THE MEDIEVAL CASTLE AS A SYMBOL OF MILITARY-POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND LEGAL POWER IN THE EUROPEAN REGIONS OF THE 10TH-17TH CENTURIES

Eugene Vitalievich KILIMNIK*
Lyudmila Petrovna KHOLODOVA**

The medieval feudal castle can be seen as a unique work of European culture, a kind of “mirror of the times,” embodying all manifestations of medieval reality and uniting the medieval regions of Europe and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania which otherwise differed in their environmental, historico-cultural, economic, technical, military and sociocultural level of development. The defensive feudal castle as a historical, architectural and artistic phenomenon of medieval culture was important for more than ten centuries (from the 8th century to the 1740s) as a symbol of the political, legal, economic and cultural power of secular and clerical feudal lords in the various regions of Europe.1 This archetypical spiritual role of the castle within European culture unites castle complexes of different architecture, endowing each with properties that reflect the whole. While peculiarities of dimensional shape and decoration mainly depended on local historico-cultural and defensive traditions, the semantic basis for any castle lay in the ideas of supreme power, common feudal law, defence and submission, i.e. the values of the political and legal culture, reflecting the world of medieval Europe.2

Studying a variety of sources (including history, literature, law, poetry and fine arts) allows us not only to comprehend the historico-cultural background of the epoch of feudal castles, but to imagine the complex system of sociocultural relations in the Middle Ages (political, legal, economic and religious) which were made manifest in the defensive castle.

Based on analysis of the relevant environmental, historico-cultural,
military and sociocultural frameworks, this study aims to define the typical dimensional shapes that were born with the genesis of the feudal castle and describe further transformations in shape between the 8th and 17th centuries across the European regions. From this, it is possible to build an architectural and historical typology which relates the medieval castles of western and south-western Russia to the architectural structures of European castles, codifying the historical variety of regional dimensional shapes between the 10th and 17th centuries, and classifying feudal castle complexes based on the study of their “genetic code” and dimensional properties. This architectural and historical typology will demonstrate visually and dimensionally the spatial and temporal dynamics, as well as cultural and historical ties from the origins of castle building to its final days and from the dominant typical European styles to minute local modifications.

The author’s architectural and historical typology takes as its basis the triple deduction principle (type>genus>species), in which historical and architectural types, genera and species of defensive feudal castles are characterised according to their temporal development and spatial distribution. During the period under study, in the territories of European medieval principalities and states, all the main architectural and historical types of castles and their derivatives, genera and species were identified and the regions of their greatest concentration defined.

According to analysis of cultural, historical, dimensional and planning-related factors, as well as historico-comparative analysis, the most widespread (geographically and chronologically) type of castle in each region of medieval Europe and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania was identified. This revealed the typical local historical architectural and artistic characteristics manifested in the construction of feudal castles.

**France**

Castles tend to be characterised by hipped roofing, protruding considerably over the parapet; castrum-type castles with round corner towers (fig. 1-2) are common. According to German researcher H. J. Mruseka, the castrum form of feudal castle was developed in France in the 13th century and its origins can be traced to the design of Roman military camps.

---

3 Kilimnik 2010b, p. 850.
4 Ibid., p. 851.
5 Mrusek, Roch-Lemmer 1975, p. 156.
Italy
Northern Italian castles are characterised by square positioning of corner towers (fig. 3). Nebbia Ugo, an Italian researcher of medieval castles, believes it is also possible to characterize these as castrum. A special form of castrum castles is characterised by towers set in a rectangular layout, following Roman traditions.\(^6\)

Iberian Peninsula countries
Castles here are characterised by stepped and keel-shaped battlements, corner towers and towers with oriel windows (bay windows) (fig. 4). Spanish castle architecture is distinguished by the form of the top of the donjon (keep): traditionally mounted turrets were installed in the corners of the tower parapets, which marked out the fortified residence of feudal lords.\(^7\)

Lands of the Holy Roman Empire; also Czech, Austrian, Hungarian, Silesian and Polish cultural and historical areas
Palatial/German-type feudal castles with round or rectangular towers dominated the North German Saxon and South German Trans-Danube architectural style (fig. 5-6). The structure of the palatial/German-type courtyard castle generally involved a basic defensive perimeter around a closed main building of two-or three stories, typically irregular in shape, reflecting the ruggedness of the surrounding landscape, as well as a courtyard.

