illustrates the events of the Norman Conquest in embroidered panels, and it includes several depictions of earth-and-timber castles. A second unique primary source known as the Domesday Book comes from 1086, 20 years after the Battle of Hastings. It documented property holdings to help William establish the wealth—and taxation potential—of his new realm. But it also showed that, within a generation of their arrival in England, the Normans had started a massive construction program, building not just castles but also cathedrals, abbeys, and other churches. Forty-eight castles are listed in Domesday, most of which were constructed in this initial 20-year period and were made of either earth and timber or stone.

Many of these castles were not entirely new creations but rather adaptations of preexisting structures. Pevensey Castle, for instance, was one of the first occupied by the Normans, lying just a stone's throw away from where William landed with his armies in Pevensey Bay in 1066. It was originally a stone fortification built by the Romans in the 3rd century CE, but it was

an abandoned ruin by the time of William's landing. The Normans quickly made repairs and reoccupied the location. In the 1070s, they improved it further, digging new earthworks, constructing an inner and outer bailey, and building towers and a stone keep with various outbuildings.

Of the 36 castles that William of Normandy had built, 24 were in urban locations. This was intentional, and some of these castles were built on top of *burhs*—walled towns that were the English equivalent of continental fortified towns known as burgs or bourgs. They were pioneered in the kingdom of Wessex by Alfred the Great, built in response to attacks by the Danes. Building a castle atop a *burh* had several benefits: It saved time and effort, contained a condensed population, and conveyed authority.

Early Norman stone castles were focused around a large central tower, known as a donjon or keep. *Donjon* was the term preferred by the castle's contemporaries. Within it would be the rooms central to lordship, including the hall, bed chambers, and chapel. Access to the donjon was controlled for both practical and display reasons. A forebuilding, also known as a petit donjon, might be constructed in front of the main entranceway and stairs. A good example can be seen jutting out of the front of the keep of Rochester Castle, constructed by the Normans in the 1080s. Over time, Norman castle complexes became more elaborate as curtain walls with mural towers and gatehouses as well as other buildings were added.

The 11th- and 12th-century donjon is architecturally associated with the Romanesque art style, which was the trend in this period of European elite building. Romanesque makes use of curved Roman-style arches in windows, arcades, and vaults. Columns and thick piers were also popular. Norman-era donjons embody grandeur, and they impress visitors even today.

One of the most striking surviving examples of a grand Romanesque donjon can be found at Norwich Castle, which was originally built at the turn of the 11th century. Its clean appearance today is due to the fact it was refaced in the 19th century with Bath stone, but its reproduction of the original Romanesque arches, windows, and ornamentation was quite faithful.

Huge Norman-era donjons exist in multiple places, including Windsor, Durham, and Canterbury.

NORWICH CASTLE

THE TOWER OF LONDON'S WHITE TOWER

The Tower of London has its origins in William the Conqueror's building spree. As the largest settlement in Britain, London was vital for him to secure and control. He built several fortifications to achieve this, but the Tower of London is by far the most famous castle in London—and arguably in all of England.

Only the keep known as the White Tower dates to the period after the Norman Conquest; the rest of the complex making up the Tower of London that people can visit today is of later medieval and Tudor origin. The White Tower has had a long history as a royal residence as well as a citadel, arsenal, prison, and administrative center. It was built around 1075 to 1079, replacing an earlier earth-and-timber castle that was built on the site from 1066 to 1067. The site has a much longer history: It was the location of a pre-Roman

oppidum, then a Roman fort, and then finally a *burh*, which was created when King Alfred the Great repaired the Roman walls in 886. The White Tower was constructed in the corner of the old Roman city walls.

Because the site has such a long and complex history, the original appearance of the White Tower can be difficult to determine. William, newly crowned as the king of England, had ordered it built, but it was not finished until the reign of his son William Rufus. Its building was supervised by Bishop Gundulf of Rochester, who may have also helped in the design.

The White Tower is rectangular, standing 4 stories high with four corner turrets. It has a false upper floor above the enclosed roof, which makes it look even bigger and more imposing. It stands 90 feet high, and its interior area is 118 by 107 feet. Its walls are made of rubble masonry, with ashlar for the finer work. It got its name because it was originally whitewashed.

The entrance was quite simple, except that it was on the second floor. A note here on floors: In Europe, it is usual to count the floors of a building as the ground floor, first floor, second floor, and so on. For this course, the references to floors have been converted to follow the American practice.

An unusual thing about the White Tower's plan is that it projects at the south to house the apse of a church—St. John's Chapel, the oldest surviving completed chapel from the Norman era, dating to 1080, and a great example of Romanesque design. Originally, it also had wall paintings and stained-glass windows. Beneath it lie crypts.

The White Tower's internal arrangement follows a double-pile plan, which means there are four rooms at each level. A 10-foot-thick wall divides the interior into two large areas, which are then further divided with walls.

How the rooms were used within the tower is uncertain. More recent reappraisals have indicated that they were not used primarily as residential options but rather as settings for ceremonial gatherings. Starting at the bottom, the basement of the tower had no lighting and so was used for storage. The second floor may have been used by the garrison. The third floor could have had the great hall as well as a smaller room for the king to retire to. The fourth floor is believed to have had a council, or advisory, chamber on the western side, with a smaller room for the queen's use.

Palaces with ceremonial functions tended to have chambers in a horizontal layout. The White Tower and the similarly designed Colchester Castle were to become real trendsetters with their vertical room arrangements—a layout that came to dominate castle architecture over the coming centuries. Later in the Middle Ages, more additions were made to the castle and its complex, many of which involved curtain walls and mural towers.

In the reign of Henry III, the castle developed its concentric plan, including many new mural towers. Henry also built a new external hall, which shifted attention away from the White Tower.

The Bell Tower confined many famous historical figures, including Sir Thomas More. Its bell, which once rang to let prisoners know when to return to their cells, rings today when it's time for tourists to leave. The Byward Tower also periodically housed prisoners, including Henry VIII's first wife, Anne Boleyn.

COLCHESTER CASTLE

Located 60 miles northeast of London, Colchester had been a Roman settlement called Camulodunum. The castle dates to around 1076. Like the White Tower, it is roughly rectangular, but it measures 152 by 111 feet. It no longer stands to its full height. Only the bottom two floors survive.

Colchester Castle's projections at its corners are different than those at the White Tower. They are bigger and would have contained the stairs. Its entrance was at the first floor, which was much less common in donjons. It also had a basement entrance that was protected by a ditch. The chapels were deliberately located on the third and fourth floors so that no secular room could be above it.

COLCHESTER CASTLE

What people see on the outside today is not what a medieval person would have seen. Originally, Colchester Castle must have been covered with ashlar, but this stonework has been stripped off, exposing its rubble core with Roman-era tiles used for bonding. It was very practical to reuse previous foundations and materials from Roman ruins. It was symbolic because it allowed the Norman conquerors to associate their coming with the Romans, those other mighty invaders from continental Europe.

The donjons of the White Tower and Colchester Castle are amazing for their early date and for their huge size, and they're iconic examples of the stone castles that were to become hallmarks of Norman architecture.

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7

Women in Castles and Castle Roche

Studies of medieval women contest the outdated concept that they were secondary and subordinate to men. And though the popular perception very much places castles within a masculine domain, their design and function were shaped by women, who were central to the political, military, and economic context in which castles developed. This lecture examines the varied roles of women in castles, including Castle Roche.

MARRIAGE AND WORK

Catholic canon law and English common law in the Middle Ages held that the minimum age for women to marry was 12, though this was usually the practice for dynastic and royal marriages. For ordinary peasant women, the norm was around 20 years old, which might have gone up to an average age of 25 after the Black Death.

It's important not to make assumptions about the lives of medieval women based on a modern understanding of women's lives. Although marriage may have been a defining event for them, it would have been a very different experience than it is today. For starters, men tended to marry later, and when they did, it was not necessarily for love. Usually, marriage was more about property transfer and thus tended to be between social equals. And castles were some of the most valuable property a person could hold in the Middle Ages; thus, they got caught up in marriage.

Of course, not all women married, though those laywomen who didn't were probably of lower social status, especially if they couldn't scrape together a dowry. Unmarried girls and widows had greater freedom of action, but it was in proportion to the economic possibilities open to them, which depended on their social class or work. Very young women could migrate to work as servants or apprentices. Women working in towns did less manual labor than the men and less labor than peasant women.

Indeed, women played a much bigger role in the medieval workforce and economy than many people assume. For instance, weaving was predominantly a female task earlier in the Middle Ages, though it was increasingly taken over by men when cloth-making became an urban industry controlled by guilds. And certain aspects of textile production, such a spinning and braid-making, remained mainly female and home-based work.

In addition to working in the textile industry, women served as shoemakers, tailors, barbers, goldsmiths, bakers, armorers, and merchants, among other crafts.

Women also controlled the manufacturing and sale of food and beverages. Alewives—or female brewers—were especially common because ale was in demand and not everybody made their own. Medieval women functioned as teachers, nuns and abbesses, artists, writers, and composers. One of their most important and respected roles was that of healer and midwife. The new universities of the 12th century, with their medical schools, downplayed this role because it suited them to create careers for their male graduates.

Regardless of where women lived, most of their work took place in and around the home. Most women appear to have undertaken a variety of different tasks during the working day, while men were generally able to focus on one main profession.

On the manorial estates, peasant women worked with the men in the fields, hauled the water, handled the livestock, prepared the food, and did the housework, including spinning cloth, which paid the feudal dues or could be sold for outside money.

WOMEN'S ROLES IN CASTLES

Women, especially the lord's wife, were expected to run the castle and its associated estate when the lord was away. This could be for very long periods of time, even years. There are many examples of women defending their castles during wars or rebellions when their husbands were absent. Early widowhood was frequent, and women who inherited lands and castles were expected to defend them. Women could also have independent wealth and power separate from their husband, whether married or widowed.

Single women could buy property, and when they were heads of household in their own right, they would assume the same responsibilities as a man. Women could also be involved in politics. Landowning women were legitimate targets for violence, and their roles also depended on the threat or reality of war. A female castle holder might use an important relative to make martial guarantees, or she might have to do it herself. She might also be able to negotiate for lenient treatment in a situation where a family was punished for rebellion by a superior.

Emma de Guader, countess of Norfolk, found herself in this situation when her husband and brother were betrayed during a planned revolt against William the Conqueror in 1075. The conspirators were violently punished, her brother was captured and imprisoned, and her husband fled to Denmark to raise support. Isolated, Emma raised and commanded a defense to protect the family seat at Norwich Castle, which William laid siege to. She refused to surrender, and the siege dragged on so long that William eventually negotiated terms that allowed her and her men safe passage to Brittany, where she rejoined her husband. There are also many examples of women not just defending castles but also commanding campaigns.

Scholars can make gendered assumptions about certain activities that went on within the castle walls. Food, for example, was the preserve of medieval women. That might mean preparing food for the family, overseeing almsgiving to the poor, or being in charge of hospitality at feasts. But ladies of the castle would have spent most of their time in high-status spaces, not in the kitchen.

How women spent their time depended on their age, social status, and location as well as things like the seasons. For example, at harvest time, peasant women spent much less time in their home. And while an elite lady of a castle would not have been out in the fields during the harvest, her occupations outside were also seasonal and could have included walking in pleasure gardens.

Gardens were associated with an ideology of enclosure, of physical or symbolic separation, and may have served as a way to keep the genders separate.

Identifying clearly female interior spaces is harder still. Scholars might look for the lady's chamber within the main castle. Theoretically, this room should be one of the most inaccessible inner spaces in the castle. But a female castle owner was important and would have received petitioners and guests; therefore, her chamber would also need to be a permeable space for such visits. Scholars might also look for separate areas within castle spaces, like pews or an upper gallery within the chapel. Women's spaces may have been more luxurious and comfortable, and they may have had good facilities, such as fireplaces and garderobes.

Their roles might be most apparent in now absent materials, such as needles and thimbles. Women probably also oversaw many residential functions within the castle, including design, making sure the interiors were bright and comfortable.

The task is made somewhat easier when there's a castle with more extensive historical documentation, such as royal complexes, where the queen was more likely to have distinct areas identified for her use. Wawel Royal Castle, for instance, historically had a variety of spaces specifically documented as being for the queen's use, including bedrooms, drawing rooms, and workrooms. It has continuously changed and expanded since the Middle Ages, with various chambers, towers, chapels, and gardens documented as being for the queen's use at some stage. Yet, even with this kind of documentation, it's still hard to know how women, even royal women, spent their days in castles.

WAWEL ROYAL CASTLE

CASTLE ROCHE

CASTLE ROCHE

Castle Roche is the only recorded example in Ireland of a major castle that was built by a woman. Unfortunately for modern historians, most castles that existed in medieval Europe lack documentation around their construction, so there were probably more that were built and owned by women.

Castle Roche, in county Louth, was built around 1236 by Lady Roesia de Verdun, who was both an heiress and a widow—her husband died in 1230, and her father died in 1231. Under English law, women whose husbands died would inherit sufficient lands from his estate to support them for the remainder of their lives. Known as dower lands, documentation suggests that many widows did not live on them but instead rented them out and lived off the income. For this reason, it's unclear whether Roesia de Verdun ever physically lived at Castle Roche. Over time, it became more common for Irish landholding widows to live on their Irish lands, perhaps as the region became more stable.

One local legend holds that no architect wanted to help the short-tempered Roesia de Verdun build her castle, so she vowed to marry whoever would build it. And indeed she did, so the legend goes—but after the wedding, she promptly pushed her new husband from the bedroom window to his death. The window was known thereafter as the murder window.

Roesia began construction on the castle and completed much of it by 1236. It was built in a contested region of Ireland, so she had to act as defender of a march, which meant that she and her castle needed to defend territory, at least in theory. She concluded her life by becoming a nun in Grace Dieu Priory, England, where she died in 1247. A lot of the castle seems to be later than this date, suggesting that her son John finished it. Castle Roche was ruinous by the 15th century, when it was repaired. Otherwise, the castle belongs to a single period but had different building stages.

It is a great-looking castle. The curtain wall encloses a subtriangular area. The castle footprint is influenced by the rocky outcrop it sits on. A causeway crosses the fosse to the entrance, and there was likely a barbican there. Within the curtain wall enclosure is a freestanding rectangular hall to the south and a gatehouse to the east. The gatehouse is a fine example of projecting D-shaped towers, allowing it to offer high-standard accommodation. Accordingly, it was the first part of the castle to be built.

The hall is now 2 stories tall, but it looks to have been heightened at a later date so that it rises above the curtain wall, which might also explain why the hall is at second-floor level. The hall might be later in date than the gatehouse. The two are connected by a mural passage, creating a hall and chamber block. Another building to the west of the hall within the enclosure might have been a kitchen. The courtyard was probably originally split in two, and it has a circular tower at its apex.

Alistair Rowan and Christine Casey, who did an architectural survey, said that "few buildings so vividly evoke the establishment of Anglo-Norman military power in Ireland" as Castle Roche. That is a serious statement to make for a medieval female castle builder.

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8

Crusader Castles and Crac des Chevaliers

The Crusades are one of the defining events of the Middle Ages. There were at least eight major Crusades to the Holy Land as well as numerous smaller campaigns, and in all these conflicts, castles were used extensively. In fact, scholars have frequently cited the Crusades as a pinnacle of castle building, especially for the massive castles built and occupied by military orders in the Levant and eastern Mediterranean. One of those castles, the Crac des Chevaliers, is the case study for this lecture.

THE FIRST CRUSADE

Prior to the 11th century, great numbers of Christians traveled to the Holy Land to follow in the footsteps of Jesus. Although major destinations, such as Jerusalem and Bethlehem, were in the Arab Muslim world, Christians were permitted to visit on pilgrimage.

However, in the 11th century, this region came under the control of the Seljuk Turks, who were expanding into territories held by the Byzantine empire. Though the Byzantines were also Christian, in 1054, long-simmering political, cultural, and theological disagreements prompted a formal split between the Catholic Church, headed by the pope in Rome, and a new Eastern Orthodox Church, headed by a patriarch in Constantinople.

In 1095, however, facing defeats by the Seljuk Turks, the Byzantine emperor wrote to the pope asking for military assistance. Somehow, this letter morphed into a justification for the calling of a holy Crusade to claim Jerusalem for Christianity, first preached by Pope Urban II at Clermont that year. Word of this Crusade traveled all around western Europe, and the following year, the first knights set off eastward. The Seljuks were caught off guard, and in 1099, the Crusaders captured Jerusalem. In the aftermath of the First Crusade, the westerners—or Franks, as they became known locally—founded new states along feudal lines, including the kingdom of Jerusalem, the principality of Antioch, and the counties of Edessa and Tripoli.

THE MILITARY ORDERS

It was in the intervening period between the First Crusade and the fall of Acre, the last Frankish stronghold, in 1291 that the Crusader castles in the East were built. These castles served important defensive, residential, and administrative functions. The builders were either newly ennobled lords securing their lands or the foreign-funded military orders that had formed to defend the Holy Land. These forces included the Teutonic Knights, the Templars, and the Hospitallers, though there were others.

The military orders were originally founded as armed escorts for pilgrims who were traveling to the Holy Land or had arrived in Jerusalem. Over time, these orders became some of the principal forces that fought to defend the Crusader states.

The Teutonic Knights—or House of the Hospitalers of Saint Mary of the Teutons in Jerusalem—would become best known as a driving force behind the Crusades in northern and eastern Europe. But they had their origins in the Crusades to the Holy Land, looking after Germans traveling to and fighting in the East. They had extensive involvement with castles—one of their major sites and headquarters was Montfort Castle in historic Galilee, modern-day Israel. Built in the 1200s along a ridgeline on a high hill, it housed a large garrison and many knights and managed a large farming estate around it.

The Templars, or Poor Knights of Christ and of the Temple of Solomon, were founded around 1120 by Hugh de Payns to protect pilgrims on their way to the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. Their castles were often by roads. In general, Templar castles in the East didn't survive as well as Hospitaller ones, but written descriptions that have survived provide evidence that they were just as big as Hospitaller sites.

Lastly, the Hospitallers—or Hospitallers of Saint John of Jerusalem—occupied and built many castles, the most famous of which is possibly Crac des Chevaliers. They started out as a charitable order looking after the welfare of pilgrims visiting Jerusalem, even before the Crusades. They may have moved into a more defensive role because the Templars had started to do that.

Although the Hospitallers built many of their own castles, as the Crusader states began to crumble, many lords handed their castles over to them as well. For example, in 1142, after several defeats, the count of Tripoli recognized that he could not hold the border and handed control of several castles and significant lands to the Hospitallers in hopes that the military order could turn the situation around.

STYLES AND LOCATIONS OF CRUSADER CASTLES

While scholars debate the exact influences of Crusader castles, they largely agree that the castles were highly influential on European castle-building processes and architecture. The castles of the military orders were notably different because of the people they housed—they were, in effect, fortified versions of monastic cloisters. Castles with enclosure plans worked especially well for the domestic needs of their residents, as they needed a lot of space for chapels, dormitories, and refectories.

By the 13th century, castles dominated passes and roads to the north and east of the Frankish territories. This choice of location was a strategic and practical move to overlook communication points. It is perhaps too simple to say that castles were associated with borders and frontiers. Following the First Crusade, the frontiers of the newly established Crusader states extended for more than 500 miles, and they changed regularly depending on political and military circumstances. There wasn't a sole direction from which a possible threat might come, and there weren't hard and fast borders.

Crusader castles were not exclusively rural, either; protecting the ports and urban centers was just as important. The Crusader states were highly reliant on not just troops but also supplies, trade, and weapons from Europe, and ports were vulnerable to blockades and sieges by sea. In the later stages of the Crusades, the Muslim fleets became almost as dangerous as their armies.

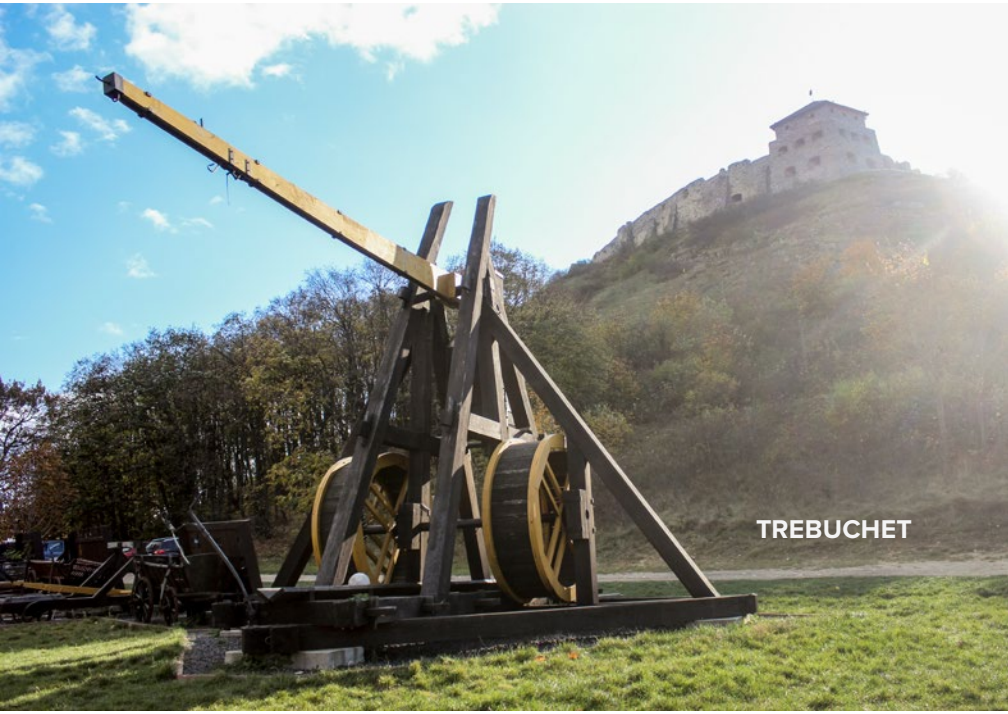
MEDIEVAL SIEGE WARFARE

Most Crusader castles were designed to resist armed attack and besiegement by large forces for long periods of time. Before more effective tools were developed, it was unlikely that siege engines alone would be able to capture a castle. The Muslim armies certainly knew siege warfare, though the logistics in the early years of the Crusades may have discouraged them from using these techniques regularly.