A number of architecturally and historically derivative castle complex styles were created based on these, for example:
- having two, one or no towers;
- with a curtain wall (a defensive wall between two towers);
- with a barbican (long, fortified gateway, often built onto a cape or isthmus and forming the way into the castle);
- concentric castles (series of terraced fortifications based on the landscape, with the lower castle at the foot, a middle castle further up and an upper castle on the summit);
- with built features projecting from the walls in a horizontal position;
- with exterior D-shaped towers (a tower protected in the most at-risk area by additional strengthening);
- with the main tower in a dynamic position (located near the entrance of the castle, serving as its primary defense) or a static position (located far from the castle entrance and serving a lesser defensive function);

\(^6\) Nebbia 1955, p. 236.
\(^7\) Washburn 1957, p. 320.
- with a regular or irregular-shaped bailey (an annex with an enclosed, fortified courtyard, adjoining the main castle);
- semi-rock castles (human-made defensive-residential constructions which incorporate natural rocky outcrops, with buildings on top of or next to the natural formation);
- rock-hewn castles (castles which are actually cut into the rock itself).

Poland
Polish castles tend to be regular-shaped constructions with round corner towers; less often, irregular-shaped castles making use of characteristics of the natural relief can be seen. In northern and central parts of Poland, convents derived from the generic dimensional shape of this type of castle are found. The original generic convent castle sprang from the lands of the Teutonic and Livonian Orders (end of the 13th century-beginning of the 14th century) and combines the structure of a military castle and a cloister in its design (fig. 7).

Medieval western and south-western Russia (Belorussia, Ukraine)
Here we see generic castles based on the northern Italian tradition, with polygonal towers which acquired a distinctive five-sided (keel) shape (fig. 8).

Fig. 1. Château d’Anjony, 15th century, France
(source: http://www.hebus.com/image-98895.html)
The Medieval Castle as a Symbol of Military-Political, Economic and Legal Power

**Fig. 2.** Lassay Castle, 15th century, France
(source: http://www.chateauxmedievaux.com/lassay.php)

**Fig. 3.** Castello di Soncino, 15th century, Italy
Fig. 4. Castle Coca, 15th century, Spain
(source: http://www.zumain.es)

Fig. 5. Maus Castle, 14th century, Germany-Saxon direction
Fig. 6. Castle Prunn, 11th century, Germany-Danubian direction
(source: http://chateau.moy.su)

Fig. 7. Castle-Convent Lidzbark-Warmiński, 14th century, Poland
(source: http://www.szlak.zamkigotyckie.org.pl/lidzbark-ros.htm)
Fig. 8. Gold Flow Castle, 17th century, Ukraine
(source: www.zamki-kreposti.com.ua)

Fig. 9. Malbork castle, 14th century, Poland
(source: www.ownplanet.ru)
The Medieval Castle as a Symbol of Military-Political, Economic and Legal Power

When considering the evolution of shapes in tower/donjon-type castles, a gradual decline in the construction and promotion of this type of castle can be observed from the west to the east of Europe. At the same time, there was a wide area (France, England, Scotland, Ireland, Spain, Portugal, southern Italy and Tirol [in present-day Austria]) in which tower castles dominated the construction of fortified dwellings. In Central Europe (Czech, Poland, Hungary), tower-type castles became less widespread compared to other types of castle (fig. 9). To the north and west of Europe, tower castles ceased to be built by the end of the 16th century.

The combined/transitional type of castle, combining the structures of tower/donjons and castrum castles, emerged in the second part of the 12th century and continued to be built until the end of the 14th century. Transitional castles represent an intermediate historic form between the historic tower/donjon castle and the castrum, retaining certain archaic features typical to the former, but incorporating new ideas from the latter. This type of castle developed in France, England, Scotland, Spain, Portugal and Italy, but in the lands of the Holy Roman Empire (not including Switzerland and western Belorussia) and further east, it was less common, and in a number of regions of central and eastern Europe (Austria, Czechia, Poland and Hungary) examples occur only in isolation (fig. 10).

---

8 Coulson 1979, p. 73-90.
Castrum castles - square or rectangular in layout with four corner towers and a big courtyard - have historical roots dating back to Roman fortified camps. They first appeared in France in the late 12th-early 13th centuries, influenced by cultural and historical traditions introduced by militant pilgrims to the Middle East. Buildings of similarly great strength and size were created in the Latin kingdoms in the first third of the 12th century. These new castrum-style feudal castles included a spacious courtyard surrounded by residential wings directly adjacent to the wall.

Between the second half of the 13th century and the 17th century, this architectural type became widespread across Hungary, Greater Poland, Lithuania, western and south-western Russia (Belorussia, Ukraine) and the Moldavian Principality, developing under the influence of the French and Northern Italian traditions of castle building. The Generic Castel Castle-Convent type dominated in the culture of the Teutonic and Livonian orders, influencing the architectural and artistic characteristics of Polish castles (especially in central and northern parts of Poland). The Generic Irregular Castel Castle became an established feature of the Halicz, Volyn, Podole and Lithuanian principalities and the medieval districts of Belorussia. It was only in the lands of the Holy Roman Empire (excluding those in the North) that this derivative castle genre did not spread, due to the dominance of the palace/German type of feudal castle.

The structure of the palatial/German-type castle, as described above, involved a basic defensive perimeter surrounding a building two or three stories high, with a courtyard inside the inner curtain. These structures tend to be irregular in shape, based upon the surrounding landscape. In contrast to donjons, where the main architectural element is the fortified keep, in palatial/German castles, the main architectural kernel is an irregular-shaped palace and courtyard. In the late Middle Ages, the Holy Roman Empire spread from the North Sea to upper Italy. The historical variety of dimensional shapes in castles of this type was caused by the growing disunity of the region (which included the Netherlands, Switzerland, Burgundy, Elsa, Lorrain, German and Austrian lands, Czechia, Moravia and Silesia) and the variety of landscapes. All these factors influenced the architectural and artistic design of castle complexes and town fortifications. In each cultural and historical zone of the German Empire, local styles of castle architecture gradually formed, varying according to specific defensive elements, but generally keeping close to the German school of castle-building.

The palatial/German castle - the most significant type in Central Europe - was widespread in the majority of principalities of the Holy
Roman Empire (excepting the northern territories) from as early as the beginning of the 12th century. It greatly influenced the art of castle building in Czechia and Moravia (early 13th to late 15th centuries), southern Poland and Silesia (mid-13th to 14th centuries), the lands of Hungarian Crown (mid-13th to 14th centuries), and, to a lesser extent, the territories of the Teutonic and Livonian Orders (1320s to the end of the 14th century), and Halicz and Podole (Russia, second half of the 14th to 16th centuries) where local cultural and historical traditions dominated.10

Due to changes in siege techniques and the development of new weapons, strategies and tactics in military science, earlier dimensional characteristics of castles were transformed in order to increase their defensive power, or were forced out by the emergence and dominance of a new type of castle better-suited to defending the region. In other words, previously dominant architectural and historical castle types were succeeded by new designs with better military and defensive properties.

Based on field, cultural and historical studies, it is fair to state that each of the historical and cultural zones of medieval Europe had clearly-defined local artistic traditions which left their mark on the architectural styles of feudal castles (be they donjon/tower, combined/transitional, castrum or palatial/German-type castles), and on other types of castle derived from these.11 Such architectural and typological expressions of regional identity in feudal castles can be seen as a manifestation of the cultural distinctiveness of the various European regions.

The huge range of dimensions and shapes of castles - dictated by local environmental, historical and socio-cultural features (including local artistic styles) - offers quite a varied picture of Europe’s Roman and Gothic periods.12 Despite these regional tendencies, it is possible to distinguish certain aspects of castle architecture in medieval Europe which reflect more generally the synthesis of the arts that was taking place in religious architecture.