Siege engines required a lot of high-quality timber, which was in short supply in the East. Most famous among them are the trebuchet, which was a counterweight catapult, and the mangonel, which was a torsion catapult. Archery and other simple tools, like covered ladders and climbing frames, were also used. The ideal strategy was to attack a castle in combination with a blockade.

Between 1099 and 1124, the Franks launched more than 20 sieges against Muslim cities, conquering 13 of them, including almost all of the region's coastal cities. Many of these cities were taken in part because the Franks used huge siege engines, but planning was also key. There were long breaks between individual sieges while the Crusaders prepared their camps.

Mining, or sapping, was a way of tunnelling in an attempt to gain access to a castle. The aim wasn't necessarily to build a tunnel into the middle of the castle itself and then transport forces through it; rather, the intent was to weaken the foundations of the outer wall, which would then collapse and allow enemy forces to flood in.



TREBUCHET

CRAC DES CHEVALIERS

Built between 1142 and 1170, Crac des Chevaliers was one of the largest and most impressive Crusade castles. It was in the county of Tripoli on the lands that had been granted to the Hospitallers. At the time of the grant, there was already a castle there, known as Hisn al-Akrad (Castle of the Kurds). By that time, most Frankish attention had shifted to the coastal plains and away from boundaries with surrounding Muslim populations, so Crac des Chevaliers was on the frontier.

Scholars have tried to interpret the new architectural features on Crusader castles as ways of frustrating the techniques of siege warfare. Some argue that circular, D-shaped, and polygonal towers and turrets withstood being hit by siege weaponry better because the corners couldn't be knocked off as easily. In addition, these shapes should have provided better flanking cover. Though several different tower plans were used at Crac des Chevaliers, including square ones, the outer curtain wall did have round towers.

Postern gates were the back entrances to a castle, and soldiers could have used them to sally forth and attack an enemy's tools. At Crac des Chevaliers, the postern gate opened in one of the outer tower angles, which sheltered it, and it had towers flanking it as well as its own portcullis and machicolations. The main entrance, which was the weakest point of a castle, was heavily defended with architecture. Entrance to the main castle was through a tunnel that made tight turns and doubled back on itself to hold up anyone entering.

Like many castles in the Levant, Crac des Chevaliers was built on steep slopes of hills to prevent siege weaponry and catapults from getting too close or getting the level footing needed for attacking. One side of the castle was open. It had extra defenses to cover this spot and separate outwork defenses on a neighboring hill. These added defenses might have seemed like a good idea, but the garrison couldn't hold them; they were taken by Baybars, who then used them to attack the castle.

On paper, Crac des Chevaliers looks mighty and impregnable. And for a time, it was. After their victory at the Battle of Hattīn in 1187, Muslim forces drove toward Crac des Chevaliers but concluded it was too well defended and moved north to try and take Margat Castle instead, which also failed. Indeed, thanks to these castles, the county of Tripoli managed to hold on as one of the last footholds in the Levant until the arrival of the Third Crusade, which temporarily reinforced the other Crusader states.

But by the 1250s, Crac des Chevaliers began to run into financial difficulties as its surrounding lands were continuously raided and funding began to dry up. In the first half of the 13th century, the castle had a garrison of around 2,000. By 1268, there were about 300 Hospitallers total in the East. In 1271, the forces of the sultan Baybars breached the castle's outer walls through a combination of bombardment and sapping. It was only a matter of time until the castle fell, and so the garrison surrendered. They were allowed to flee to Tripoli, while their local allies were taken prisoner.

The loss of Crac des Chevaliers was a major blow to the Crusader states. Now, the roads to the remaining cities were largely open, and only a few strongholds remained. The year 1291—when the Crusaders lost their last major city at Acre—is usually considered the end of the Crusades, but some smaller castles and fortified cities held out until the early 1300s.

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9

Frederick II and Castel del Monte

Italy's undulating terrain has given rise to some of the most spectacularly situated castles in Europe. And Castel del Monte, located in the region of Apulia, is arguably one of the most unique and aesthetically interesting castles in Italy. Built between 1240 and 1250 as a pleasure palace for the Holy Roman emperor Frederick II, it's a castle with few parallels. This lecture explores the fascinating life of Frederick II and Castel del Monte, a UNESCO World Heritage site described as "a unique masterpiece of medieval military architecture."

FREDERICK II'S WIDE DOMAIN

Frederick II was born on December 26, 1194, at Jesi, near Ancona in the south of Italy. His parents were King Henry VI, who had ended Norman rule in southern Italy, and Constance, the heiress to the Norman kingdom in Italy. He was the grandson of Holy Roman Emperor Frederick Barbarossa and King Roger II of Sicily. The marriage between Henry and Constance was not a love match but a political alliance to unite huge tracts of land. So, Frederick was always destined to be a major player in history.

Frederick lost both of his parents when he was a young child, and he grew up in Palermo, Sicily, under the direction of Pope Innocent III, who served as his guardian. Sicily was a wealthy, multicultural island, well situated amid the many trade routes of the Mediterranean.

In 1197, at the age of 3, he was crowned king of Sicily—an area that included not only the island of Sicily but also the southern parts of the Italian peninsula, including the regions of Calabria, Apulia, and Campania. In 1211, Frederick was elected king of the Romans, which was the rather inaccurate title for the king of Germany in this period. This effectively made him the Holy Roman emperor, whose domains included much of modern-day Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Czechia, the Low Countries, and parts of Poland, France, and northern Italy.

Frederick's rule in Germany was shaky—unlike most Holy Roman emperors, he spent little time in the north of his empire. Moreover, his relationship with the popes soon took a sharp turn. As both Holy Roman emperor and king of Sicily, Frederick had become one of the most powerful monarchs in European history. Sandwiched between his two enormous domains in Italy were the Papal States. In the Middle Ages, the pope was a major political leader with huge territorial landholdings. The popes began to worry that Frederick had become too powerful and was now potentially a challenge to the pope himself as leader of Christianity.

Frederick had promised that, if elected king of Germany, he would go on Crusade, but he kept finding excuses not to go. When the Sixth Crusade was launched, Frederick finally set off sailing to the Levant, but he stopped his

journey due to a disease outbreak within his army. Fed up with Frederick's broken promises, Pope Gregory IX excommunicated him from the church.

Despite being excommunicated, Frederick restarted his Crusading journey. But instead of fighting, he made a deal with the sultan of Egypt, with whom he had diplomatic relations. From this, Frederick ultimately received the three major Christian pilgrimage sites of Jerusalem, Nazareth, and Bethlehem, with a thin strip of land connecting them to the coast under a 10-year truce. He then became the only Holy Roman emperor to be crowned king of Jerusalem, which occurred in 1229, following his marriage to Isabella of Brienne—heiress of the kingdom of Jerusalem—in 1225. In 1228, they had a son, Conrad, and Isabella died soon after. This meant that the baby Conrad was actually the king of Jerusalem, though Frederick used the title because he was regent for his son. But all this was seen on both sides as a betrayal.

Frederick returned to western Europe in 1229 to a crisis-filled Italy, with Pope Gregory IX turning some of Frederick's own lords against him. A couple of years of warfare ended with a stalemate in 1230 and a peace treaty in which Frederick's excommunication was lifted—at least temporarily.

In 1231, he published a new legal code called the Constitutions of Melfi, which strengthened his power and proclaimed his God-given right to rule. He announced the laws from the Castle of Melfi, one of the most important medieval castles in southern Italy.

Built by the Normans in the 11th century, Frederick had made it one of his main administrative castles. Some of the architectural inspiration for Castel del Monte came from the Castle of Melfi, with its stout, angled towers, flat stone surfaces, and clean geometric design.

CASTEL DEL MONTE

Apulia had good access from the island of Sicily, and it was straightforward to get to Frederick's lands farther north and to Rome. During his reign, he moved his capital from Palermo to Foggia to reinforce his power within Apulia and to be closer to the border with the Papal States.

Frederick was a castle enthusiast, and Castel del Monte—by far the most famous of his castles—reflects his willingness to spend big on his leisurely pastimes. He was a hunting nut, and this castle served predominantly as a royal hunting lodge with luxurious and large accommodations.

It had a very unusual octagonal plan with eight octagonal towers that may have been designed by Frederick himself. Both the main tower and the attached towers rise slightly higher than 80 feet. It had no real central donjon but rather enclosed an eight-sided small inner courtyard that might have contained an octagonal fountain.

CASTEL DEL MONTE

The octagon shape was used as a symbolic display of power and authority. The imperial crown of the Holy Roman Empire had eight sides, as did the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem and the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem. Frederick likely wanted to reinforce his connections to these famous places and perhaps send a cheeky message to his papal detractors in Rome.

The ground plan was a square rotated 45°, aesthetically designed so that the sunlight added to the contrast of all the eight-sided shapes. The complexity must have necessitated a ground plan that was drawn out on paper as well as literally marked out on the ground. It had a very exact system of measurement involving the plan, the main tower, and the corner towers.

The main entrance looks like a triumphal arch and faces east. It leads into the 2-story-high interior. The room on the upper floor above the entrance has been called the throne room, though this is by no means certain. This room is accessed through preceding rooms, and it has steps leading to window seats. The room's walls also accommodate the portcullis.

Looking at the castle on the outside, one can see a dividing line between the two floors. Frederick liked a mash-up of styles and particularly liked to borrow classical designs, especially those with a connection to the Roman Empire. Frederick also liked to reuse artworks from the ancient world, called spolia, as visible references to the past. There were probably reliefs and carvings on the walls of the courtyard, and some of the lions that were part of them remain.

Though Castle del Monte had plenty of rooms, scholars disagree as to how nice the accommodations were, and the functions of the rooms are still speculative. The interior rooms are trapezoid shaped, with square-shaped ribbed vaulting rising above. On the lower level, the vault rises from columns, with three-column bundles on the upper floors with finely worked capitals. The overall appearance has been likened to a Cistercian monastery, and there were such monasteries that might have been influences in central and southern Italy.

Castel del Monte is very geometric. It has eight 8-sided towers that meet an 8-sided main tower, and there are eight rooms at each level. This design is consistent with Frederick's enthusiasm for mathematics. The style would have also been influenced by a combination of Islamic and Norman architectures, already embedded within southern Italy. No geometric and symmetrical building plans like this exist in the Romanesque and Gothic designs of central Europe. There are some Romanesque and Gothic design features at Castel del Monte—the thick windows, archways, and columns are all recognizable features in northern Europe. And Frederick himself did build Romanesque-style castles, such as Castello di Lagopesole, which is only about 60 miles from Castel del Monte and dates to roughly the same period.

CASTELLO DI LAGOPESOLE

All of this is to say that Frederick was very cosmopolitan in his architectural influence. And that makes sense because Sicily had been a cosmopolitan place for many centuries —Normans, Byzantines, and Arabs all lived there. By the time of Norman rule, Sicily had been under Islamic influence for around 250 years. The Norman style of building in southern Italy exhibits these merged cultural traditions, and Frederick—who liked to connect himself visually to his Norman ancestors as well as to the Roman Empire—continued this established tradition.

Despite the beauty and grandeur of Castel del Monte, there's not much evidence that it was ever extensively used. It was one of Frederick's later constructions, begun in 1240 and probably completed around the time he died. And it was never a true residence; it had always been designed as a pleasure palace where Frederick hoped to pursue his main hobby—falconry. But the drama of his reign didn't leave a lot of time for leisurely pursuits. Most of Frederick's castles were to try and shore up his sprawling empire, particularly in northern Italy, where the lords were most resistant to imperial rule.

This castle was never finished, as Frederick died rather abruptly in December 1250, just shy of his 56th birthday. His son Conrad inherited the bulk of his titles along with the near-constant state of warfare with the papacy. But after just 4 years, Conrad died of malaria. His heir, Conradin, was just 2 years old and hardly in any position to defend the realm against so many threats. Within a few decades, most of the families' holdings, including the kingdom of Sicily, were lost. But even before these events, the lifestyle and cultural need for a castle like Castel del Monte died along with Frederick II.

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10

Monastic Castles of the Baltic and Cēsis

European expansionism under a religious banner was a common feature when Christians interfaced with pagans of any sort, not just Muslims and Jews in the East. And the medieval history of the eastern Baltic is dominated by the Northern Crusades, another series of religiously motivated wars that took place over the 12th and 13th centuries. Areas that were particularly affected included modern-day Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and parts of Poland, which were conquered, converted, and then colonized. This period of colonial settlement produced new towns and created a need for castles. This lecture looks at Livonia, an area where many Crusader castles were built, including Cēsis Castle, located in present-day Latvia.

THE LIVONIAN CRUSADE

By the late 12th century, almost all of Europe had converted to Christianity. Yet, there were still some pagans in northern Europe, particularly along the Baltic coast and Scandinavia. Missionaries in these regions had long sought to convert these pagans to Western—or Catholic—Christianity, and some had been martyred in the process. But neighboring lords and monarchs also saw these pagan regions as opportunities for expansion and trade.

Merchants had established routes into what is today Russia to obtain valuable products like furs and timber, but the pagans in between threatened these routes. There was also fear that the Russian principalities, which followed Eastern Orthodox Christianity, would convert these pagans first, thereby expanding their influence at the expense of Catholic Europe.

In 1193, Pope Celestine III announced an official Crusade against the northern pagans. There had already been some campaigns in the region, but now a new and much longer phase of the Northern Crusades, known as the Livonian Crusade, was about to begin.

A historical region that roughly encompasses the modern nations of Estonia and Latvia was named for the Livonians (Livs), who were among the native Baltic tribes of this area. In the 1180s, there had been a conversion mission to Livonia led by an Augustinian monk called Meinhard. He was accompanied by merchants eager to find new trade opportunities. This first mission and several others weren't particularly successful at converting the local population, but his fellow travelers saw the commercial possibilities.

The Livonian Crusade occurred at the height of the High Middle Ages—a period of urbanization, economic productivity, and centralization of political systems. In part, the Crusade was spurred on by the medieval climate anomaly, a period in which Europe was warmer than usual, which made the northern regions more amenable to crop cultivation. As a result, the lands of pagans became especially attractive. Thus, religious conversion and expansion into new fertile territories could be done hand in hand.

In 1198, the pope granted Crusading privileges to those who would go and fight to convert the Livs. And over the next century, Crusaders subjugated the Baltic coast from the Holy Roman Empire to Russia, with only the hinterlands of modern-day Lithuania holding out.

MILITARY ORDERS AND THEIR CASTLES

As in the Holy Land, military orders were formed to fight the Crusades and administer the conquered territories. The first was the Order of the Brothers of the Sword, or the Livonian Order, which was founded in 1202. They would be joined by the much larger and wealthier Teutonic Order in the 1230s. Having been largely expelled from the Holy Land by Muslim forces, the knights of the Teutonic Order now turned their eyes to new Crusading opportunities elsewhere in Europe. These orders merged militaristic culture with elements of monastic orders.

They were initially very successful against the pagan tribes, particularly as the Baltic tribes lacked access to technologies like heavy cavalry or siege equipment that the military orders had. In the first decades of the Crusade, the Order of the Brothers of the Sword conquered vast swathes of Livonia.

But they began to face more resistance as the Baltic tribes organized a united resistance and developed new tactics to counter the Crusader advantages. In 1236, while pushing into modern-day Lithuania, the order was dealt a stunning defeat at the Battle of Saule, in which their grand master and most of their knights were killed. With their ranks decimated, they merged into the Teutonic Order, becoming an autonomous branch known as the Livonian Order. Doing so placed the conquered lands of Livonia under the authority of the newly established Crusader state of the Teutonic Order, which would govern the region for the next 3 centuries.

The conversion of the local population was gradual, and it was hardly the only goal of the conquerors. The territories were completely reorganized, administered either directly by military orders or by newly established

bishoprics, archbishoprics, and monasteries. They invited German settlers to migrate into Livonia, and soon, Germans formed a new ruling and land-owning class. Meanwhile, the Baltic tribes, who still made up the majority of the population, became an underclass who worked the land and served the new elite. This new structure was economically supported by the German-led Hanseatic League, which established new trading ports and local branches in conquered settlements.

Castles were an integral part of these efforts to conquer the Baltic and reorganize its peoples and lands. Individual territories ruled directly by the military orders were governed by commanders (*Komtur* in German) and advocates (known as *Vogt*). These top officials were based in castles. Like in the Holy Land, these castles of the orders were more like fortified monasteries that managed resources and maintained security. Some of the conquered territory was placed into the hands of bishops and archbishops, whose castles sometimes combined their dual roles of religious conversion and military defense.

Livonian castles played a significant role in running an estate and its economy. The biggest economic changes seem to have occurred in the 14th century as the Hanseatic League extended its influence to an international market and sought more agricultural goods to trade. Efforts to completely control the region intensified.

CĒSIS CASTLE

Cēsis Castle is situated in the Gauja valley in present-day northeastern Latvia. With much of it remaining intact, it is today one of the best-preserved and most extensively excavated castles of the Livonian Crusade.

The Order of the Brothers of the Sword began construction of Cēsis Castle in the early 1200s, but it was not on a greenfield site. During the Iron Age, a tribe known as the Wends had occupied a hillfort close to where the medieval castle was later built. Around 1206, the Wends of the area converted to Christianity and chose to become allies of the Crusaders rather than fight them, and soon after, the Order of the Brothers of the Sword began living among them.

CĒSIS CASTLE

Cēsis was in a border area between the Livs (of which the Wends were part) and the Latgalians, so the order looked to reinforce its position here and selected a site that was already defended. According to *The Chronicle of Henry of Livonia*, the smallest castle in the land was built around 1209 on the site of the hillfort, and it was occupied until 1214 by both Wends and members of the order while the nearby stone castle was built. A town developed alongside the castle, and it received a charter in 1224.

In 1237, the Teutonic Knights took Cēsis Castle over from the Order of the Brothers of the Sword, and it became their seat in the Livonian region. It was significantly expanded over time. By the end of the 15th century, it was elevated to the branch master's main residence, and it remained one of the most important power centers in the eastern Baltic during the Teutonic Order's rule in Livonia.

Cēsis Castle is unusual because it has been so well studied archaeologically; it has been excavated most summers since the 1970s. More than 2 acres have been excavated—a huge area compared to the average archaeological site—and thousands of artifacts have been found in the process.

Excavations at Cēsis Castle have uncovered a large quantity of armor, including some very stylish examples, which suggests that the order may not have followed a strict monastic-style rule in practice.

The scale of the excavations has also allowed for scientific study of the plants and animals that were present at the time. As a result, scientists have unusually detailed information about environmental change over time in the surrounding parts of Livonia. Based on the density of artifacts and organic remains, scholars know that Cēsis Castle was intensively occupied.

Documentation dating to the 15th century states that the castle was a major grain storage center. Much of it would have come from the surrounding fields, but some of it would have been moved there using local and regional trade routes. Cēsis Castle was also situated on the important international trade routes of the Hanseatic League. The Hansa's trading networks were long, stretching from Russia through the Baltic and North Seas and into England and the Low Countries, meaning that the people who dwelled in Cēsis Castle had access to a wide range of trade stuffs.

LIVONIA AFTER THE CRUSADES

By the end of the Middle Ages, the Baltic region was well integrated into Christendom and formed the frontier between Catholic Christian Europe and the realms of Orthodox Christianity. The Northern Crusades had converted and subdued not only Livonia but also many areas around the Baltic Sea, including Prussia and Finland. Just about everywhere, similar patterns of colonization followed, with numerous castles around the region standing as testament to that history.

With their primary mission complete and the age of Crusading fading, the military orders became less religiously motivated in outlook and behavior. The Teutonic Order secularized entirely in 1525 when its last grand master converted to Protestantism and declared himself duke of Prussia. The Livonian Order became fully independent again and, in concert with the bishops and archbishops of the region, attempted to maintain power in Livonia. However, with the loss of the Teutonic Order and the decline of the Hanseatic League, they were militarily and economically vulnerable. By the 1550s, Livonia was plunged into a conflict known as the Livonian War, in which Russia, Sweden, Poland-Lithuania, and Denmark vied for control over the region.

Cēsis Castle was the site of sieges and battles as part of the Livonian War. The most famous of these incidents occurred in 1577, when it was besieged and bombarded for 5 days by Ivan the Terrible of Russia. This attack was so fearful for the castle's inhabitants that 300 of them decided to die by mass suicide by blowing themselves up with gunpowder.

Ultimately, Poland-Lithuania and Sweden triumphed in the war and partitioned the region among themselves. Cēsis was taken over by the Swedes, but they had limited use for it. Over the centuries, the castle was abandoned and fell into ruin. In the early 1900s, interest in the castle was revived. Locals made efforts to preserve it, and by the 1930s, it was a popular tourist attraction. However, World War II led to a period of anti-German sentiment during which Germanic medieval heritage was often ignored, neglected, or even destroyed. Under the subsequent Soviet occupation, many castles were damaged or pulled down. This fate did not befall Cēsis Castle, and hundreds of thousands of people visit it every year.

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11

Malbork and the Teutonic Castles of Prussia

This lecture looks at another castle of the Northern Crusades. Known today as Malbork Castle, it was historically called Marienburg Castle—named for the town in Prussia, now in Poland, that served as the overall headquarters of the Teutonic Order in the East. Like Cēsis Castle, Malbork Castle arose from the same religiously motivated process of warfare and colonization in northern and eastern Europe, but the brick castles of Prussia embody a fusion of military and religious architecture that makes them particularly distinctive and interesting.

CASTLE BUILDING IN PRUSSIA

Following their expulsion from the Holy Land, the Teutonic Knights took on a new mission and, after absorbing the Livonian Order, became the leading military order of the Northern Crusades. They formed a monastic state that stretched from the border of the Holy Roman Empire to the border of Russia. They were particularly active in the conversion and colonization of Prussia—a historical region of the south Baltic coast that is today in Poland— and the Russian exclave of Kaliningrad. Unlike Livonia, Prussia would be thoroughly Germanized by the Teutonic Knights, to the point where the preexisting Prussian culture and language of the region were completely extinguished.

Castles were not unknown in Poland before the start of the Northern Crusades. Scholars have debated whether proto-castles emerged as early as the 9th and 10th centuries. Certainly, by the later Middle Ages, earth-and-timber castles were being built in Poland, and some of them would be rebuilt in stone or brick. Castle building accelerated from the 14th century onward, when the Polish kingdom and then the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth became considerably more powerful and prosperous and castle ownership had spread from the upper nobility into the knightly classes.

Scholars have suggested that the Teutonic Knights' castles in Poland were adapted from those they occupied in the Holy Land, though the building materials available in the two places were very different. Some of the earliest castles built by the knights were just fortified enclosures with timber-framed buildings sitting on stone foundations. Others were mottes, and some had well-fortified outer baileys. Masonry or brick castles were built to replace earlier timber castles during periods of comparative stability, though timber castles were still used well into the 15th century.

A style of architecture known as Brick Gothic emerged. This style was particularly favored by the towns of the Hanseatic League, which in turn influenced a lot of the new construction in Prussia and the Baltic. The use of brick in Teutonic castles may have also been influenced by the Cistercian monasteries, which had previously been established in the region to convert the population.

The order's castles often followed a template—the main structure was generally square or rectilinear with a courtyard at the center and towers on the corners. The keep, sometimes called the *Hauptturm* in German, was usually in one of the corner towers. Changes could be made to the standard design depending on the needs of the castle and local demands.

GNIEW CASTLE

Like the other military orders, the Teutonic Knights incorporated many monastic aspects, and they were established as a religious corporation with property held in common by all of its members. Accordingly, the castles needed to be defensive sites and also include places of religious contemplation. And their standard design echoes that of medieval monasteries, with a central courtyard—known as a cloister—as the focal point along with a chapel, dormitory, refectory, and chapter house.

Their castles were also rife with art and architecture depicting themes like imposing order on chaos. The message here was a parallel to their imposition of Christianity over paganism, and they wanted their castles to represent a heavenly Jerusalem on earth.

MALBORK CASTLE

In Prussia, colonization was pursued much more aggressively than it was in Livonia, and German-speaking immigrants from Christian Europe were encouraged to settle on the newly conquered lands. Fortified places were built to safeguard new areas of colonization, often on existing fortified sites. These fortifications were communal projects, and as early as 1233, a papal bull called on the Dominican friars active in Prussia to preach that good Christians should go help build defensive buildings in exchange for a 20-day indulgence. No doubt the pope had the Teutonic Knights in mind when he called for this building program. In all, around 218 fortifications would be built in Prussia.

The grandest and most complex castles tended to be those associated with administration of the order. The way the knights held their lands in Prussia was unique in Europe—technically, the land they conquered from the Crusades became papal territories, held in trust by the order. But the effect of this was to make the grand master of the order the equivalent of any other lordly ruler. The order's territory was divided into commanderies, and the castles at the center of these were very impressive.

Most impressive of all was Malbork Castle, the grand master's headquarters. Malbork was built in the uplands of north Poland. It overlooks the Nogat River, a tributary of the Vistula River that has direct access to the Baltic Sea. The associated town was granted rights in 1286, and it was physically integrated with the castle through connected walls. Malbork Castle was originally called Marienburg Castle in recognition of the Virgin Mary, the order's patroness.

Malbork Castle is the largest brick fortification in the world. It covers about 50 acres in area and more than 60 acres if including the attached fortified town.

MALBORK CASTLE

What visitors see today is not how the castle first looked. Like so many historical monuments in Poland, the castle was partially destroyed during World War II and later restored. The earliest castle on the site was built around 1280 on the highest ground. The northern parts of the castle were built on lower ground with slopes leveled. Scholars don't know much about this earlier castle except for the occasional element preserved in the later building.

In 1309, the Teutonic Order permanently relocated its headquarters from Venice to Marienburg. The Crusaders had lost Acre—their last stronghold in the Holy Land—in 1291, so the shift reflects a wider change in worldview: not just from the Mediterranean to the Baltic but also from ideologues to landlords. It's not clear why Marienburg was selected, but the relocation prompted significant expansion of the preexisting castle, with major additions until the mid-15th century. The castle almost tripled in size and became not just the administrative headquarters for the order-state but also the center of huge commercial and provisioning networks.

Malbork is so large that scholars describe it as having three castle areas: the high, middle, and lower castles. The main castle is often referred to as the high castle. Scholars think the earliest parts of this castle to be built were the northern range, followed by the western range. This part was completely rebuilt after the first half of the 14th century and expanded northward to give river access. At around this time, the southern and eastern ranges were built alongside corner towers and cloister arcades. Other additions included a dormitory, a refectory, and a tower that operated as both a bell tower and watchtower.

There are several chapels on the site. The imagery focuses heavily on Mary. Artistic decoration gave an opportunity to visually convey political authority and remind everybody that the Teutonic Order started with the Crusades to the Holy Land.

The two large towers in the front of the high castle were built in the 15th century to flank the eastern end of a bridge crossing the Nogat River. Large semicircular towers and gun platforms were added to the bridge in response to the increased use of artillery.

The Great Refectory and the Grand Master's Palace were built in the 14th century on top of the older castle's outer bailey, which became the middle castle. The highly decorated refectory could hold around 250 brothers and was used as a feasting hall, a place for audiences, and the site of grand master elections. The Grand Master's Palace was later turned into a 4-story residential tower with decorated vaults. Attached to the palace was a chapel dedicated to Saint Catherine. There were numerous other buildings, too, including a bathing hall, a scriptoria for book and manuscript production, and the chancellery, which was the administrative headquarters of the order.

The lower castle was developed from the mid-14th century. It was initially used to store construction materials, but later it housed service buildings, including workshops. There was also a special building called a *karwan* that stored arms, and between 1364 and 1409, it held 240,000 of the documented 600,000 arrows and one-third of the armor held by the entire order.

Attached to the castle was the walled town, which had a grid plan. The only two intact buildings that survive today are a church dedicated to Saint John and a town hall. Documentation indicates that there was a school, where the wealthy populace sent their children to be educated alongside outside students who were probably hoping to join the order.

WARS WITH POLAND AND LITHUANIA

At the beginning of the 15th century, the Teutonic state and Malbork were at the height of their glory. But they were under significant pressure from increasingly hostile neighbors, namely Poland and Lithuania, who banded together and went to war with the Teutonic Order. In 1410, the two sides confronted each other at Tannenberg in one of the largest battles in medieval history. It was devastating for the knights—they lost their grand master along with much of their leadership and at least half of their army. While Malbork held out against a siege the next year, the order began to decline. The era of Crusading was over, and funding and recruits for the knights from the rest of Europe was dwindling.

The order became increasingly reliant on mercenaries to fight near-constant wars with Poland and Lithuania, and in the 1450s, they even sold several of their castles to pay them. In 1457, unpaid and unhappy mercenaries garrisoning Malbork struck a deal with the Polish king to effectively sell control of the castle to him, though it would take another 3 years for the Poles to secure the nearby town as well. With Malbork gone, the grand master moved to Königsberg, which in turn became the center of a much-reduced state. In 1525, its last grand master converted to Lutheranism and became a vassal of Poland.

As for Malbork Castle, it lost prominence after the Swedish wars of the 17th century. It came back into German hands in the 18th century, and in the 19th century, German nationalists saw it as an important monument and sought to undertake restoration, imaginatively rebuilding some sections in neo-Gothic nationalist styles. The structure was severely damaged during World War II, and extensive restorations were undertaken once again from the 1960s.

Malbork Castle became a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1997.

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12

Caernarfon and Edward I's Welsh Castles

The castles of King Edward I were built to subdue and integrate northern Wales into the English kingdom. This lecture explores Edward's approach to castle building and his inspiration for Caernarfon Castle, which stands above the others for its architecture, symbolism, and history. As cutting-edge examples of the military technology of their time, several of his castles today are commemorated as part of a World Heritage site.

THE BATTLE FOR NORTHERN WALES

Wales was no stranger to English castle building by the 13th century. The annexation of Wales into the English kingdom was a long and complex process that had begun in earnest when the Normans began to encroach into South Wales in the 11th century. Earth-and-timber castles proliferated as newly ennobled Anglo-Norman marcher lords established bases throughout the region to subdue the population and work the lands. By the end of the 13th century, southern Wales had been ruled by the English for some time.

In contrast, northern Wales remained firmly Welsh, both culturally and politically. This region was still ruled by native kingdoms and nobles. The principality of Gwynedd was foremost among these, and for more than 2 centuries, its rulers had resisted annexation by England and attempted to claw back Welsh territories. In the 1260s, Prince Llywelyn ap Gruffudd saw an opportunity when chaos broke out in England during the Second Barons' War and—after inflicting several defeats on the forces of King Henry III—successfully negotiated for official recognition as the prince of Wales in 1267.

But when Edward I succeeded the throne in 1272, hostilities resumed after Llywelyn did not attend the coronation and soon stopped making tribute payments. But Llywelyn did not necessarily have united Welsh support—in 1277, Edward marched on Gwynedd with a force that was more than half Welsh. Llywelyn had to accept a treaty with the English, and they claimed territory in Wales at his expense.

EDWARD'S CASTLE-BUILDING CAMPAIGN

Suspecting that peace would not last, Edward began building castles, including Flint and Rhuddlan. Even these early castles are impressive in their scale and ambition. Flint Castle featured three large defensive towers and a keep that was detached, with walls 23 feet thick at the base. Rhuddlan was a

concentric castle with an even more elaborate design, featuring an inner and outer wall surrounded by a moat on three sides and a river on the fourth. It also featured two large twin-towered gatehouses and two defensive towers around the diamond-shaped inner bailey.

In 1282, discontent among the southern Welsh princes and lords living under English rule encouraged Llywelyn ap Gruffudd's brother Dafydd to stage a rebellion, which turned out to be ill-fated and resulted in both of their deaths. The principality of Wales was annexed to the English crown, and the castle-building campaign really got underway. In addition to Flint and Rhuddlan, Conwy, Caernarfon, Harlech, and Beaumaris were the most ambitious of the new constructions. They were not just castles; they were the sites of a new political and social order in Wales.

Edward was supported in his efforts by a master builder-architect called James of St. George, who came from Savoy, which is located in parts of modern-day France, Italy, and Switzerland. James built castles there for the Savoyard counts before he arrived in Wales, where he was appointed Master of the King's Works in Wales. It's unusual for scholars to know who the architects were for even the grandest castles, but scholars know about James because of the level of documentation surviving from Edward's castle-building campaign. James's specialty was as a mason, or skilled stoneworker.

Scholars are not sure how much influence James had on the design of each castle, as Edward himself would have had many ideas. He had been on military campaign in France, and he went on Crusade to the Holy Land and Cyprus. There, he would have seen firsthand some of the most impressive fortifications to have existed in the Middle Ages and the very latest developments in military architecture. He also had prior experience in castle construction, as he had overseen the significant expansions to the Tower of London that had begun under his father. Consequently, Edward's new Welsh castles have Savoyard and French elements as well as English.

CAERNARFON CASTLE

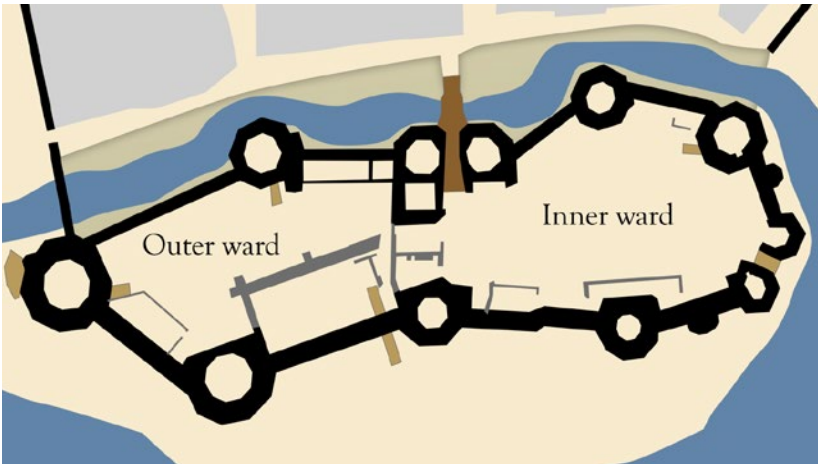
Based on surviving written documents, the most expensive of all the castles built during the campaign seems to have been Caernarfon Castle. The enormous investment was no accident—Caernarfon lay at the center of Gwynedd, the core territory of the Welsh princes of Wales. It was also the site of the Roman settlement of Segontium, whose remains were talked about in the Welsh saga *The Mabinogion*. One famous tale describes a fortified city at the river mouth with a great fort with towers of many colors. Inside the fort


CAERNARFON CASTLE

was a hall containing an ivory chair with the image of two eagles of gold on it. Edward may have deliberately set about realizing this story to help make him ruler over Wales in a way that followed the place's own legends.

The walls of the attached town were begun early in 1284. The river Seiont lies to the south, and a moat circles the rest of the castle. The town, located beyond the moat to the north, granted access to the castle—specifically to the King's Gate, a strong twin-towered gatehouse located between the two castle wards. The other gatehouse was called the Queen's Gate.

The castle itself has a figure-of-eight plan, split between an inner ward and an outer ward. It's not a perfectly symmetrical plan because it was designed to enclose an earlier motte castle built by the Normans in the late 11th century.



Caernarfon Castle has a geometric design, with hexagons and octagons dominating the layout throughout. There are seven polygonal mural towers surrounding the castle, the largest of which is the Eagle Tower. It had a doorway in the basement that allowed people to arrive by water. Some of Caernarfon's best rooms are within the Eagle Tower. They needed to be of a luxurious standard appropriate for the first justiciar, Otto de Grandson, Edward's close friend and main deputy in Wales.

The inner ward was the most exclusive part of the castle. It included the royal apartments. Most of the towers were well serviced with latrines and had pleasant chambers that could provide accommodation. Guests dining in the Great Hall, located along the southern wall of the outer ward, would have had an attractive view over the river. Aside from this, there are few surviving domestic areas outside of the mural towers.

Some of Edward's castles had impressive water features. At Caernarfon, rainwater was collected, channeled toward the Queen's Gate, and then piped into the kitchen to provide running water. At Beaumaris, a latrine pit was flushed by the tide entering and exiting the castle moat.

SYMBOLIC CONNECTIONS TO IMPERIAL ROME

Edward had a keen sense of architectural symbolism and calculated how this could play a role in the subjugation of Wales and its people, so he used Caernarfon as a weapon of propaganda. For example, the banded polygonal walls that are so unique to the castle feature alternating courses of light and dark stone. This was a way to visually tie his masterpiece to Christian Rome, as banding was common in medieval Italian architecture. The symbolism of Caernarfon's architecture was first analyzed by Arnold Taylor in the 1960s and is still a hot topic in castle studies today. Taylor connected Caernarfon's walls to the 5th-century Theodosian land walls of Constantinople, thus

linking northern Wales with the great city founded by Emperor Constantine as his "New Rome." Buildings from Roman Britain may also have provided inspiration, especially the Multangular Tower in York.

Caernarfon Castle might even reflect Edward's concept of chivalry and his interest in Arthurian romance literature. In 1283, workers conveniently discovered the remains of Magnus Maximus, who was reburied in the new church. He was the legendary father of the Roman emperor Constantine and purported great-grandfather of King Arthur. In one handy move, Edward linked the history of his castle not just to imperial Rome but also to works of famous medieval literature.

Caernarfon Castle was the only one of the Edwardian Welsh castles to be militarily challenged during the Middle Ages.

Furthermore, eagles—the symbol of imperial Rome—were employed pretty much everywhere throughout the castle. The hall with eagles on the chair described in *The Mabinogion* was made reality: The Eagle Tower was so named deliberately, and it was to have a triplet of turrets, each with an eagle on top. And this tower was to be the residence of the justiciar—the king's number one representative in Wales. The eagle imagery was to support his authority in a newly conquered land. And just to make sure Edward's long-term intent was clear, he arranged for the birth of his youngest child on the castle building site and gave him the title of prince of Wales.

This symbolism cut both ways, though, and it made Caernarfon a target for Welsh discontent with the new English order. In 1294, a Welsh uprising broke out, and the castle, still under construction, was captured and held for 6 months. This did a lot of damage to both castle and town defenses as the Welsh set fire to the buildings and deliberately pulled down other parts.

When the English reoccupied it the following year, in 1295, they started another major rebuilding phase. But when the First War of Scottish Independence broke out the next year, it diverted attention and funding, so building was less intense this time. The conflict dragged on for decades, and in 1307, Edward I died of dysentery while on campaign near the Scottish border. Work on the castle continued during the reign of Edward II, but royal finances were strained due to ongoing wars with Scotland and France as well as international rebellions. When his son, Edward III, assumed rule in his own right in 1330, construction on the Welsh castles was stopped altogether.

Despite all the effort to connect the English monarchy to Rome and to legends of literature, Caernarfon Castle went largely unused for monarchic pageantry. It did not become a major royal castle, and it was visited by a monarch just once between the 14th century and the early 20th century.

Its symbolic power was revived in 1911, when, in a grand reimagining of medieval Welsh traditions, the future Edward VIII was invested as the prince of Wales in the castle. An investiture was conducted there again in 1969 for Prince Charles, now Charles III. Intended to reinforce the legitimacy of royal authority and a sense of unity amid nationalist tensions in Wales, these ceremonies rather neatly mirrored the original intent behind the castle's construction.

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13

Lordly Landscapes and Leeds Castle

This lecture takes a deep dive into the ways that castles transformed the countryside surrounding them. Some landscapes were designed to assert power and authority or to extract the agricultural potential of the land, while others were decorated with garden and water features for pleasure and enjoyment. Leeds Castle in England offers great examples of a variety of landscapes, so that will be of special focus here.

LORDLY LANDSCAPES

Looking at how castles left physical traces on their surroundings can tell scholars a lot about how their occupants saw their social, economic, and political uses. Most castles were manorial centers, around which a castle lord often rented his landholdings to peasants and tenants, who owed him a range of rents and labor obligations in exchange. The lord's peasants likely lived close by the castle, so the locations of castles often influenced the distribution of villages and other rural settlements.

Because the people living in these rural settlements were mainly employed in agriculture, the lord needed to ensure the landscape surrounding his castle could support peasant employment. Therefore, mills for grinding grain would have been located on a stretch of river the lord controlled, and granaries or barns would have stored harvested crops on his lands. Ponds, reservoirs, and wells might have been dug to control and provide water, and tracks and roads would have been hewn out to facilitate peasants, animals, and carts transporting crops and people across the estate. Pastureland may have been cleared for the animals of the village and the manor, or woodlands might have been retained and managed for hunting or timber collection.

Beyond the broader estates, castles shaped the land around the complex itself. Many castles featured a designed landscape or a landscape of lordship, in which powerful lords altered the activities and features around their castle for their own benefit—oftentimes for their pleasure and leisure. As castles became increasingly associated with residential rather than defensive purposes, the emphasis on sculpted landscapes, pleasure gardens, hunting forests, and serene water features around a castle also increased.

The day-to-day activities surrounding and supporting a castle had a big impact on how the land was used, and the landscape could be dramatically transformed to support the local manorial economy.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF LEEDS CASTLE

Leeds Castle, in Kent, England, has a particularly watery landscape. The castle was built in the 12th and 13th centuries, though much of the building that visitors see today is not medieval—rather, it was built in the 19th century in a medieval style. However, the castle's surroundings are still quite medieval in appearance.

The castle's location made it fairly accessible to London and the center of the royal court. A stronghold existed in Kent before the arrival of the Normans, who likely built a motte and bailey on the site. After Queen Eleanor of Castile, the wife of King Edward I, acquired the site in the 13th century, a royal stone castle began to take shape. When Eleanor died in 1290, the castle was granted to Queen Margaret of France, the queen dowager of King Edward I, and she held it until her death in 1318. That same year, the ambitious and influential courtier Bartholomew de Badlesmere offered to purchase it from King Edward II for three times more than its value as an economic estate. Shortly after purchasing it, de Badlesmere was named seneschal—a senior administrative and legal role in Edward's household—so the purchase was an investment in a way.

This transaction annoyed Edward II's wife, Isabella of France, who had expected Leeds to become her castle. Angry at being overlooked, Isabella showed up at the castle with her retinue in 1321, demanding admission. Bartholomew de Badlesmere wasn't home at the time, and his wife, Margaret, was in charge. Margaret refused admission to the queen, which did not go well—a ruckus at the barbican followed, and some of Isabella's party were killed or injured. News of the altercation made it back to Edward II, who dispatched men to force Margaret to give in. For her defiance, she spent a year in the Tower of London. Queen Isabella became the main power in England for a time after her husband was murdered in 1327, possibly at her arrangement, and she made Leeds Castle her primary residence.

GARDENS, ORCHARDS, AND DEER PARKS

Until fairly recently, garden history held that large-scale formal gardens arrived with the Renaissance. However, further study of historical and archaeological sources has shown that to be untrue. Descriptions of medieval gardens abound in literature and art, with allusions to the Garden of Eden being a popular trope. Because gardens have been associated with women, scholars often look for gardens when attempting to locate female spaces in castle complexes.

Gardens in medieval designed landscapes were often square or rectangular areas enclosed by a hedge or a wall, and the plants and spaces within the area were geometrically arranged. Small, enclosed gardens known as herbers or herbaria would be by the castle, along with a kitchen garden. Occasionally, living apartments were arranged around a castle garden for the pleasing views and aromas. In addition, walkways, terraces, and observation platforms could have been used to create an ornamental landscape.

Deer parks were designed to contain animals for hunting, but such parks could also have ornamental gardens, fruit trees, rabbit warrens, fishponds, dovecotes, beehives, and stud farms.

Orchards also existed, though the term could mean different things in the Middle Ages—a field growing fruit, a small woodland containing fruit trees, or a garden with fruit plants. Blossoming fruit trees were also very ornamental in the spring, and some orchards were bound by hedges, walls, or even moats to accentuate their beauty and create pleasant walkways through them.

Deer parks became popular in England the 12th century. Fences, walls, ditches, and embankments were often used to contain the animals, and a variety of landscapes could be found within the parks, from open lawns to dense woodlands. Hunting deer on horseback was an exclusively lordly pursuit—one that kept the men up to date on their war training and allowed them to exhibit chivalric behavior. Hunting was also closely associated with hospitality and entertainment, and venison was considered a high-status food.

Even more impressive than having a deer park was having a private forest, sometimes called a chase. Today, people associate the word *forest* with trees and woodland; however, in the Middle Ages, it tended to refer to the legal right that the crown had over the trees or woodland, so such areas were often called royal forests. Up to one-quarter of the land in England was retained as crown forest, which gave the king the right to hunt in those areas. But this land was also used for ordinary daily activities and provided space for villages and farms.

Today, scholars can find deer parks based on place-name evidence, documentary references, and occasionally physical remains. Leeds Castle had a park, mentioned in documents as being wooded, so it might have been used for hunting and managed for timber.

WATER FEATURES

Natural and artificial water features were common in castle landscapes. Many castles had moats, which were not only powerful symbols of a lordly landscape and nominally defensive but also important to the residential and economic life of the castle. For example, Leeds Castle had a corn mill that was located by the main gate and fed by its moat.

Moats were also used to store fish, which medieval people consumed often, especially during times of religious fasting. Sea fishing became a big part of the medieval economy, and freshwater fish, such as carp, trout, and salmon, were farmed on a commercial scale. Lords might go to great lengths to hold the rights to a river weir or to have their own fishponds, which were called stagna and vivaria in documentary sources. These ponds were artificially constructed and frequently complex, requiring huge expenditures for building, stocking, and cleaning.

Leeds Castle has a large irregular lake that was used to stock fish. Created by Queen Eleanor between 1278 and 1280, the lake has an elaborate setup. The castle is located on two islands in an artificial lake in a valley, with the water controlled by sluice gates and banks. The larger island was walled with round towers and had a barbican, which was divided into three parts by wet ditches.

On the smaller island was a gloriette—a summerhouse or pavilion that served as a viewing platform. It was created by King Edward I for Queen Eleanor between 1279 and 1288. In Britain, the term *gloriette* was often used to mean

luxurious upper chambers in high-status buildings, and the gloriette at Leeds Castle has royal apartments in it. The gloriette was at the most secluded part of the castle—an island-like enclosure linked to the rest of the castle by a bridge. Only three examples of gloriettes in Britain have been identified, including the one at Leeds.

LORDLY ANIMALS

Rabbit warrens were often found on a castle's marginal land because rabbits were desirable for their meat, fur, and skins. Medieval warrens could be enormous, and some survive in the landscape even today—archaeologists call them pillow mounds.

Another lordly animal was the pigeon, or dove, desirable for its meat as well as its manure, which was used in gardens as fertilizer. Pigeons were kept in special houses called dovecotes, which could be quite elaborate, especially in the later Middle Ages. Because dovecotes could be ornate and housed birds associated with lordship, they were located in prominent places, such as gardens, and they were planned in conjunction with a new castle build from the outset.

DOVECOTE

During the Renaissance, the attitude toward castle landscapes changed radically, and enormous ornamental gardens became all the rage. Renaissance gardens completely transformed the perception of the aristocratic landscape and continue to do so today. But in recent decades, researchers have uncovered the landscapes of the past and have recreated medieval gardens more fitting to the eras in which the castles were first constructed. And scholars have found that these earlier landscapes, like the castles themselves, played diverse and multifaceted roles to support the communities around them.

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14

Bodiam and the Symbolic Power of Castles

Bodiam Castle, in the South of England, is one of the most intensely debated castles among scholars. Some see Bodiam Castle as an excellent poster castle for the military and defensive castles, while others contend that its apparent defensiveness is all for show and that the castle was designed to convey a symbolic message. These different interpretations of the castle's architecture reflect a broad range of views about what makes a castle a castle and how scholars use archaeological, architectural, and historical evidence. Bodiam Castle is often used when teaching people about the roles of castles in the Middle Ages because it so perfectly encapsulates the complexity of medieval society. The goal of this lecture is to challenge you to think about where the line is between what's real and what's symbolic in castles.

MOCK CASTLES

In many ways, castles continue to be symbols of power, strength, security, and permanence—as evidenced by the fact that decades after the defensive usefulness of castles had passed, some aristocratic constructions continued to incorporate features of castle architecture, such as towers and crenellations. Examples of these mock castles, as they're sometimes called, can be found all over the world, from the almost tasteful to the downright hideous. Castles also appear in other symbolic places, such as coats of arms, corporate logos, and military insignia.

It's easy to see through mock castles today because most of their defensive architecture has been rendered irrelevant by modern military technology, such that anyone building castles today must be doing so purely for symbolic, aesthetic, or perhaps nostalgic reasons. But how could scholars tell whether a medieval construction was a mock castle?

For example, at first glance, Castello di Fénis, in the Valle d'Aosta of Italy, looks like a textbook castle from the Middle Ages—it has towers, curtain walls, crenellations, and so on. It was built by the noble Challant family in the early 14th century.

But something is amiss in the castle's location—it was not built in a particularly defensible place, even though there were plenty of hillsides and high promontories in the area. Instead, it was built on a small knoll down in the valley, close to the nearby settlements, which suggests that the castle was intended to be seen by the local population.

Some scholars have argued that the castle is almost ostentatious in its defensive architecture. It has a concentric design of two curtain walls and a seemingly excessive number of towers for its relatively small size. The battlements seem to be exaggerated, too, with tall merlons that make the crenellations visible from far away. The merlons are also topped with the shape of a fishtail, which advertised that the owners were Ghibellines, an important political faction in 14th-century Italy.

CASTELLO DI FÉNIS

There are seven towers around the keep, which has seven chambers on each floor, and a person must go through seven doors to get to the inner courtyard, which features elaborate frescoes of chivalric and Christian themes as well as characters holding scrolls that bear proverbs and prophecies. Because of its symbolism, many scholars have concluded that the castle was mostly for show.

BODIAM CASTLE AS A MARTIAL MARVEL

Located to the south of London in Sussex, Bodiam Castle also looks much like a textbook castle, with a quadrangular plan and a wide moat. It has been called an old soldier's dream home, and its builder, Sir Edward Dalyngrigge, was indeed an old soldier. He'd made his fortune while fighting in France during the Hundred Years' War, and upon returning to England, he married Elizabeth, whose family held the manor of Bodiam in East Sussex. Dalyngrigge would build his castle on her ancestral estate.

BODIAM CASTLE

Bodiam's walls were specially constructed so that they appear to rise directly out of the moat, which creates the impression that the castle is joined to its reflection. This picturesque view can be captured when photographed from the right angle.

First, Dalyngrigge needed permission from the king to build his castle—an official document called a license to crenellate. This license stated that Bodiam had a military purpose: to defend the countryside and provide resistance against enemies. What could be clearer as to Bodiam's martial role than an actual document providing its justification?

Bodiam is close to the south coast of England, an area that the English feared was susceptible to French naval attacks. It stands to reason that Dalyngrigge would have appreciated the need for a solid castle at a potential flashpoint. Bodiam Castle is by the river Rother, which was navigable as far as Bodiam. Boats could enter the river from two important ports at its mouth: Rye

and Winchelsea. By the time the castle was built, Dalyngrigge was already involved in the fortifying and walling of Rye, which suggests that a stronghold was needed to defend the river. Accordingly, the bridge that crossed the river at the castle had defenses added to it, reinforcing the sense that Bodiam Castle was intended to serve a defensive purpose at a key strategic location.

Bodiam Castle also has a wide moat surrounding it. The goal of moats was simply to keep mining or besieging equipment at a distance, and large irregular lakes—which Bodiam's moat was—were theoretically better for that kind of defense. The watery surrounds also complicated the approach to the castle, which would have slowed down attackers and left them vulnerable to counterattack. The castle's quadrangular plan would have also allowed for the movement of a small group of defenders.

By the 14th century, gatehouses were the height of castle fashion. At Bodiam, the main gatehouse is in the north wall and is accessed over a causeway that passes through a barbican. The entrance of the main gatehouse is flanked by two rectangular towers that are machicolated and contain many arrow slits as well as early examples of handgun loops—indicators of the transition to gunpowder-based warfare. Within the main gatehouse are three doors, three portcullises, and murder holes in the vaulting.

As a residence, Bodiam Castle was extremely comfortable by the standards of the day. The interior of the castle was dominated by a courtyard, which was surrounded by domestic buildings. All the hospitality elements were conveniently grouped together on the south side, where the great hall and kitchen were located. The lodgings were on the east side of the courtyard and the chapel on the north side. Servants' accommodations and garrison barracks were located on the west side.

Bodiam Castle is unusual in that its latrines discharged directly into the moat, making it more of an open sewer. In most castles, the latrines emptied down the sides of the walls—an image that might make one rethink the appearance of castles in their heyday.

BODIAM CASTLE AS A SYMBOLIC STRUCTURE

While Bodiam Castle's defensive credentials seem impeccable, some scholars argue that the castle emphasized symbolism above all else. Historians tend to see the written word, such as Dalyngrigge's license to crenellate from King Richard II, as being supreme. However, the license contains some inaccuracies, including a description of the castle as being by the sea, which it is not. It's also worth noting that Dalyngrigge had garnered prestige and recognition from the king for his role in helping to put down the Peasants' Revolt in 1381, and the license may have been more of a reward for a loyal and talented solider than a plan for a new strategic strongpoint in the south.

Bodiam's moat is another point of contention. Despite its width, the moat wasn't defensive at all. It is held back by an earthen bank that is undefended, and there's no indication that there were ever palisades atop it. But Bodiam is not unique in this sense, and the perception of a moat as primarily defensive is problematic because it overlooks all the practical uses of moats.

Recall that there were many arrow slits and even gun loops at Bodiam Castle. Despite the number, most of the arrow slits wouldn't have been suitable for archers because the slits wouldn't have provided a useful line of sight. It's not enough to simply have holes in a castle wall—the holes need to be planned out so that archers can take aim at the places where enemy troops are likely to congregate. In addition, Bodiam's towers would not have provided flanking cover, and they're overlooked by higher land in the vicinity—not a great defensive tactic because of the risk from enemy siege equipment or missile troops firing from above and over the top of the walls. Scholars have also argued that the battlements at roof level were not high enough to cover a man.

Furthermore, the castle's exterior displayed a great deal of imagery, and heraldry was prominently located and highly visible. Such displays make Dalyngrigge seem a bit desperate to make a connection and claim between himself and more powerful people. His dovecote was also highly visible, located in the upper part of the southwest tower where everyone could see his pigeons.

In 1988, the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments undertook a survey that identified a complex series of earthworks facing the moat and castle. The commission concluded that these earthworks were part of a purposely designed landscape that included things like fishponds and cascades. Such features were pretty, provided food, and had clear associations with lordly land possession. To the north of the castle was an ornamental terrace that gave the best view of the castle. Initially, scholars thought these earthworks were built as platforms for artillery during the English Civil Wars, but excavations have shown that a banqueting hall was located there, allowing people to dine and admire the castle and its reflection in the moat.

The earthworks around the castle were also likely intended to control how people moved around it. The original approach to the castle was very rigid, but the modern approach deviates to go over the moat. Scholars have debated whether the approach was designed to funnel enemies into one place or to allow for different views of the castle. Bodiam may have had two routes to the castle, depending on the social status of the person approaching. The grand approach was a route with clear walkways that passed by fishponds. A lower-status route came from the mill, through the village, and entered the castle through the postern gate. As a result, medieval interpretations of the site could have depended on who was doing the viewing.

A lot of the scholarship involving Bodiam Castle recognizes that interpretations of the castle can go either way. Charles Coulson, for instance, said that this variable perspective helps people appreciate how significant castles were to those who lived in them and how influential they were to all walks of life at the time. Coulson concluded that Bodiam Castle was built out of pride, not out of fear.

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15

Carcassonne, Visby, and Urban Fortifications

Carcassonne is one of the most visited sites in France and arguably one of the greatest examples of concentric fortification in the West. Although the town and castle were conceived together and built in tandem, most people are more familiar with the walled city, the Cité de Carcassonne, than with the castle. This lecture explores the Cité and other medieval city fortifications to see how they fit into the history of castles. It also considers the challenges that scholars face when trying to preserve and restore an unknowable past.

MEDIEVAL CITY FORTIFICATIONS

City fortifications receive less scholarly attention than castles, and despite the ubiquity of such fortifications in medieval Europe, few survive today. Most European cities have long since outgrown the fortifications that were originally built around them. And as cities grew and the nature of warfare changed, medieval fortifications often became nuisances rather than necessities. Walls would gradually disappear as city blocks expanded, roads were widened, or sections were plundered for building material. Crumbling walls could become hazards to surrounding people and structures, and maintaining them could be costly; it was often easier to remove them entirely.

Not all medieval towns would have had walls, but many hundreds of settlements of all sizes across Europe were fortified with walls of stone in the Middle Ages. Building the walls tended to be the easy bit—the hardest and most expensive elements of city fortifications were the towers, just as at castles. Fortified towns tended to have D-shaped or semicircular mural towers, but other defensive features common to castles could be added, such as crenellation, moats, and gatehouses. Nondefensive buildings and houses could also be built against the walls.

Towers and gatehouses were also used to control entry into the city and thus served as clearing points for tolls to access the town's marketplace. Most medieval towns would charge a murage tax for town wall upkeep.

City towers could be rented out or used for commercial purposes, possibly to offset building and maintenance costs. Geoffrey Chaucer rented a mural tower while he was employed as the customs comptroller for the Port of London.

VISBY'S WALLS AND TOWERS

Some of the best preserved and documented medieval walls and towers are to be found in Visby on the island Gotland, which is part of Sweden. Visby was a booming merchant town that was part of the Hanseatic League, and its great wealth and importance prompted the construction of elaborate city fortifications. But beginning in the late 15th century, the town fell into decline after several wars and redirection of Baltic trade routes. As a result, Visby experienced little urban growth or development, which left most of the walls intact.

Documentary and archaeological evidence have revealed that Visby's mural towers and gates served a variety of purposes. The tower known as the Butter Box, which didn't seem to have anything to do with butter, was largely defensive, designed to provide flanking fire to the walls. The Mill Tower

contained mills for grinding malt and grain. Several other towers and wall buildings were also used for processing raw materials, such as the Tar Boiler's House and the Fish Oil Tower. The Kajsarn Tower may have stored goods or served as the town's arsenal—later, it became the town prison. Some of the taller towers were also used for signaling or even as navigation aids for incoming ships.

The North Gate was defensive and designed to be manned by a garrison, but it also included a slot for a toll barrier so that merchants and visitors could be appropriately charged. Announcements by the magistrate and other local officials would be posted on the gate.

THE FORTIFIED CITY OF CARCASSONNE

Carcassonne is in the South of France, in a region historically known as Languedoc. It sits high up on an escarpment over the river Aude in the mountains of Corbières. The first signs of human settlement there date to around 3500 BCE, and there was probably a proto-hillfort type of fortification on the site as early as 600 BCE. When the Romans moved into Gaul, they established a fortified town on the current site of Carcassonne, and by the 4th century CE, a system of Roman stone walls and towers had been built there. The town's population likely swelled in the High Middle Ages, as it was the seat of both a count and a bishop and was an important center of trade in the region.

In the early 12th century, Carcassonne passed into the hands of the Trencavels, a prominent noble family of Languedoc who held several other important viscounties. The Trencavels had great ambitions for their new town and began a program of construction that included new fortifications atop the remains of the Roman walls. By 1209, the escarpment probably had a single wall surrounding it with mural towers.

CITÉ DE CARCASSONNE

Carcassonne is unusual in how well its communal city walls and defenses have been studied, but it's also famous and controversial for its extensive, and arguably misguided, attempts to restore it to what was imagined to be its medieval appearance.

A fortified area of a town or city was known in Old French as a *cité*; hence, the Cité de Carcassonne refers to the fortified settlement atop the escarpment. This distinction is important because, over time, the city would grow beyond the escarpment and into surrounding suburbs.

By the standards of the day, Carcassonne's walls were unusually impressive. They were between 60 and 115 feet high and 6 to 10 feet thick. Built into these walls were about 40 mural towers, most of which were semicircular and stood up to 50 feet high. A number of knights were responsible for each tower, and in return, they were given a house in the Cité and lands outside the walls.

Two rings of walls can be seen today. The inner wall has 26 rounded towers, some of which have incorporated building materials from the Roman period. The outer wall is longer than the inner wall and has 19 towers. An external moat, barbicans, and gates were added in different periods.

Around 1120, the Trencavels began constructing the castle at Carcassonne, which is often overlooked by the fame of the walled city, but it was an integral part of the city. Indeed, the castle's western wall that overlooks the river Aude is part of the city walls, and evidence suggests that only a wooden palisade separated the castle from the rest of the city. In other words, the city walls were also the walls protecting the castle and its inhabitants. Much of the castle was later constructed by the French kings.

THE CATHAR HERESY AND CRUSADE

Not long after the Trencavels began building up the Cité, Carcassonne would become swept up in one of the great controversies of medieval France—Catharism. The Cathar heresy was present across much of southern Europe, but it was deep-seated in Languedoc. Catharism was particularly associated with the Trencavel lordship, and Carcassonne was therefore considered the center of the heresy.

The origins of Catharism are obscure, but it was deemed heretical because it stated that there is a god of good and a god of evil. This dualistic belief distinguished between spirit and matter—all matter was created by Satan, the god of evil, and thus all matter was evil. This belief became problematic for the church because it meant the Cathars believed that Jesus was never human but ever a god. And as the church was not a spirit but rather a real organization, it was also considered matter and thus evil. So, the Cathars aspired to free themselves from a material life and return to an earlier type of Christianity that was more ascetic.

Despite vigorous attempts to suppress the movement and burn prominent heretics, by the turn of the 13th century, Catharism had a solid following in southern France, and it was gaining traction in neighboring regions, including northern Italy. In 1209, Pope Innocent III declared a Crusade against the Cathars—the goal was to crush the movement and remove the nobles of the region who had been protecting it.

While many towns immediately surrendered to the Crusaders, Raymond-Roger Trencavel, the viscount of Carcassonne, refused to capitulate and instead prepared the city for siege. In August 1209, the Crusaders surrounded Carcassonne and blocked its access to the river, limiting the water supply. Eventually, the Crusaders attacked, taking the suburbs first and then assaulting the Cité's walls with catapults.

The siege quickly led to appalling conditions inside the walls, where the Cité's inhabitants were sheltering with an additional 15,000 to 20,000 people who had fled the surrounding countryside. Realizing the hopelessness of the situation, Raymond-Roger surrendered himself, and the city and castle were taken by the Crusaders. The population was allowed to leave, but Raymond-Roger died in the city's prison 3 months later.

DECLINE, RESTORATION, AND CONTROVERSY

In 1247, Carcassonne was annexed by the French king and became a royal city. Around the same time, a new town of Carcassonne was founded on the plain below the old city. The Cité was still one of the best-equipped strongholds in the kingdom, with a large garrison and stores for a siege, and it also continued serving various administrative roles for the region. Even so, the Cité lost a lot of trade and business to the new city and began to fall into decline.

In the 17th century, the border between France and Spain had shifted farther south, so there was little need to maintain Carcassonne as a major fortification. Around the same time, the administrative functions of the Cité were moved into new buildings in the lower town. With its narrow streets and difficulty of access up the hill, the Cité became an unattractive place to live, and wealthier residents moved out.

By the 19th century, it had become a slum, home mostly to poor workers, and proposals were made to demolish the old Cité entirely. However, efforts by scholars and locals to save it came to the attention of Emperor Napoleon III, who was fond of funding projects to save French heritage. And the emperor's right-hand man in this task was an architectural scholar and engineer named Eugène-Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc.

Viollet-le-Duc wanted the restoration to be educational, and he wanted the Cité to become a major tourist destination. In 1855, his work began with the restoration, consolidation, and roofing of the mural towers, which were completed by 1910. From this date, he also undertook annual wall repairs. The castle was also restored, with various buildings within the bailey reconstructed based partially on evidence from a fire.

But almost as soon as work began, Viollet-le-Duc's approach was controversial. His restorations were criticized as erroneous, fanciful, or inaccurate to the period. He was also criticized for his harsh treatment of the poor people who lived in the old city.

This controversy raises important questions not only about the degree to which scholars should attempt to restore the past but also about how they assess the authenticity of restorations. Given the state of the Cité in the 19th century, it's quite possible that it would have been demolished entirely but for the restorations. Moreover, Viollet-le-Duc's goal of turning the city into a tourist attraction was met: More than 2 million people visit every year, providing funds to continue its maintenance. Yet, Carcassonne has been described as too pretty to accurately reflect medieval reality—a Disneyfied version of a medieval walled city that reinforces the mythologization of castles and the Middle Ages and draws attention, tourists, and funding away from sites that more accurately reflect the medieval past.

Carcassonne became a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1997. Today, restoration work is done to match Viollet-le-Duc's plan, as his vision is now an indelible part of the city's history.

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16

Widows, Inheritance, and Chepstow Castle

Inheritance was a big deal in medieval Europe, and many conflicts of the era began as fights between sons and brothers over succession. But widows could also play an influential role in inheritance disputes and the fates of large estates. This lecture considers the experiences of heiresses and widows in the Middle Ages and explores several castles—including Chepstow, in South Wales—that were inherited by Isabel de Clare, fourth countess of Pembroke and Striguil.

MEDIEVAL LAWS OF INHERITANCE

In medieval law, many jurisdictions made an allowance for a wife to retain a share of her deceased husband's property to support her in widowhood. This provision, known as dower, could be very complicated and varied significantly across Europe. In English common law, widows retained an interest in one-third of their deceased husband's goods and properties for the rest of their lives, meaning that a widow could hold large parcels of land within an estate otherwise inherited by another heir, such as her husband's brother or son. Sometimes, widows would sell their interest in lands or other assets to an outside lord and use the revenue as a kind of retirement package or pension.

Dower provisions could include castles, and even when ownership didn't pass to a widow, she could retain the right to reside in them. Such scenarios could have major impacts on castle occupancy and could deny the male heir access to their castle until they were able to secure a suitable residence for the widow, known as a dower house.

Such legalities were supposed to protect a vulnerable group in society, and although some widows became wealthy, they were still vulnerable to jealousy and intrigue. Daughters who inherited castles or interests in estates had similar experiences, with distant male relatives contesting the legitimacy of their inheritance. Rich heiresses and widows were often used as economic and social pawns and were pressured to marry and remarry. Marriage could at least protect them from an unscrupulous and increasingly litigious medieval society.

A quick way for a man to gain access to the ranks of privilege in the Middle Ages was to kidnap an heiress and force her into marriage. Many reports of such abductions exist, though they were often called elopements.

Elite women would usually be married around the ages of 17 to 24, but an heiress could expect to be married as early as age 14 to a much older man seeking wealth or to consolidate his own situation. This age gap is why many wealthy women remarried multiple times—they simply tended to outlive their husbands, even considering the risks of childbirth. As a result, inheritances could get really complicated between multiple extended families.

ISABEL DE CLARE

Heirs and heiresses who were not yet of age to fully control their own inheritances had guardians appointed for them. However, many guardians sought to profit themselves, and the terms of the wardship could be open to negotiation. To get around the potential for neglect, heirs were sometimes granted their lands before they came of age. In these situations, the crown usually determined that the lands were too vulnerable and thus needed careful supervision, ideally from their rightful holder. Such was the case of Isabel de Clare, one of the greatest heiresses of her day.

Due to the unexpected death of her brother, the teenaged Isabel had inherited massive lands stretching across countries. The crown took a particular interest in Isabel's future because so much of her land was in politically unstable places, most notably Ireland and Wales. As a young heiress, Isabel was placed into the king's custody in England, where she was part of the royal household until she married.

King Richard I picked William the Marshal to marry Isabel. William came from a noble family but had no title or landholdings of his own; however, he had ambition, political talent, and martial prowess that impressed the king. When they married in 1189, William was at least 25 years older than Isabel. The marriage made him suddenly rich, and he received the title of lord of Striguil. A decade later, he was raised to earl of Pembroke. Despite the big age gap between Isabel and William, the arranged marriage seemed successful. William appeared to have been careful to include Isabel as an active participant in the administration of her lands, and he at least recognized her role in his success, reportedly stating he had nothing "save through her."

It was not the first time a woman in Isabel's family had been used as a reward; her mother, Aoife, had been too. She was the daughter of Dermot MacMurrough, the king of Leinster in Ireland, who promised her—and the throne—to the earl of Striguil, Richard de Clare, nicknamed Strongbow. In effect, the whole kingdom of Leinster was Aoife's dowry! But when MacMurrough died in 1171, the clan chiefs of Leinster declared MacMurrough's son Domhnall, not Strongbow, as their new king in accordance with customary Irish law.

Strongbow and Aoife negotiated with Henry II of England, who intervened to legitimize Strongbow's retention of their vast holdings in Ireland through his wife's claim and declared him lord of Leinster. Strongbow died in 1176, and his son Gilbert died young in 1185, leaving Isabel as the sole surviving heir. And although Ireland became her best-known inheritance, Isabel was now part of an international landowning class, with properties stretching across Ireland, England, France, and Wales.

Isabel knew how to be powerful in a militaristic society, especially when it involved protecting what was rightly hers. She also knew the importance of castles, and she and William had other strategically located castles built alongside those she inherited.

CHEPSTOW CASTLE

Chepstow Castle, located in Monmouthshire, Wales, is one of Isabel's more famous castles. It was known as Striguil by the Normans. The masonry castle sits on cliffs that rise above the river Wye. The earliest castle on the site was built between 1067 and 1071 by William FitzOsbern, who was a powerful supporter of William the Conqueror. FitzOsbern had been placed on the border with Wales to protect important Norman centers in England. Chepstow was initially a border stronghold, but it became an isolated outpost of Anglo-Norman life in Wales when the initial Norman conquests in central and northern Wales were lost.

CHEPSTOW CASTLE

In time, Chepstow passed to the de Clares and then to Isabel and William. Most of the additions they made were to make it more comfortable and brighter as a residence. The FitzOsbern keep formed the center of the castle and contained a great hall. The Marshals rebuilt the upper levels and inserted larger windows on the second floor. They built an extra story on the western side to hold a new chamber lit with large windows. These additions turned the keep into a hall-and-chamber block that was comparable to a royal castle in size and luxury.

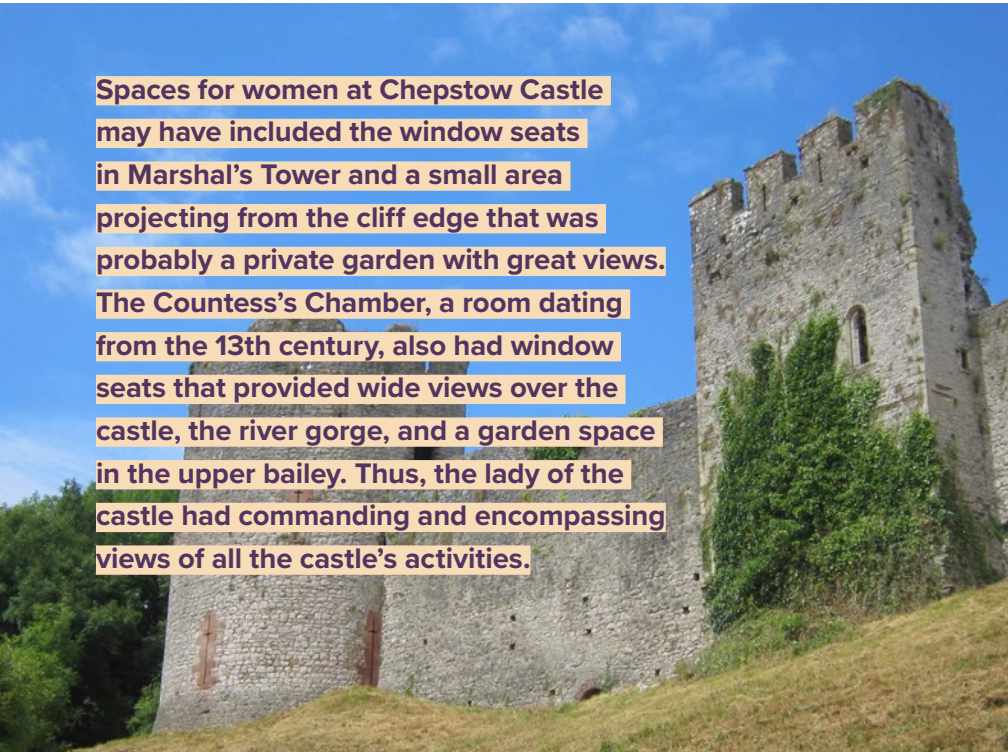
Around the year 1200, they added the west barbican with a strong mural tower and a lower bailey at the ridge's east end. A simple gate separated the lower bailey from what became the middle bailey, and drum towers strengthened the curtain towers of the two baileys. At the far eastern side of the castle was a double-towered gatehouse that provided fine accommodations for visitors.

After Isabel's death, Chepstow Castle passed successively to her children and eventually went to her great-grandson Roger Bigod, the fifth earl of Norfolk, who updated it. In the 1270s and 1280s, he built a huge domestic range in the lower bailey, adding two impressive halls that overlooked the river and provided breathtaking views.

Bigod's range predates Marten's Tower, which was built between 1285 and 1293 in the southeast angle of the lower bailey. The 3-story tower was entered from the bailey at the first floor but was covered by a portcullis. From the left of the entrance, a circular stair rose to the second-floor hall and continued to the third-floor chamber and the chapel. The whole tower shows evidence of an aesthetically pleasing design—a luxurious and private space away from the hustle and bustle of the castle.

As a leading lord, William would have met with other important lords and significant supporters, and so excellent accommodations were necessary. William and Isabel Marshal would not have personally supervised their Welsh lands—that would have been delegated to an administrator, who would have been a person of high enough social standing to need their own pleasant accommodations.

William died in 1219, and Isabel died the following year, around the age of 50. With 10 surviving children, William and Isabel must have felt that they were leaving their lands in a secure position. However, all five sons died without having legitimate children, the last in 1245. With no male heirs, the family titles were extinguished and reverted to the crown, and the estate was divided among the daughters.



Spaces for women at Chepstow Castle may have included the window seats in Marshal's Tower and a small area projecting from the cliff edge that was probably a private garden with great views. The Countess's Chamber, a room dating from the 13th century, also had window seats that provided wide views over the castle, the river gorge, and a garden space in the upper bailey. Thus, the lady of the castle had commanding and encompassing views of all the castle's activities.

In 1270, Chepstow, Framlingham, and Carlow Castles went to Roger Bigod. Other parts went to the widows of the Marshal sons, but the inheritances were not stable—fights would break out as husbands would seize castles that had not been assigned to them. Thus, it was mainly Isabel's grandchildren, many of whom were female, who actually laid claim to her lands. For three successive generations, these lands passed through female lines—unusual in the Middle Ages.

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17

Hamlet's Kronborg and Toll Castles

As tolls became an important source of revenue for medieval lords, toll castles began to emerge to control the roads and waterways of Europe. This lecture examines the rise and impact of toll castles and explores one famous royal toll house in particular: Kronborg, immortalized in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* as Elsinore Castle.

THE COMMERCIAL REVOLUTION

One of the most important economic and social developments of the Middle Ages was the rise of the merchant class, fueled in part by what some historians have called the Commercial Revolution. First, the Crusades and explorers brought Europe into contact with desirable products from the East, such as spices, sugar, silk, tea, and ceramics. Long-range trading routes emerged to bring these products to Europe at enormous profits. Such exposure accelerated in the late Middle Ages with the discovery of the New World and products such as tobacco, furs, timber, dyes, and exotic foods.

Second, Europe was becoming progressively urbanized. Towns and cities were growing, supporting an ever-larger class of craftsmen and artisans, who made a living from trading their goods rather than producing what they needed from the land. And third, money and finance were becoming more sophisticated—banking, accounting, insurance, and even stock exchanges emerged to support the growth of trade and complexity of operations.

The flourishing of trade created vast amounts of new wealth. Eager to bring trade to their kingdoms and profit from its taxation, many monarchs passed laws that were friendly to merchants. Many trading cities were given political independence, which meant that their ruling class was increasingly dominated by merchants rather than nobles or bishops. Some cities grew particularly large and rich from trade, such as Venice, Genoa, Bruges, and London.

Because river tolls were so lucrative, feuds could break out between noble families for control of customs castles. As a result, toll castles needed to be garrisoned and well defended.

GROWTH OF TOLLS AND CUSTOM POINTS

While the rural economy was still important and profitable, it was not nearly as lucrative as trade, and this shift presented a challenge to the economic model of the nobility, who began looking for ways to take a cut of the profits. Castles that had been built for defensive purposes in strategic locations could also be used to collect duties from any merchants wishing to enter the village or town. Lords might also build castles or towers on popular roadways or bridges in their territory as another way to enforce tolls.

The most lucrative trade routes of medieval Europe tended to go by water, and in many areas, lords could petition the monarch for the right to collect tolls on major rivers, crossings, and waterways. Tolling rights could be extremely valuable and make a noble very rich indeed. The Rhine River, one of the most important trading waterways in Europe, was among the most heavily tolled rivers, but similar situations occurred across medieval Europe. Eventually, there were so many toll castles and customs points on rivers that it became unprofitable for merchants to use them, and they began to take long, complicated routes just to avoid such points. But land-based routes were slower and not as safe, which left the merchants vulnerable to highway robbery.

SHAKESPEARE'S ELSINORE

The king of Denmark built Kronborg Castle on one of the most important waterways in northern Europe. Despite its importance in Danish history, the castle has been forever immortalized as Elsinore Castle, the primary setting in William Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. In fact, Shakespeare has changed people's perception of the history, archaeology, and architecture surrounding the castle.

KRONBORG CASTLE

Hamlet has been performed regularly at Kronborg since 1816—the 200th anniversary of Shakespeare's death—when it was performed by soldiers who were stationed there. In particular, the 1937 Old Vic theater production starring Laurence Olivier as Hamlet and Vivien Leigh as Ophelia did much to solidify the castle's reputation.

However, the story of Hamlet that Shakespeare used for his research was set in Jutland, another area of Denmark. Shakespeare transferred the historic events to a different location (Zealand) and castle (Elsinore, or Kronborg), probably because these sites were already familiar to his audience: Kronborg Castle had been rebuilt as a royal palace not long before Shakespeare wrote his play, and early modern Londoners would have likely recognized Elsinore as the name of the town associated with the sound tolls—the tax paid by mariners seeking access to and from the Baltic Sea and its markets.

Elsinore is the anglicized name for Helsingør, which is in Denmark and directly across the Øresund from modern-day Sweden. The Øresund is the gateway between the Baltic Sea and the Atlantic Ocean, and ships have plied this route for hundreds if not thousands of years. By the time the castle was

built, local and international ships were pouring through this narrow water gap searching for fish shoals, timber, amber, and animal furs—all highly prized goods in early modern Europe.

In the 15th century, the Kingdom of Denmark held a major advantage because it controlled the shores on either side of the Øresund. The modern town of Helsingør was founded in the 1420s by the Danish king Eric VII of Pomerania. Around the same time, the sound tolls were established, which meant that all foreign ships passing through the Øresund had to pay a fee. There was so much shipping traffic at this time that tolls provided around two-thirds of Denmark's income.

KRONBORG CASTLE

Kronborg Castle is a mighty fortress by the water. It received the name Kronborg (Crown Castle) in 1577, following the first extensive round of building works. Before this time, it was known as Krogen Castle. Some of the wall fabric remains from the earlier castle, but otherwise, it has been totally transformed.

In terms of appearance, Kronborg is a Renaissance castle, with works that were commissioned by King Frederick II and completed by 1585. The castle was constructed of red brick with vertical bands of sandstone and a red tiled roof. At the end of the 16th century, it was updated with sandstone used as cladding over the brick, and the roof was covered with copper. The bastions were expanded when the castle was updated for artillery. Originally 2 stories tall, it was raised in height in the 17th century. Galleries and ballrooms were also added to reflect the castle's royal usage.

In 1629, a fire badly damaged the castle to the point where, aside from the chapel and some tower rooms, only the walls remained standing. The castle was then rebuilt by King Christian IV in 1631 in a mainly baroque style. Christian altered the castle's gables, spires, and room heights but otherwise tried to recreate the essential elements of the castle as they looked before the fire. The present appearance of the castle shows a melding of styles from the 16th and 17th centuries.

KING'S TOWER AT KRONBORG CASTLE

The main gate into the castle was originally intended for Skanderborg Castle in Jutland, but it was redirected to Kronborg in 1576. The gate lies just beyond the external Dark Gate, constructed in 1577. There are no defenses on these entrances—instead, the emphasis is on the impressive masonry carvings. Likewise, the Kronvaerk Gate is an ostentatious entryway, with columns, arches, and heraldry.

The west and north façades of the main block are dominated by the King's Tower, a 5-story polygonal building with symmetrical arched windows on each face. A small dormer gable attached to the tower displays the year 1580 and the cipher of King Frederick II. Visible towers on the main block's exterior include the Queen's Tower, which was later used as a lighthouse, and the Trumpeter's Tower, which was built in 1777 as a reproduction of one erected after the 1629 fire.

The royal apartments were located in the castle's north wing. King Christian IV erected a huge fireplace in the King's Chamber, located on the third floor. The entrance door frame to this room is made of stone and marble and is partially painted and gilded. The room's ceiling had eight paintings, commissioned by Christian IV after the major fire. The children depicted in the paintings are supposed to represent members of the royal family.

The Queen's Chamber, also on the third floor, has a marble fireplace and 10 ceiling paintings representing the planets. Queen Caroline Mathilde is supposed to have been imprisoned here in 1772 in a turret room accessible from this grand chamber.

The royal apartments were connected to the great hall in the south wing by means of a long passage running through the east wing. The great hall was enormous—200 feet by 36 feet. Originally, a series of 43 tapestries decorated the great hall, depicting the 100 Danish kings since Dan, the legendary early king of Denmark. The final tapestry shows Frederick II in front of Kronborg Castle and the future Christian IV in front of his birthplace castle, Frederiksborg.

KING'S CHAMBER AT KRONBORG CASTLE

Kronborg found new life after being restored and opened as a tourist attraction in 1938. Today, it tolls a new kind of cargo—more than 250,000 visitors stream through the gates of this World Heritage site every year.

From 1658 to 1660, Kronborg Castle was occupied by Sweden and suffered looting and bombardment with artillery. Following the occupation, the castle's fortifications were increased. Drawings dating from 1696 show the addition of a star-shaped fort with a moat, indicating that Kronborg had shifted from being a royal residence to serving as a military barracks.

Toll castles had a longer life than many other medieval castles, as they remained lucrative for their owners during the Renaissance and the early modern period. But by the 1700s, as modern centralized states began to emerge, many countries greatly reduced or abolished their toll points to allow freedom of movement. After the end of the Napoleonic Wars, a raft of international agreements ended the tolling of certain waterways, and by 1831, nearly all the toll castles on the Rhine had been closed. At the same time, Denmark came under significant pressure to end the sound dues, which slowed Baltic shipping and ran counter to the growing movement for freedom of navigation. Denmark finally relented in 1857, signing a treaty making the Øresund an international waterway and ending the sound tolls, in exchange for a large one-time payout from the international community. Overnight, Kronborg lost its relevance and was largely abandoned.

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The Alhambra and Later Spanish Castles

This lecture explores the castles of the later Middle Ages in Spain and the fusion of Islamic and Christian influences that emerged in castle architecture during and after the Reconquista. At the heart of this discussion is one of the most unique and beautiful castle-palaces in Europe—the Alhambra, which remains a stellar showcase of Andalusi architecture at the center of the last emirate of Al-Andalus.

THE RECONQUISTA

Reconquista is the term used to describe the centuries-long series of military campaigns in which the Christian kingdoms of Iberia sought to recapture the Muslim-held territories of Al-Andalus. This battle for control lasted from the 8th century until the end of the 15th century, when the emirate of Granada—the last Muslim-held area of Iberia—fell. The Reconquista had religious and ideological motivations, but it was also about territorial expansion.

In 1085, the Christians reclaimed Toledo and large swathes of central Spain, which prompted the nobles of Al-Andalus to unite first under the Moroccan Almoravid dynasty and then the Almohad dynasty. This unity stabilized the situation in Al-Andalus for a time, while the Christian kingdoms of the north entered into a period of infighting.

One of the most important Christian frontiers was between Portugal and León. The kingdom of Portugal was born in the shadow of a castle—Guimarães—where in 1128, Afonso Henriques began a successful rebellion against the crown of León. Afonso would become the first king of Portugal, and his new kingdom would become an active participant in the Reconquista to the south.

GUIMARÃES

During the Reconquista, warfare between Christians and Muslims was not constant—it occurred in bursts, interspersed by long periods of peace and consolidation. Throughout this complicated history, the two sides influenced each other intellectually and culturally.

Along with new Christian kings, military orders were also playing an expanded role in the Reconquista. As in the East, these orders could hold castles, and during the 1100s, several recaptured castles were donated to the Crusader orders, which used their wealth and resources to rebuild them as frontier fortifications.

Sometimes, the military orders merged a castle and religious site—Uclés Castle in Castile was used as a castle-monastery by the Order of Santiago, a homegrown Spanish order, until the mid-16th century. Accordingly, it had a church and cloister at the center of the castle where other castles might have the donjon, though today the site is dominated by a much larger 16th-century monastery.

Despite the infighting, the Christian kingdoms progressively became more united, particularly through marriage. A combined force of former rivals in Castile and Aragon, along with the military orders and Portuguese and Leónese Crusaders, set out on a renewed campaign against the Almohad caliphate. The subsequent Battle of Las Navas de Tolosa in 1212 was a turning point for the Christians, and other Muslim losses came quickly afterward.

With the departure of the Almohads, the nobles of Al-Andalus were now in disarray against a united Christian front. Córdoba surrendered in 1236, Valencia in 1238, Murcia in 1243, and Seville passed into Christian hands in 1248.

THE EMIRATE OF GRANADA AND THE NASRID DYNASTY

One local Muslim ruler, Ibn al-Ahmar, managed to unify what was left of Al-Andalus into the emirate of Granada and negotiated a treaty with the Christians. Al-Ahmar became Muhammad I and founded the Nasrid dynasty, the last Islamic house that was to rule in Iberia. The Nasrids ruled in Granada for more than 250 years. The new emirate covered part of the south coast of Spain up to 60 miles inland and had a large population of approximately 300,000, with about 50,000 people living in the city of Granada itself.

The emirate prospered on trade, producing high-value exports and importing products from North Africa for reexport to Europe. With this wealth, the Nasrids bought their survival by paying huge tributes to Castile to keep the peace, a mutually beneficial arrangement.

After the 13th century, the Nasrids expanded their fortifications, building new strongholds within existing urban castles, making gateways grander, and focusing their attention on waterways. The Alcazaba de Málaga, constructed by the local Muslim dynasty in the 10th and 11th centuries, was significantly rebuilt and expanded by the Nasrids in the 14th century. With almost 4 acres of interior space in the complex today, this huge castle dominates the hillside.


ALCAZABA DE MÁLAGA

THE ALHAMBRA

The most spectacular transformation of an *alcazaba* is the fortress-palace complex of the Alhambra in the city of Granada, where the Nasrids had their seat of power. Its name means "the red one" in Arabic.

The original *alcazaba* of Granada was walled, and in the early 13th century, Muhammad I further fortified and walled a larger urban area. In the early 14th century, Muhammad III made major expansions, as did most Nasrid rulers over the next century. The result was an enormous complex with three distinct areas: the *alcazaba*, the palace, and the medina.

The *alcazaba* is the oldest surviving part of the complex. It remained a military castle and was well defended with the highest towers. It also contained a military quarter that could house the garrison and any prisoners who were kept in the dungeons. The palace area contained many palaces for royal and elite use. The medina—or the court's living quarters—had markets, shops, workshops, baths, and other public amenities. A small city unto itself, each of the three areas of the Alhambra were independent and fortified but linked by streets.

THE ALHAMBRA

Fortress-palaces like those at the Alhambra tended to follow a distinctive plan that centered around large rectangular courtyards with ranges on the shorter sides. The courtyard contained a garden and water features. The ranges were fronted with a portico—often a large central arch flanked with two smaller arches. Rooms were decorated up to chest height with paintings, but after the late 13th century, mosaic tiles, plaster wall decorations, and cedarwood ceilings became popular.

The best preserved of the Alhambra's seven palaces are the Comares Palace and the Palace of the Lions. The Comares Palace served as a royal residence and had several courtyards, public rooms, and legal rooms. It was most extensively updated in the 14th century. The public parts were mainly on the west side, though some were housed in the Comares Tower at the northern end. The tower is a square space lavishly decorated in gypsum and tiles with a domed cedarwood ceiling.

The Palace of the Lions was built in the mid-14th century and most likely also served as a royal residence, though scholars have proposed other uses. At the center of the palace is a cruciform patio with a fountain supported by 12 lions, from which the palace gets its name.

Water formed the centerpiece of the palace courtyards at the Alhambra, and elaborate arrangements were made to carry water by aqueduct from the mountains outside Granada, nearly 4 miles away. Once it reached the complex, the water was stored in underground repositories and then used to irrigate the gardens in the courtyards.

As at many royal castles across Europe, a designed lordly landscape surrounded the Alhambra, dominated by a hunting park. And just uphill of the complex is a country villa known as the Generalife, built by the 14th-century sultans for the enjoyment of nature. At the villa's center is a large cruciform garden courtyard.

Using pollen analysis, preservationists discovered what plants were grown in the gardens at the Generalife during the medieval period, and today, visitors can see what was likely there—myrtle hedges, rose bushes, aromatic and ornamental plants, and pomegranate and orange trees.

CASTLE CONSTRUCTION AND ADAPTATION IN CHRISTIAN SPAIN

The Nasrid kingdom of Granada had a period of relative respite from defensive concerns in the 14th and 15th centuries, as another period of Christian disunity resulted in civil wars and social conflicts across Christian Spain. Tensions and wars between the kingdoms of Castile and Aragon renewed a focus on fortification building to their mutual border, which was also in flux.

The relationship between castle and settlement continued, and donjons were often built within a village. A popular layout among nobles featured a large central donjon enclosed within a square plan of curtain walls with corner turrets. This period of castle occupation occurred amid the reconquest of large areas of Al-Andalus, during which many nobles took possession of castles that had been held by Muslims. The new owners reconstructed and transformed these castles to not only convey important symbolic messages but also provide shelter and defense. At the same time, the frontier continued to shift southward, rendering some castles superfluous, and many were likely abandoned.

After the mid-14th century, stone and brick became the preferred building materials for castles. Some of the new trends in construction were linked to changing military technology, such as gunpowder artillery, which Christian Spain quickly adopted during the Reconquista. The power of gunpowder meant that artillery could fire projectiles with much more force and in a much straighter arc toward a castle. The battlements could be more easily destroyed, making it more dangerous for troops stationed on the walls, and the lower sections of the walls were also more vulnerable. Firing back with artillery also became a challenge because the weight and angle of cannons and cannonballs made them hard to fire downward from the top of a castle wall.

La Mota Castle in Castilla y León is a good example of a castle that was adapted for the age of gunpowder. To address the cannon issue, the outer curtain walls at La Mota were built low and wide so that rows of artillery would be closer to the ground level and troops could fire at better angles. Ventilation holes in the outer walls allowed smoke from cannons to escape.

The outer walls also sloped outward at the base, which gave the lower parts of the walls extra thickness and created angling that helped deflect incoming artillery fire.

Of course, the lower outer walls were also vulnerable to infantry attacks. The solution was to dig a deep trench and build in shooting galleries that angled down into it, which made it harder for an enemy army to scale the outer walls.

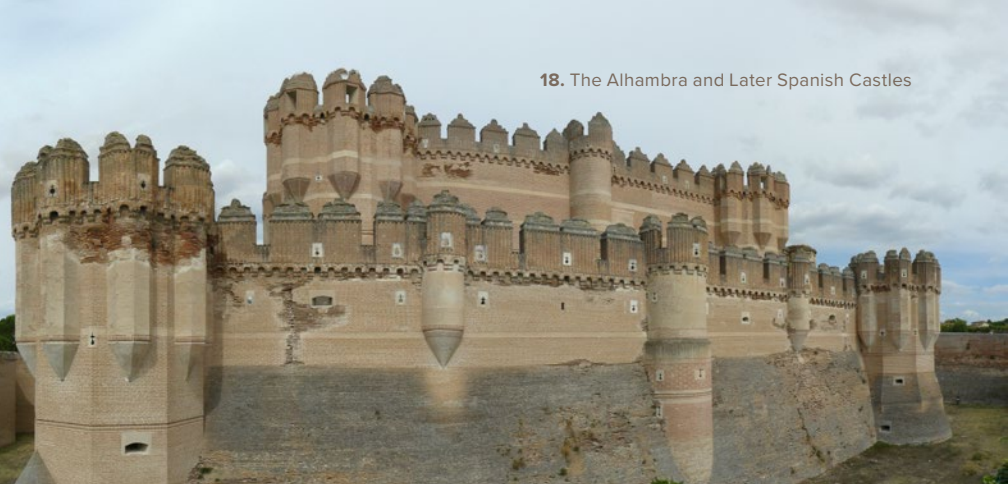
THE AFTERMATH OF THE RECONQUISTA

In 1469, a new period of Christian unity came with the marriage of Isabella I of Castile and Ferdinand II of Aragon. This marriage effectively united all of Christian Spain under one rule, and together, they adopted a more aggressive Crusading stance against the Nasrids.

In 1482, Ferdinand and Isabel launched a full-scale invasion. The Spanish use of gunpowder artillery was one of the decisive factors—sieges were now much faster, and the emirate's major cities were quickly taken. In 1491, the Nasrids made a last stand in the Alhambra of Granada, finally surrendering in 1492.

After the Catholic monarchs took the Alhambra, they established a Franciscan friary on top of one of the 12th-century Nasrid palaces—a common fate for many Islamic palaces. Soon after the conquest of Granada, all Jews and Muslims were ordered to convert to Christianity or leave Spain. Yet, a paranoia persisted about the genuineness of the conversions, which drove the creation and expansion of the infamous Spanish Inquisition. New building works thus expressed an enthusiasm for Catholicism.

In the aftermath of the Reconquista, a lot of different castle styles merged. Muslims who converted and remained in Spain continued to serve as master craftsmen and artisans on many Christian projects, giving birth to the so-called Mudéjar style, which exhibited many Islamic influences. At the same time, Gothic styles from Christian Europe were also popular. This mix of



influences resulted in unique and interesting designs, such as those seen at Castillo de Coca, completed in 1493, and the Alcázar de Segovia, which was updated in the 15th century by King John II of Castile.

When confronted with issues around historic preservation today, scholars face challenges in determining what to keep and what to consider authentic. In an attempt to reconstruct the authenticity of the Islamic period, many of the Christian-era buildings have been removed. In the case of the Alhambra, removing the Christian buildings from the early modern period meant removing the lower-status areas of the complex, leaving people with the misleading impression that the Alhambra contained only luxury palaces. Yet, fortified palaces in Spain were tightly interwoven with civic, administrative, and defensive functions. And in much the same way, the Christian and Islamic histories of Iberia are also tightly interwoven—both traditions have contributed to create the unique and fascinating castles of Spain.

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Bran, Corvin, and Castles of Transylvania

Bram Stoker's Castle Dracula is one of the enduring literary images of the medieval European castle. And although this castle does not actually exist, people often place it near the top of the list of castles they know. Mythmaking in history is a powerful and persuasive force, and castles are not exempt from becoming entwined in stories that blur the lines of fact and fiction. This lecture dives into castle mythology through the examples of two Romanian castles—Bran and Corvin—and examines the connections between these historical sites and the stories associated with them.

DRACULA'S CASTLE

Bram Stoker's novel *Dracula* begins and ends in Transylvania, a historical and cultural region that is today part of Romania but was part of the kingdom of Hungary in the Middle Ages. Many of the book's most iconic scenes take place in Castle Dracula, the ancestral home of Count Dracula. His castle is located somewhere in the Carpathian Mountains, which define the eastern and southern borders of Transylvania. But both Dracula and his castle are fictional inventions.

Nevertheless, since *Dracula*'s publication in 1897, a fair amount of academic and public interest has centered on identifying the castle that influenced Stoker's descriptions of Castle Dracula. Stoker never visited Transylvania, though he did read travelers' accounts, so his descriptions of the place are rooted in some research. Similarly, Stoker never visited any castles in the region; however, he was Irish, so he would have seen his fair share of castles and would have heard folktales about them, which may have provided inspiration.

Bran Castle, often marketed as Dracula's Castle, has become the most popular attraction in Romania. Yet, there's no evidence that Stoker even knew about this castle, and it looks nothing like the descriptions of Castle Dracula in the book. Nonetheless, its popularity shows the discrepancies that can exist between what the public sees and what scholars study when it comes to castles.

BRAN CASTLE

EARLY SETTLEMENTS IN TRANSYLVANIA

The history of Transylvania—whose name comes from the Latin *terra ultrasilvana*, or "the land beyond the forests"—has been tumultuous, with its lands fiercely contested by different powers over the centuries. A late 12th-century chronicle mentions Transylvania as being within the borders of Hungary, and place-name evidence suggests that the Hungarians built fortified frontiers with defended entrances through Transylvania to separate Hungary from the "deserted lands" that lay beyond.

Transylvania has historically been one of the more ethnically and linguistically diverse areas of Europe, particularly after the mid-12th century, when "guest" settlers began to arrive. The Saxons, or German-speaking people, were invited to help populate the region with the expectation that they would develop local agriculture and defend the southern borders. Many settlements of the region today still bear Romanian translations of their earlier German names.

The Teutonic Order also began settling in southeastern Transylvania, and in 1211, King Andrew II granted the border region of Burzenland to the knights in exchange for defending the frontier against the Cumans. The knights were successful in pushing back the Cumans and expanding their territory, and they were further rewarded by the king. However, their growing power sparked resentment and suspicion among the Hungarian nobility. To prevent local interference in their operations, the knights asked Pope Honorius III to place their growing holdings under papal authority rather than Hungarian authority. King Andrew didn't take kindly to this, and in 1225, he expelled the knights from Transylvania. All of their castles reverted to the Hungarian crown, and the settlements that the knights had founded were added to the Saxon guest lands.

In 1241 to 1242, the Mongols invaded, which was a watershed moment in the medieval history of southeastern Europe and particularly devastating to Transylvania. Afterward, building in stone was increasingly popular and permitted, and some timber towers may have been rebuilt as masonry towers. Stone castle-like arrangements began to appear as well to provide refuge for the local population during raids and invasions, which remained a constant threat in the region for centuries.

Though the initial Mongol invasion was eventually turned back, Transylvania remained on the frontlines of Catholic Europe and contended with many enemies on its borders, particularly the Golden Horde and the Ottomans. Fortification became a necessity for even small villages, many of which were reoriented around a central fortified citadel or church.

VLAD TEPES

Vlad Tepes—or Vlad the Impaler—was the real-life person associated with the Dracula of pop culture. Born in 1431, he was also known as Vlad III Dracula. *Dracul* meant "dragon" in medieval Romanian, and his father, Vlad II Dracul, had been admitted into the prestigious Order of the Dragon because of his success fighting against the Ottomans. Vlad III would thus adopt the nickname Dracula, which meant "son of Dracul" or "son of the dragon." In modern Romanian, however, *dracul* means "devil," which has contributed to the more sinister reputation.

Vlad Tepes was the ruler of Wallachia, a principality that broke away from Hungary in the 14th century and eventually evolved into the modern nation of Romania. The new principality bordered Transylvania and took in part of the southern Carpathian Mountains. Sandwiched between the Hungarians to the north and Ottomans to the south, the princes of Wallachia needed to be tough and shrewd to keep their new state independent.

Vlad Tepes has been linked to Stoker's Dracula character on the basis of his nickname, Vlad the Impaler, and gruesome reputation—but beyond that, the connection is slight. In modern Romania, nationalists see Tepes as an important leader who kept Wallachia independent and imposed order during an unstable and dangerous time.

Vlad Tepes had a turbulent reign over three different periods—first in 1448, then from 1456 to 1462, and again in 1476. He was opportunistic, allying with either the Hungarians or the Ottomans against the other and then switching sides when he stood to gain. But he gained especial infamy for his harsh rule and his practice of impaling lawbreakers and enemies on wooden stakes—hence his nickname Vlad the Impaler. In 1476, he died in battle with the Ottomans, and as the story goes, his own head was impaled on a stake in Constantinople.

BRAN CASTLE

In addition to fortified villages and towns, Transylvanian communities and nobles also constructed castles at strategic points, particularly at passes in the Carpathians. Bran Castle is one such example. Located on the Bran Pass near the town of Braşov, the castle was built by the Saxons to control access through the pass and to collect tolls from travelers. The castle is first mentioned in historical documentation in 1377. It was renovated in 1723 and later extensively restored by the Austro-Hungarian state in the 19th century.

In the first half of the 20th century, Bran Castle became a royal palace and was remodeled in a Romantic, neo-Gothic style. These renovations have helped drive the supposed connection between Bran Castle and Castle Dracula, but there are several key differences between the real castle and the fictitious one.

First, Bran Castle doesn't match Stoker's descriptions of Castle Dracula at all. The castle in the book is described as being a vast, ruined castle with numerous broken walls and battlements and as having windows and floors of a scale that doesn't match that of those at Bran. Castle Dracula also has an open courtyard large enough for a horse-drawn carriage to ride into, which Bran most certainly lacks. Second, Castle Dracula is near Borgo Pass—today known as Tihuta Pass—which is about 100 miles away from Bran Castle. Third, there's no evidence that Bram Stoker even knew about Bran Castle. And fourth, Bran Castle isn't even strongly associated with Vlad Tepes, whose castle was at Poenari.

BRAN CASTLE

So, why is Bran Castle the famous one? Poenari Castle is much smaller and in a far more ruinous state. Its setting is not as impressive as Bran's either. Poenari Castle is also in Wallachia, not Transylvania, and it's unlikely Stoker knew of it either. Meanwhile, Bran Castle is in good condition and is easily accessible by road from several popular ski resorts, which has helped drive tourism to the castle. And thanks to its later renovations, it looked the part and matched the romantic idea of Dracula's castle that tourists were looking for.

CORVIN CASTLE

Scholars have tried to determine what Bram Stoker knew about Romania, considering that he never visited. Stoker used travelers' accounts of Romania that included images and discussions of many castles, one of which might have been Hunyadi Castle, also known as Hunedoara Castle and Corvin Castle. Corvin Castle is located in southwestern Transylvania near the Poiana Ruscă Mountains, on a bluff overlooking the Zlasti River. This was a historical frontier with Hungary and a rich iron-producing region.

Corvin Castle is the largest castle in Romania, built on a long-occupied site. Nearby was a Roman and then medieval settlement that was reportedly destroyed by the Mongols during their mid-13th century invasion. The invasion may even have prompted the construction of Corvin Castle.

The castle is associated with the Hunyadi family. John Hunyadi, who had fought the Ottomans and become regent of Hungary, converted the site into a castle in the 15th century. The castle's plan is quite simple, with a powerful

CORVIN CASTLE

tower dominating the northern end. Its walls rise to a great height and are 6 feet thick. During the first building phase, John added a second wall to encircle the preceding one and added six towers, which are extant today. He also built living quarters for troops and storage rooms and started building the palace.

During John's second building phase, Corvin Castle came into the form that visitors see today. The castle features many architectural styles, and scholars have argued that it displays an early manifestation of Renaissance style in a Romanian context. This interpretation is mainly based on the four circular and symmetrical towers, though castle symmetry was around before the Renaissance.

Corvin's late-Gothic-style chapel is located on the northeast side of the castle. It was begun sometime in the 1440s and remodeled in the 16th century. The largest rooms in the castle were the Knight's Hall, which was used for large gatherings and feastings, and the Diet Hall, which was used for council meetings.

John's son Matyas became Matthias I Corvinus, king of Hungary and Croatia from 1458 to 1490, but after his reign, the castle changed hands frequently. Local nobles fought over it until a major fire in 1854 extensively damaged the castle. The fire attracted scholarly attention, and several artists made drawings and took measurements of the castle, many of which were published. It's possible that Bram Stoker encountered Corvin Castle this way.

The castle was restored in the late 19th and early 20th centuries before being reopened in the 1950s. As with so many sites, the accuracy of the restoration is moot—visible features like the roof tiles and archways have been described more as reimaginings.

At best, Bran, Poenari, and Corvin Castles have tepid associations with Castle Dracula, and none of them really match Bram Stoker's description. Moreover, Bran and Corvin have little if anything to do with Vlad Dracula, who has almost no connection to the literary vampire beyond his name. But the myth and romance of the castle—and the power of tourism marketing—have helped to attract more than a million visitors to Bran Castle alone in recent years.

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The Paston Saga and Caister Castle

Thanks to the remarkable survival of a collection of letters from the 15th century, Caister Castle in Norfolk, England, has one of the best documented family stories of any castle of the Middle Ages. Set against the backdrop of the Wars of the Roses, the letters tell the story of the Paston family and their attempt to climb the social ladder and hold on to a castle. This lecture focuses on the Paston Letters, which reveal lots of details not just about one family but also about life in the late Middle Ages.

THE PASTON FAMILY

The Pastons were a family of the Norfolk gentry that, by the 15th century, had risen to local prominence within a few generations. They were not nobles, but they had wealth and independence. Below the gentry were the wealthy peasantry known as yeomen.

The origins of the Paston family are obscure, which is common among this social class. They would have benefited from the economic and social changes after the Black Death, particularly the uptick in trade and the increased opportunity to buy property. The family had a tradition of becoming lawyers, which brought them social connections and a good income.

The Paston story that concerns this lecture starts with William Paston. At the age of 42, he married Agnes, who may have been 18 years old. Agnes was the daughter of and heiress to Sir Edmund Berry, and as per inheritance law, Agnes's lands and manors remained hers for life. After her death, her heirs fought over her lands.

Agnes and William had six children. One son, John I, is the best represented in the letters. John married Margaret, who brought even more lands to the family as she was an heiress too. Margaret's letters are fantastic for scholars because she writes as a householder and landholder in her own right and as a representative of her husband during his frequent absences.

There were many lawyers within the family, and they viewed legal knowledge as an essential part of an education. John I had two sons known as John II and John III. Both served as judges and were elected to the English House of Commons. Even Margaret obtained enough legal knowledge to attend the shire court, where she would obtain warrants to reclaim lost livestock. Margaret was also comfortable speaking with senior clerics, including the archbishop of Canterbury, and the recorded responses indicate that her complaints carried weight.

Of the 930 letters in the Paston Letters, 421 were written by members of the Paston family, including 107 written by Margaret, one of the family's matriarchs.

SIR JOHN FASTOLF

Until the Pastons came into possession of Caister Castle, their main residence was at Oxnead, and the castle was the home of Sir John Fastolf—who loosely inspired Shakespeare's famous character Falstaff. Fastolf had been at Agincourt in 1415 and had gained a lot of money and a knighthood from being in the king's service, and he furthered his fortunes through inheritance and canny land purchases. By the time of his death, Fastolf had accumulated 94 manors as well as trading ships. John I Paston was one of Fastolf's lawyers and became his close friend, main adviser, and estate trustee during the 1450s.

In the 15th century, manor castles needed to be both comfortable as a palace and defensive against low-level violence. Because Fastolf was extremely rich, the castle he built at Caister between 1432 and 1446 was extravagant and a clear example of conspicuous consumption. It attracted many envious eyes, but Fastolf had no direct heirs. So, he wanted to establish a religious house called a college that would take possession of Caister when he died. But such a move needed royal consent, which was difficult to obtain at that time because the Wars of the Roses had broken out.

The Wars of the Roses was a civil war for control of the English throne between the houses of York and Lancaster. The family emblem of both houses was a rose, hence the name of the war. The conflict would drag on for more than 3 decades, claiming many lives and causing significant political and social instability. Fastolf seemed to know that he was unlikely to receive permission to turn Caister over to a college during his lifetime, and just before his death in 1459, he signed over all his moveable goods to John I Paston and Thomas Howes.

Paston became the main executor in exchange for a lump payment for all of Fastolf's manors in Norfolk and Suffolk, and the other executors were downgraded to advisors. Such a late change to the will to benefit the deceased's lawyer caused a scandal. Paston was accused of many bad things; however, he did try to establish the religious college, and in 1464, at the cost of 300 marks, he was even able to get royal permission to do so.

CAISTER CASTLE

Fastolf's inheritance made the Pastons very wealthy and increased their status, and the biggest prize they inherited was Caister Castle. It was built of brick and in a French style and reportedly had a great hall, 26 bedrooms, and a chapel. It was arranged around four sides of a great inner courtyard, and the ranges appear to have been machicolated. The east range included the main gate passage with a gatehouse and drawbridge leading to a large rectangular barbican.

The inner court was surrounded by a water-filled moat, and a small forecourt sat to the west of the castle to protect a second gate. Fastolf had built a 5-story artillery tower with circular gun ports at the stairs and tower base. It was also a residence with chambers containing fireplaces and garderobes. Today, just the tower and outer walls of the ranges on both sides are extant. On Fastolf's death, an inventory of all the items in his bedchamber was composed. Among the items were a featherbed, a fine blue mattress, a canopy, one supporting framework, one trestle table, and one long chair.

CAISTER CASTLE

PASTON FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

Scholars can deduce a lot about family relationships from the Paston Letters. For example, the children were deferential in their letters to their parents, even when writing as adults. That could be because, oftentimes, children did not spend their whole childhood in the family home. Instead, many were sent to lodge with a great lord in the hopes that it would lead to social advancement. The Pastons practiced this too: John III was placed in the house of the duke of Norfolk, and John II was sent to live at the royal court.

Letters show that the Pastons conformed to the dominant belief of their time that marriages should be socially or economically advantageous. Margaret sought to place her daughter Margery with a good family to distract her from an attachment to the family's estate manager, Richard Calle. At the age of about 20, Margery secretly married Calle, which enraged the family. John III had his eye on a wealthy widow as a potential bride at one time, and when he was to marry his eventual wife, also called Margery, the two families negotiated a dowry quite intensely.

The Paston Letters also illuminate the importance and reciprocal nature of good lordship. Margaret intervened in manorial disputes, oversaw the maintenance of the estates and rent collection, and encouraged her husband to buy household provisions, including crossbows and axes. With this military equipment, she sought to defend the Paston estate at Gresham, which was being legally and violently challenged. Margaret even moved into the manor in 1449 and was prepared to physically defend it, although she was ultimately unsuccessful. The same thing had happened to John I a year before.

Many people opposed the Pastons taking up residence at Caister, and Fastolf's will was immediately challenged. In fact, the reason many of the Paston Letters seemed to have survived was because of their potential use in various legal cases.

FIGHTING TO KEEP THE CASTLE

John I died in 1466 at the age of only 44. Two months after his death, the Paston name was legally cleared from misdeeds surrounding the will, and the family moved into Caister Castle. But in 1467, a rumor reached Margaret that a Fastolf relative planned to attack Caister Castle with 100 men. She wrote to her son John II, who enlisted men for the castle's defense.

Meanwhile, John II also continued to work out a settlement with Fastolf's other executors. The sticking point between them all was the location for the religious college—it had been approved for Caister, but the other executors wanted it moved. Ultimately, the college was founded in Caister by 1469, but it was moved to Oxford University the following year.

One impact of the Wars of the Roses was that it created power vacuums in which nobles were able to advance themselves at the expense of the crown or other nobles. As law and order deteriorated, many nobles raised private armies to defend and expand their interests, and there was little to stop them. And in 1469, the duke of Norfolk, who had previously tried to purchase Caister Castle, got a chance to act on his old desire when King Edward IV was taken prisoner at Middleham Castle.

The duke wrote the Pastons a letter insisting the castle be turned over to him. Ten days later, he arrived with armed men intending to lay siege using artillery and bows. The Caister garrison surrendered on terms: John II had appealed to powerful lords for help, and as a result, the duke of Norfolk offered safe conduct for the garrison. The Pastons were able to leave with their baggage, but they had to leave behind the castle's contents—a kind of rock bottom for the family.

But the restoration of Henry VI of Lancaster to the throne at the end of 1470 meant the return of many lords that the Pastons were close with. The duke of Norfolk was persuaded to let John II reoccupy Caister Castle in exchange for a payment of 500 marks. However, the Wars of the Roses continued, and in 1471, the Johns Paston were summoned to fight in the Lancastrian army against King Edward IV of York. But when the Lancastrians lost at the Battle of Tewkesbury, Edward resumed the throne again.

Unlike the nobles, who had to flee for their lives, the Pastons were able to obtain pardons. However, the duke of Norfolk took the opportunity to seize Caister Castle again, and this time, the Pastons dared not protest. But they didn't stop fighting to get it back. In 1475, the duke suddenly died, and in 1477, John II got back the legal title to Caister Castle. Never again was their right to the castle challenged.

John II, along with several other family members, died of plague in 1479, and John III inherited the castle. In 1484, Margaret died, and the letters started to dwindle as there simply were fewer family members to write. John III died in 1504, but the family's prominence lasted into the 17th century. Their position as Royalists in the next English Civil War is what ruined them, and to cover their debts, Caister Castle was sold, along with the last of the family's estates.

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21

Châteaus of the French Renaissance

The Renaissance overlapped with the later Middle Ages and the early modern period. It also marked the beginning of the end of the age of castles in Europe. This lecture examines the Renaissance through the building projects of Catherine de' Medici, a 16th-century queen of France. Her Château de Chenonceau in the Loire River valley is probably the best surviving example of her architectural ambitions, which reflected a broader trend toward palatial splendor over castle imagery.

THE ITALIAN RENAISSANCE AND THE MEDICIS

The period known as the Renaissance, which means "rebirth," entailed a rediscovery and revival of classical Greek and Roman philosophy, culture, and aesthetics as well as a repudiation of anything seen as medieval. The Renaissance also had a big influence on European politics, and in this era, the modern state began to emerge. In Italy, many of the elite forms of government were now oligarchies dominated by wealthy families rather than autocracies ruled by lords or churchmen.

Italy was divided among many small territories and city-states. One of its wealthiest was Florence, which became a leading cultural and artistic center of the Renaissance. And throughout this period, the Medicis were the leading family of Florence. They made a fortune first through the fabric trade and then through banking, which gave them connections all over Europe. The Medicis dominated Florentine politics and sponsored many of the city's great artistic, religious, and cultural institutions that have made the city so famous today. As a Renaissance family who preferred politics and business over war, the Medicis built villas and palaces, many of which still dot the Tuscan countryside today.

Catherine de' Medici was born in Florence in 1519. She was the daughter of Lorenzo di Piero de' Medici, duke of Urbino, and Madeleine de la Tour d'Auvergne, a French noblewoman. However, both parents died within weeks of her birth, and she was raised by relatives in the Palazzo Medici. As a wealthy heiress, her upbringing and future were of great interest to the powerful players in Italy, including popes, and almost as soon as Catherine entered her teenage years, prestigious suitors began entreating the pope for her hand.

In 1533, at the age of 14, Catherine was married to Prince Henry of France, the second son of King Francis I. It was rare for someone of royal birth to marry outside of royalty. But Francis I was perpetually engaged in wars around Europe—many of them in Italy—and he was constantly seeking to expand his influence and find allies there. Though Catherine was not of noble birth, the wealth and influence of a family like the Medicis were becoming more valuable than their lineage.

FRENCH RENAISSANCE ARCHITECTURE

King Francis I was a man of the Renaissance and, like the Medicis, poured vast sums of money into the arts and grand construction projects. Château de Chambord was one of his most notable creations. It had a layout and many elements of a medieval castle, such as a central keep surrounded by a curtain wall, along with corner towers and a moat, but these features were largely decorative and provided little defensive capability.

CHÂTEAU DE CHAMBORD

Chambord was one of the new Renaissance "castles" that heralded great architectural change in France. These were the twilight years of the castle, as gunpowder had dramatically transformed the nature of warfare. By the 16th century, cannons had become so powerful that there seemed little point in trying to build castles capable of withstanding them—the investment was better spent on standing armies that could prevent them from reaching the cities in the first place.

Of course, standing armies and Renaissance pleasure palaces don't come cheap. In marrying Catherine to Henry, the Medici pope paid an enormous dowry that filled a huge hole in France's finances. For Francis I, this was perhaps an ideal arrangement, as Henry was a second son and not meant to become king. But then, Henry's elder brother died in 1536, making Henry the heir, and 11 years later, he ascended the throne as Henry II.

Henry II and Catherine took up primary residence at the Château de Fontainebleau. Although it once had been a fortified medieval castle, by this period, it had been radically remodeled into a new Renaissance-style château. Henry continued to work on the palace—he expanded several wings, added a ballroom, and commissioned several famous aesthetic features, including the horseshoe staircase. Many of Catherine's 10 children were born at this château.

CATHERINE AND THE FRENCH COURT

Henry reigned for 12 years until he died in a jousting accident in 1559 at the age of 40. Catherine and Henry's son became King Francis II at age 15, but he was sickly and died less than 18 months later. As his brothers were too young to rule, Catherine acted as regent in their stead. Yet, even when two more of her sons came of age and nominally ruled, she remained the key power behind the throne in France for most of the next 3 decades.

France followed the Salic Law of Succession, which disallowed women from succeeding to the throne under any circumstances, even in the absence of male heirs. As a result, women generally played a minimal role in politics and government throughout late medieval and Renaissance France.

However, Catherine de' Medici was among a handful of notable exceptions, and she arguably opened a new public-facing role for women in France. Even as queen, she had a role in the government, taking over when her husband was away on military campaigns.

While serving as regent, Catherine had the funds and ability to build elaborate palaces. She moved to shore up her domination over the French court, which was central to monarchical rule in France. She also appointed other women to positions of power.

The French court was greatly influenced by Renaissance ideals: It was formally organized and part of a bigger trend toward authoritarian rulers and a cult of monarchy. And although Paris was the capital of France, in reality, the capital was wherever the king happened to be in residence. So, a raft of new and reconstructed royal residences and palaces played host to the roving court. Many of these places, such as Château d'Amboise, had formerly been medieval castles that were now repurposed, often with grand halls and ballrooms to accommodate the burgeoning courts with lavish dinners and dances.


CHÂTEAU D'AMBOISE

CATHERINE'S ARCHITECTURAL AMBITIONS

Supporting the arts played a huge part in the cult of monarchy. Monarchs across Europe sought to recruit the best poets, artists, philosophers, and musicians, so the court also comprised the French intelligentsia. And architecture was a way for monarchs to express the grandeur and sophistication of their rule and showcase the talents and prestige of their court. Catherine was an architecture enthusiast and sought to use grand constructions to project the image of a unified French kingdom.

The first château where she got to explore her enthusiasm for architecture in her own right was the Château de Montceaux-en-Brie, near Meaux, which was gifted to Catherine by her husband in 1556. The château had two long wings with a pavilion at each end, linked by a third wing containing a central pavilion with a straight staircase. Catherine commissioned a "grotto" for playing pall-mall, a type of croquet. Completed in 1558, the grotto was really a 2-story grand building containing a viewing room, but scholars know of it only from descriptions and drawings as it is not extant today.

CHÂTEAU DE CHENONCEAU

Catherine explored her architectural ambitions on a much greater scale at Chenonceau, a château in the Loire valley, where many royal castles were already located. Chenonceau was originally a fortress owned by the Marques family, who fell on economically tough times. By the early 16th century, the château was taken over by Thomas Bohier, a senior royal official who wanted a residence near the Château d'Amboise, where the court was often based. He pulled the château down, keeping the moat and one tower as status symbols. Around 1513, the Renaissance-style château that can be seen today was constructed atop the site of a humble water mill. Unfortunately, Bohier went into significant debt, and Chenonceau was confiscated by King Francis I in 1535.

King Henry II made a gift of Château de Chenonceau to the love of his life—not his wife, Catherine, but his mistress, Diane de Poitiers. After Henry's death, Diane was forced to sell Chenonceau to Catherine in exchange for Chaumont-sur-Loire, a much less attractive château. Diane died in 1566, and in 1576, Catherine undertook her major works at Chenonceau, which focused on two galleries along a bridge over the river Cher. Water for the château's many gardens was brought in from nearby springs to create waterfalls. She added to the existing vineyard and laid out three parks, an exotic bird aviary, and a rare animal menagerie. She also started a silk-making industry on site to provide thread for the silk factory she had established in Orleans in 1582. All of these additions were expensive, which opened Catherine to criticism, though she at least used Chenonceau for important state occasions.

CATHERINE'S PARIS PALACES

Chenonceau was not Catherine's only residence. When in Paris, she and the king based themselves at the Hôtel des Tournelles, but she abandoned this palace and sold the site after his death because she hated the reminder of his loss. Part of the income was to go toward her replacement residence: the Palais des Tuileries, which was probably her grandest building project of all, planned for her retirement. It was still conveniently close to the palace at the Louvre, which was the traditional base for the French monarchy, and Catherine thought up a way to physically connect the two palaces.

Catherine's intimate involvement with the design and execution of the Tuileries can be seen in the instructions she gave to the architect, Philibert de L'Orme. Catherine was concerned with the arrangement of rooms and their functions, right down to their specific dimensions. In addition, she appointed Marie-Catherine de Pierrevive to oversee the construction.

The original intent of the plan has caused some confusion among scholars because, despite Catherine's grand plans, only the first floor of the Tuileries was ever completed. She stopped work on the palace in 1572, probably for security reasons since it was just outside the city walls of Paris. It was later pulled down and destroyed.

With the Tuileries no longer an option, Catherine instead built the Hôtel de la Reine as her Parisian residence. It also disappeared in the intervening centuries and is only known from engravings, which show a central wing with three pavilions, a courtyard, and gardens. Her grand plans for the Hôtel de la Reine did not enamor her with the common people. After her death in 1589, an inventory was taken of the items within the Hôtel de la Reine. The inventory included tapestries, maps of the world, sculptures, portraits, paintings, Limoges ware, taxidermic exotic animals, a mineral collection, fabrics, about 4,500 books, and ebony furniture inlaid with ivory.

It's no surprise, then, that Catherine came under a lot of criticism during her lifetime. In the years after her death, she was often portrayed as a wicked queen—not without justification. France was in a near-constant state of civil and religious turmoil during her life, and Catherine pursued increasingly hardline and repressive policies toward Protestants.

But a good chunk of the criticism against her was sexist and xenophobic, probably more of a proxy for criticizing the power she wielded—history rarely treats ambitious women kindly. Yet, despite all her building efforts, only fragments from her Parisian works survive today. However, much like her influence over this turbulent period of French history, Catherine's hidden hand can probably be seen in many of the royal Renaissance châteaus that marked the beginning of the end of castles.

Catherine was criticized for her Italian origins, but she mainly patronized French artists and architects. As a result, she helped define a particularly French Renaissance style of building.

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Tower Houses and Kilcolman Castle

Tower houses might be small, but they're fascinating—and this lecture aims to dispel the myth that they were the last hurrah of the medieval castle. They condensed earlier castle architecture into small spaces, creating a new, compact form that endured for centuries. While they were not the homes of royalty and the super rich, tower houses served the same military, residential, and administrative functions as their predecessors. The case study for this lecture is the tower house at Kilcolman, which belonged to the Renaissance poet Edmund Spenser.

THE ORIGINS OF TOWER HOUSES

The origins of tower houses lie somewhere in the 14th century, during which Europe experienced events that might sound all too familiar to people today: climate change, animal disease, harvest failures, outbreaks of bubonic plague, political and religious instability, and multiple wars.

Survivors of the plague entered a new world where there were more jobs than people, which meant higher wages and more disposable income. It was a good time to be a merchant. Some merchants directed their money into building tower houses in their cities, and others took advantage of a collapsing land market to become new lords of the manor—a move that was not always welcomed by the establishment. Tower houses were also popular with nobles, ecclesiastics, and the emerging gentry class. As a result, thousands were constructed in their heyday.

Scholars who study tower houses find themselves returning to the question of what a castle is and whether these towers warrant inclusion. People writing at the time of the tower house referred to them as castles, using ambiguous words such as *castellum* and *fortalicium*. But there are many terms used for them depending on the region. In Scotland and northern England, they are called pele towers or bastles. *Tower house* is the 19th-century term that arose to describe this large and varied category of architecture.

The study of tower houses has focused mostly on the tower itself, but there would have been multiple buildings, such as barns, granaries, and workshops, around the tower that made up a larger castle complex. In general, the siting of tower houses is closely linked to fertile land and the potential for good communications. Many exceptions to this rule exist—numerous Spanish examples are located on hilltops.

Tower houses can be found in many places beyond Europe, including Arabia, Afghanistan, and West Africa.

Getting specific details about a tower house, its outbuildings, and its inhabitants can be very difficult, probably because they were built by the kind of people who tend not to be documented in the major works of their time. And tower house architecture usually doesn't provide a lot of clues. Elements like fireplaces and roof gables might help scholars narrow down the date to a century. Unfortunately, the nicest examples of carved stonework around windows, entrances, and stairs in tower houses were usually removed and put into later mansion houses.

TOWER HOUSES OF IRELAND

Many tower houses were built across Ireland in the 15th century and into the 17th century. This period was culturally referred to as the Gaelic Resurgence—a time when the influence of the Anglo-Irish government based in Dublin decreased and the traditions and habits of native Irish lords, known as the Gaelic Irish, spread. Much to the government's distaste, these Irish traditions were readily adopted by many descendants of the Anglo-Normans who arrived with the conquest of Ireland in the late 12th century.

King Henry VIII attempted to reestablish English crown's authority in Ireland, and in 1542, he was declared king of Ireland. In the 1550s, a practice known as plantation began, which involved planting people loyal to the crown in Ireland where they could model good practices. While not terribly successful at first, several others plantation attempts occurred following bloody periods of warfare.

Probably the most impactful plantation came in the north of Ireland following the brutal Nine Years' War. After its conclusion, many of the native—or Gaelic—nobles left in 1607 in what became known as the Flight of the Earls. This opened huge tracts of land for new settlement. Incoming English settlers embraced the local tower house concept, and many even had local Irish residents build one for them. These tower houses, which some scholars call plantation castles, stopped being built by the second half of the 17th century, though they continued to be occupied.

KILTEEL CASTLE

Irish tower houses can vary greatly in size, from only a few meters wide to as big as a donjon. They usually have a square or rectangular plan, though a few circular ones exist, such as the one at Coolhill in Ireland's county Kilkenny. They were at least 3 floors high, and many had projecting or side turrets, which could house staircases and garderobes. While tower houses today tend to have exposed stonework, contemporary references indicate that they were limewashed, so they would have appeared white.

The entrance was usually at ground level, but there were some interesting exceptions to this rule. Tower houses with two entrances might have been particularly well suited for merchants, who could have a store on the first floor and living spaces above.

The internal arrangements of tower houses also varied considerably. Some had a single chamber at each level, which presumably would have been subdivided further, and others had multiple rooms on each floor.

KILCOLMAN CASTLE

Kilcolman Castle, located in the south of Ireland in county Cork, is a great tower house to examine as a typical example of the style. It was built in the first half of the 15th century, and it was probably overhauled at the end of the 16th century. It had been occupied by a Gaelic Irish noble family before it was granted to the famous Renaissance poet Edmund Spenser, who was also an English government official.

Spenser was born in London around 1552. His most famous work, *The Faerie Queene*, was dedicated to Queen Elizabeth I. Spenser took possession of Kilcolman in 1588, which means he must have written some of the epic poem in the castle. Certainly, several other of his best-known works were created while living there.

Spenser's second wife, Elizabeth, was a member of the Boyle family, who were unusually astute colonists and part of the new English aristocracy in Ireland. Elizabeth's cousin, Richard Boyle, became the first earl of Cork and was very wealthy and powerful. The Boyles were therefore the perfect family for a social climber like Spenser to marry into. He married Elizabeth in 1594, and they had one son called Peregrine.

Scholars have an idea of Elizabeth based on her well-known family and Spenser's love poetry about her. Her cousin loved to build, and it is likely she learned about elite architecture through family conversation. Records suggest that Spenser did a lot of work on Kilcolman, but scholars don't know to what extent Elizabeth was behind the improvements.

The local population hardly welcomed the English settlers with open arms, and tensions in the area remained high. Conflict between the English crown and the Irish population flared up again at the end of the century in the Nine Years' War. During the conflict, Spenser was literally burned out of his castle when Kilcolman was razed in 1598. He died the following year in England, and Kilcolman was abandoned shortly thereafter.

The tower house courtyard, known as a bawn, is essentially the equivalent of the castle bailey. Kilcolman had an outer bawn and an inner bawn. The stone bawn walls were more than 3 feet thick and extended about 40 yards from the tower. Along the top of them was a wall walk that provided space for guards to patrol. Kilcolman also had a small mural tower—very fancy for a tower house. It was only 9 feet by 8 feet but big enough to hold some guards.

The inner bawn held ancillary buildings that were probably timber-framed and built in the 15th century at the time of the first iteration of the tower. Excavations indicated that this building range included a great hall and possibly a parlor. Considering the location of the external hall, kitchens must have been nearby. The hall originally had a cellar, but it was later filled in. It also had a garderobe added. Around the exterior of the hall were glass windows. The price of glass was coming down at this time, and so larger windows were becoming increasingly common.

Artifacts recovered from excavations at Kilcolman show the leisurely side of castle life and some of the activity in the great hall. Among the recovered items were a bone tuning peg that may have come from a lute, which would've been played during feasts; several clay pipe fragments; and a sewing pin—a hint of a female presence!

Scholars estimate that Kilcolman had six floors. Descriptions of the tower house before Spenser's occupation indicated it had four floors. The main entrance was at the first-floor level, which was usual for tower houses at the time. Machicolations, bartizans, and crenellations were also common features and may have been part of Kilcolman's architecture. The one entrance is protected by a heavy oak door and a yett—a metal grille placed over a door and secured with sturdy hinges and a chain that held it closed. Yetts protected doors from the impact of battering rams. The wooden door itself would have been secured with a heavy drawbar, not a lock.

One of Spenser's closest neighbors was Sir Walter Raleigh, who had been rewarded with more than 40,000 acres of land in the district by Queen Elizabeth I for his assistance in putting down the Second Desmond Rebellion. One of the windows at Kilcolman Castle is known as the Raleigh Window because, as legend has it, Spenser and Sir Walter Raleigh sat there, smoked pipes, and chatted when Raleigh visited Kilcolman in 1589. Given that Raleigh was one of the first explorers to popularize the smoking of New World tobacco in England, that's a particularly noteworthy legend. Plenty of pipes were recovered during excavation, so the story sounds convincing!

Kilcolman Castle has been digitally re-created from a ruinous condition. The team behind this effort based the castle's appearance on the surviving architecture, descriptions of the site, and the most common architecture from castles in the surrounding region. They also used some of Spenser's own writings and comparative studies for the project.

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The "Slave Castles" of West Africa

In this lecture, the focus shifts away from the continent of Europe to look at how Europeans used their castle building traditions in new places—in particular, the west coast of Africa, where fortified trading posts were built to secure the burgeoning trade in timber, salt, gold, and, ultimately, enslaved people. Like European castles, the West African fortifications served several functions, but these "slave castles," as they are sometimes called, were used to colonize distant lands and facilitate the slave trade. As you explore Elmina Castle, Cape Coast Castle, and other sites in the lecture, consider whether the term *castle* is appropriate for them or if a different term is more apt.

EARLY EUROPEAN TRADING OUTPOSTS IN WEST AFRICA

People tend to associate European involvement in Africa with the age of colonialism and the 19th century, but the first established contact occurred in the Middle Ages. The Gold Road was a series of caravan routes that connected sub-Saharan Africa to North Africa, the Mediterranean, and, ultimately, continental Europe. Much of the gold—along with other valuable trade commodities, such as salt, spices, and ivory—came from the Malian empire. Its most famous king, Mansa Musa, visited North Africa while on pilgrimage to Mecca, and stories of his vast wealth reached European ears.

Portugal was the first European nation to sustain African-European maritime trade and the first to build a fortified trading post, established in 1445 on Mauritania's Arguin Island. The Portuguese continued to build outposts along the West African coastline and were soon joined by other European nations. Holland, Sweden, Denmark-Norway, Brandenburg (in modern Germany), Courland (in modern Latvia), and Britain would all build their own trading company outposts. These trading posts were usually fortified with structures that were sometimes called castles, as the new colonial powers frequently attacked each other for control of the most lucrative trade routes.

These outposts are most often associated with the slave trade, but it was gold that drove their establishment. Many of the gold mines that supplied the Gold Road were located close to the Ghanian coast, which the Europeans at that time called the Gold Coast. The Europeans also sought ivory, pepper, redwood, animal hides, and various other trade goods.

EXPANSION OF THE SLAVE TRADE

Slavery had been a relatively minor part of the West African trade during the Middle Ages, but a major shift occurred in the 17th century. The new European colonies established in the Americas were seeking huge fortunes by producing

goods such as sugar, tobacco, cotton, and exotic timbers for export back to Europe. But these items were labor-intensive to produce, and the new colonies lacked a large local workforce. Their solution was the dramatic expansion of the African slave trade, and by the second half of the 17th century, the booming slave trade was dominating many of the Gold Coast colonial ports.

Enslaved people were obtained and moved to these ports in a variety of ways. West African kingdoms, such as Dahomey and Ashanti, were the main suppliers of slaves to the coast, capturing people through raids and selling them for goods. European slavers sometimes engaged in their own slave raids as well. Soaring profits drove continuous growth in this brutal and miserable industry until the 19th century. An estimated 12 to 15 million people were forcibly removed from Africa.

WEST AFRICAN CASTLES AND FORTS

Earlier European fortifications were expanded and adapted to hold enslaved Africans before they were transported across the Atlantic. The European commercial buildings in West Africa followed a hierarchy, and the largest forts were called castles. What distinguished them from mere forts wasn't just their size and building materials but also their capacity—they could hold up to 1,500 slaves. The castles oversaw smaller forts and trading lodges. European traders built about 60 forts of different classifications on the Gold Coast, but sea erosion has caused some to disappear entirely.

West African castles and forts served as market centers, but they were also needed for defense as there was a lot of fighting for control of the slave trade. Like castles in Europe, they were also built for their symbolism and to proclaim authority. They provided accommodation for Europeans and were major administrative centers for commercial operations.

European trading companies negotiated geographic areas in which to conduct operations between one another and with local African leaders. The forts tended to be located on the coast, though some were on islands and rivers. Most were located near African communities, whose populations could be in the thousands. Both men and women were part of the ruling elite in West

Africa, but men formed a merchant class that grew wealthy facilitating the slave trade from the interior. These African men would sometimes challenge the European monopoly, seizing and occupying European forts to prove this.

Like European castles, most slave castles had curtain walls, battlements, watchtowers, central courtyards, and gun loops. They had storerooms, barracks for the soldiers, and prisons to hold Africans captive before shipping them to the Americas. In terms of plan, they could be very different—rectangular, triangular, star-shaped, or concentric—and their designs evolved over time. Earlier slave castles tended to look more like typical European castles. Later fortifications, particularly those built in the 17th and 18th centuries, tended to look quite different, reflecting changes in military architecture due to gunpowder as well as changing demands for comfort and privacy.

ELMINA CASTLE, GHANA

Elmina Castle is one the best-studied fortifications of West Africa. It is also one of the earliest, established by the Portuguese in 1482. Scholars know little about what it looked like then, but they do know that the Portuguese brought masons and precut stone with them to build it. Documentary evidence describes the early fort as a rectangular tower of at least 2 stories, surrounded by a wall that created two courtyards. The tower might have been flanked by two or three towers, with a fourth possibly added later. Some scholars suggest that it had a medieval appearance and was modeled on other Portuguese castles of this time. Elmina Castle was massively modified over the years but has largely stuck to its original plan.

The first fort was at the eastern end of a rocky peninsula jutting into the Atlantic Ocean, so it was easily defensible. The lagoon on one side was good for a ship harbor. The Portuguese used Elmina and other smaller forts on the Gold Coast to control the region's trade, which initially focused on gold. The Portuguese established a commercial monopoly in the region and burned villages that were caught trading with other Europeans. They also offered

protection to those who lived under their authority, which caused Elmina's population to swell and political influence to shift from local chieftains to the Portuguese governor.

The Dutch captured Elmina in 1637 after several attempts to wrest control of the coastal trade from Portugal. After its capture, the Dutch thickened Elmina's walls, raised the height of the castle, and remodeled it into a rectangle with triangular corner bastions. Water was a constant problem, so the castle had many cisterns; moreover, two large ditches across the peninsula collected rainwater for ships. In the middle of the central courtyard, the Portuguese had a church, but the Dutch converted it into other buildings and built their own church inside the walls.

Elmina soon became a major hub for the transatlantic slave trade, and the castle often acted as the depot where slaves were deposited and held until they could be shipped onwards. Various holding cells are still apparent in the castle today, where captives were kept in appalling and overcrowded conditions. There were no bathrooms or amenities attached to these spaces, and captives received a bare minimum of food, water, and medical attention. Captives could be held there for weeks or months before they went through the so-called door of no return that led to the awaiting slave ships. Not all survived to this point—particularly rebellious captives were locked in a small, separate prison cell without food or water until they died.

CAPE COAST CASTLE, GHANA

By the mid-17th century, the Dutch and Danes were dominating the Gold Coast, but others were attempting to break into the lucrative trade. In 1653, the Swedes constructed Cape Coast Castle to rival the Dutch at Elmina. In 1657, the Danes captured Cape Coast, but 2 years later, the Dutch tricked the local commander into handing the fort to them. However, the local king refused to allow the Dutch to occupy it and sold it back to the Swedes in 1660.

When the king died in 1663, the Dutch moved in again, and by this time, they had constructed more forts along the Gold Coast to stop the Swedes or anyone else from getting another foothold. The Danes were doing the same thing. They built Fort Frederiksborg just a few hundred yards from Cape Coast in preparation for eventually retaking it, but before they could, the English captured Cape Coast in 1664 and heavily reinforced it.

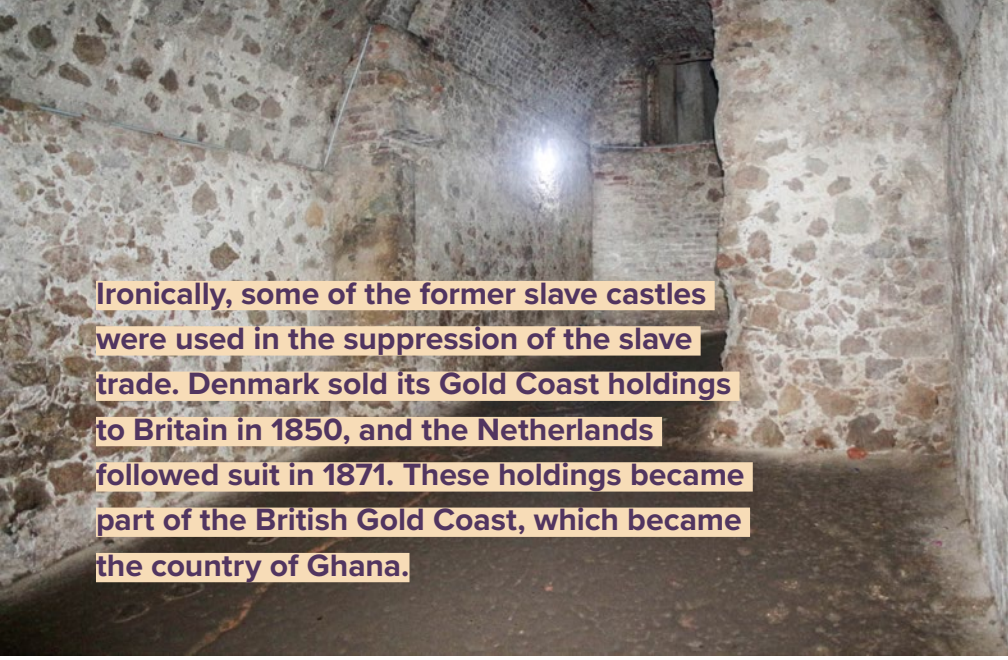
When the English took over, the castle was already an established trading center, but after 1699, they expanded it. Square in shape, it was built from local materials, mainly baked and fired mud bricks. Diamond-shaped bastions at each corner enclosed a courtyard with buildings for storage and accommodation. It appeared white from the outside but was painted with color on the inside. Later documentation says that Cape Coast had extensive gardens, orchards, and fishponds. Residential and administrative facilities were constructed within the interior, built around a large courtyard called the parade. The castle looked impressive but was actually flimsy—many of the West African British forts were not well built or well suited to their location in the tropics.

In the later 17th century, a prison was built under the parade ground. It was called a slave hole at the time, and enslaved people would be imprisoned there until they were transported. This dungeon was renovated and "improved" in the 18th century, but it was still horrendous.

In the late 18th century, the French began challenging the British for control over the Gold Coast. Cape Coast Castle was expanded and reinforced, particularly to defend against naval attacks. By this point, only Britain, the Netherlands, and Denmark retained forts in modern-day Ghana, but public and political pressure in Europe was growing to end the slave trade. The Danes were the first to ban the slave trade, in 1803, followed by Britain in 1807 and the Dutch in 1814—though both slave trading and slavery would continue in various places until the late 19th century. Many slave castles were abandoned and left to ruin. Elmina and Cape Coast continued as administrative centers until the 20th century.

Some scholars have argued that while slave castles may have borrowed castle architecture and served administrative roles, they were not true castles. William St. Clair argued that Cape Coast was not a castle because it did not command and administer a surrounding landscape as castles did in Europe. But perhaps this view takes an overly narrow perspective on what it means to dominate a landscape. While the West African forts were not necessarily used as offensive structures to dominate geographic territories, they were certainly used for commercial domination, which in turn brought political domination. And while some of the forts were nearly entirely defensive in nature, many also served residential and administrative functions as well as symbolic roles.

Today, these slave castles are the property of the African nations in which they are located. The Ghanian slave castles are part of a UNESCO World Heritage site. As visible manifestations of the horrors of the slave trade, they are critically important sites of world memory and education for future generations. They are also incredibly significant to the stories of the millions of descendants of the enslaved people who were sent through them. Whether or not they can be classified as castles can be debated, but their importance to global history is beyond doubt.



Ironically, some of the former slave castles were used in the suppression of the slave trade. Denmark sold its Gold Coast holdings to Britain in 1850, and the Netherlands followed suit in 1871. These holdings became part of the British Gold Coast, which became the country of Ghana.

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Neuschwanstein and the Romance of Castles

Neuschwanstein is one of the most famous castles in the world and probably bears the closest resemblance to the castles of Disney princesses. But this 19th-century historicist palace cannot be classified as a castle in any meaningful sense. Despite its non-castle status, it's still a captivating work of art and architecture that's worthy of attention and an excellent example of the romantic revival of castles.

THE RISE OF ROMANTICISM

By the 16th century, the era of castles was coming to an end. But that end didn't happen overnight. Some castles remained in the hands of aristocratic families as residences, while others were repurposed to serve administrative functions or adapted for modern warfare. Castles also continued in new forms, such as tower houses and colonial outposts. But by the 17th century, many castles had been abandoned or had fallen into a ruinous state. Their upkeep or restoration was simply too expensive for many people to justify.

However, in the mid-18th century, there was a burst of new enthusiasm for castles and all things medieval. In 1764, Horace Walpole published *The Castle of Otranto.* In the story, a castle lord schemes to kill his wife so that he can marry the beautiful girl who is betrothed to his son. The story has knights, ghosts, sorcery, and murder, all set inside a medieval castle. It's considered the first gothic novel, which became a very popular genre, spawning titles like *Dracula* and its association with Bran Castle.

Medieval texts such as *The Song of Roland* and the legends of King Arthur were republished and widely read. Curious tourists began appearing at medieval castles, and artists took to sketching their ruins. This renewed interest drove what became known as Romanticism—a cultural and artistic movement that peaked in the early 19th century. The Romantics had a flair for the dramatic and embraced feelings, passions, beauty, horror, creativity, and, of course, romance. In contrast to the Renaissance, which had embraced the classicism of ancient Greece and Rome, the Romantics took the Middle Ages as their inspiration—or at least what they imagined it to have been. This interest in Romanticism was partly a reaction to urbanization and industrialization, which was dramatically transforming life in Europe.

Romantic art, music, and literature celebrated a highly romanticized version of the past that entailed heroic knights, courtly love, damsels in distress, fearsome dragons, and lofty castles on lonely peaks. The movement produced many of the tropes, myths, and images of the Middle Ages that got absorbed into popular culture and continue today. For example, *Grimm's Fairy Tales*, first published in 1812, are some of the most popular children's stories ever published. And the illustrations included in various editions gave generations

a very romantic view of the medieval past. When Disney began animating these tales, such as *Cinderella* in 1950, inspiration for the castles came not from the ruins of medieval castles but from castles built in the Romantic era—especially Neuschwanstein.

NEUSCHWANSTEIN

Neuschwanstein—or New Swan Stone, as the name translates in English—sits perched upon the alpine foothills of Bavaria. It was built by King Ludwig II of Bavaria, who came to the throne at the age of 19 and ruled between 1864 and 1886. Nicknamed the Mad King, Ludwig was very much a Romantic in love with a mythologized medieval past.

NEUSCHWANSTEIN

HOHENSCHWANGAU

This mythic past was all around young Ludwig, including at Hohenschwangau, the summer residence of the Bavarian kings, where Ludwig lived during his youth. Hohenschwangau was built by his father, King Maximilian II, in the 1830s on top of the ruins of an earlier castle in a Romantic style known as Gothic Revival, imitating the architecture of the Middle Ages. Its interiors were filled with frescoes depicting the heroes of the German sagas. Legendary medieval figures were popular subjects for the German Romantics and for the nationalists, who were promoting a unified German nation and German expansionism.

Romanticism and nationalism also came together in the music of one of the era's greatest composers, Richard Wagner. As a teenager, Ludwig fell in love with Wagner's operas *Lohengrin* and *Tannhäuser*, and they very much fueled his romanticized ideals of the Middle Ages.

King Ludwig became Wagner's principal patron and dedicated Neuschwanstein to the life and work of the composer.

Planning for King Ludwig II's grand new palace began in 1868. He oversaw its development down to the smallest details. Neuschwanstein was originally intended to use Gothic architecture as its basis, but Ludwig switched to Romanesque. He didn't seek accuracy—he sought exaggeration, and true to the historicist trend, there's an eclectic mix of features and styles from various periods.

Historicism was a Romantic style of architecture that combined styles from different historical periods. Schloss Schwerin, seat of the grand dukes of Mecklenburg-Schwerin, is perhaps one of the most influential examples of the historicist style. Set on an island in a lake, Schloss Schwerin has Gothic towers and windows, baroque statuary and plasterwork, echoes of medieval symbolism and design, and frescos in various halls depicting romantic scenes of medieval history and folklore.

SCHLOSS SCHWERIN

Neuschwanstein was deliberately designed to appear like it emerges out of the rock, but there's a ravine separating it from the surrounding massif. From the village below, it looks inaccessible, which was probably also a deliberate part of the design.

Two older ruined castles that existed in its location had to be removed to provide enough space for the new structure. A new road had to be constructed, and a spring was diverted to the site to make water available. An unusual element to Neuschwanstein is that it does not have an enclosed curtain wall or a moat. Even medieval castles on cramped sites usually had an exterior wall.

The gatehouse was completed first, built at a right angle to the approach road. Ludwig lived there while the rest of his designs were constructed. The gatehouse is constructed of brick, and the archway is sandstone and has the Bavarian coat of arms above it. The residential block is 5 stories high and has a gabled roof. The central block sits on a courtyard and is flanked by the knight's building and the unfunctional square tower as well as the ladies' bower, which was completed after Ludwig's death.

The first floor of the residential block is vaulted—which King Ludwig probably did for atmosphere—but vaulting helped structurally and also with fire protection. Appropriately then, the first floor of Neuschwanstein holds the kitchens and sculleries. It had running hot and cold water as well as central heating. The second floor, which was for servant use, has much the same plan as the floors rising above it. It has a ribbed vaulted passageway on the valley side, with two parallel suites of rooms next to it.

The royal spiral staircase at Neuschwanstein rises to the topmost floor and into a round temple surrounded with columns. There, a large stone dragon guards the entrance to the anteroom of the Hall of the Singers. This hall occupies nearly the entire top floor. It has a highly ornamented coffered ceiling, a high roof frame, and a gallery running along one side of the hall. The objects inside are ostentatious and try to evoke a Romanesque style. It was a banqueting hall, but Ludwig also wanted it to be a performance space for his favorite pieces, though Wagner died before it could be completed.

Neuschwanstein has a throne room that is 2 stories high. It is so big and structurally weighty that it needs girders to support it. The room is lavishly decorated in gold in a Byzantine-Romanesque style. Despite the room's name, the throne itself was never erected there. Above the planned location for the throne is a single cupola to draw attention toward the center, and behind the intended throne is an apse. The arches in the throne room are made of cast iron with porphyry and lapis lazuli stucco. Again, the impression is of medieval architecture as it might appear in a place such as Sicily, with Byzantine elements, Islamic influences, and a Norman mashup of the cultures.

The third floor was intended to have guest apartments, but they were not completed, apparently because of Ludwig's social isolation. The royal apartment is on the rest of the floor. The bedroom has carved Gothic canopies over the bed, a washstand, and a reading chair. The balcony has an impressive view over the ravine's waterfall. Adjacent to the bedroom is a chapel with a high altar dedicated to King Louis IX of France—known today as Saint Louis, famous for his Crusading activities.

Like his medieval predecessors, King Ludwig had access to the latest technologies. At Neuschwanstein, this meant that features like telephone lines and intercoms replaced the murder holes as the easiest way to communicate between floors.

THE FATE OF LUDWIG AND NEUSCHWANSTEIN

Ludwig used only his personal income on his building projects and not the kingdom's funds, and by 1885, he was deeply in debt. Despite years of urging from his minsters, he continued to plan further projects and seek more loans, while largely ignoring the business of the kingdom. In 1886, armed with gossip collected from his servants and medical reports from doctors who had not examined him, the king's exasperated minsters declared Ludwig insane and removed him from office. Ludwig was found dead in a lake the next day, ruled at the time to be suicide. His mental condition and cause of death remain the subject of ongoing debate. Therefore, despite Ludwig having planned Neushwanstein in every detail, he barely used it.

So, why is Neuschwanstein not a real castle? First, it's not medieval or even early modern—it was built in the 19th century, during an entirely different era of Romantic revivalism that saw the emergence of mythologized versions of medieval castles. Neuschwanstein's remoteness from any of the forces that shaped medieval or even early modern castles makes it very hard to see them as related.

Second, Neuschwanstein has no defensive architectural features. Apparently, the plan was to connect the gatehouse and the castle with a drawbridge, but a stone bridge was used instead. Even those occasional references to medieval defenses, such as the crenellations on the gatehouse towers, are

clearly nondefensive: They ring the roofline rather than the walls, and there's nowhere to stand behind them. Defense was not something that would have concerned King Ludwig, as he was a product of an entirely different time.

Third, Neuschwanstein had no intended administrative function—after all, Ludwig shunned his governing duties and built it to escape that world. Nor was it part of a wider castle complex. Neuschwanstein makes a nod to the historical bailey by including a courtyard, but it's not functional or needed.

Neuschwanstein didn't have much of an afterlife—just 6 weeks after Ludwig's death, his succeeding uncle opened it to paying visitors, and it has been a tourist attraction ever since. The other castles in this course had quite long and winding histories, whereas Neuschwanstein is much more straightforward, even though Ludwig actively sought to connect it to history. And isn't their connection to history why castles continue to fascinate people today as much as they did King Ludwig? Castles are tangible pieces from a time and place that seem so different from the world now. By walking through castles, people in the 21st century can connect to the people and places from centuries ago and make the medieval world feel more real.

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