When exploring the synthesis of artistic, functional and constructive aspects in the architecture of castles, it should be noted that during the development of the art of defensive castle building, these principles varied, altering in their significance and distinctiveness. At the dawn of the castle era, master-builders were only concerned with the usefulness and strength of the construction: its beauty did not matter. By virtue of the utilitarian and functional purpose of the defensive castle, the masters’ task was to make

---

10 Kilimnik 2011a, p. 296.
11 Kilimnik 2010a, p. 219.
12 Ulmer 1999, p. 303.
best use of the terrain and the latest developments in architecture to endow the construction with a “multi-level security system,” making it as safe and inaccessible as possible, equipping it to defend the surrounding lands and population and, most importantly, demonstrating the power of the ruler over the region.\textsuperscript{13}

Medieval builders undertook this daunting task at huge financial, energetic and material expense; nevertheless, the scale of the task reflected the intrinsic value of the idea on which it was based. The result of these efforts - the castle - impressed contemporary observers: its stern look commanded their respect, aroused fear and inspired awe before the grandeur of power. At the same time, for the dependent population, it symbolised the hope of salvation from the enemy and was, on the whole, the centre of their lives and world order.

Today, we still experience this energetic impact, though in a different way. Even the earliest, undecorated castles evoke a sense of aesthetic perfection, thanks to the elegance of their design. It can be stated that the beauty of the castle, originally inherent in the design but not realised by medieval man, gradually became manifest with the change of axiological system and is today firmly established in people’s minds as one of the greatest achievements of human skill.

As society developed and castles became subject to new tasks set by the rulers of the time, castle architecture evolved. During this transitional stage, the noblest and wealthiest castle owners borrowed certain elements of Gothic church architecture, blending them with Roman-style interior decoration. These gothic elements did not actually perform any structural function, but produced an illusion of authenticity. See, for example the vaulted ceiling of the Knight’s Hall of Malbork Castle (fig. 9).

This process of borrowing was more intensive in relation to the reconstruction of castle chapels - especially those that were inside the castle court, defended by fortress walls - which were re-configured using new stylistic principles of construction, making them look Gothic.

It is from here that the tendency to synthesise artistic, functional and constructive principles in castle architecture originates. Born as an attempt to achieve a balanced combination of heterogeneous details while retaining traditional defensive features, this process eventually culminated in the emergence of multifunctional palace complexes that eventually lost any fortification purposes completely between the 16\textsuperscript{th} and 18\textsuperscript{th} centuries.\textsuperscript{14}

During this period, the development of religious and secular architecture

\textsuperscript{13} Kilimnik 2013, p. 237.

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid.
was accentuated, increasing the value of the aesthetic synthesis of both constituent elements and related elements of other arts. This process was greatly encouraged by feudal lords allocating funds which in the past would have been used to support the optimal fortification and armament of castles. As Europe stabilised and the relevance of defensive functions waned, the owners instead funded artistic reconstruction of former feudal strongholds.

Thus, having arisen as an aspect of early medieval Roman culture, defensive architecture was long characterised by a severe appearance which almost completely avoided Gothic influence. With the beginning of the Renaissance, the centralisation of states led to the loss of castles’ former utilitarian and functional purposes, at which point Gothic and Renaissance properties began to creep into the architecture of feudal fortifications, synchronising the development of the art of defensive construction with the aesthetic creative tendencies of the epoch. As a result, by the Baroque period, the functional and artistic representation of castle construction completely corresponded to the spirit of the age.15

Castles were an important factor in stabilising territorial borders and stimulated the development of power relations. Their creation contributed to the development of science and technology, since they posed a number of specific requirements for builders to solve. The stabilisation of territorial relations led to greater attention being paid to the comforts of everyday life. The art of castle building contributed to the maintenance of cultural values (through frescos, tapestries, etc.). The construction, transformation and decoration of castles and palaces contributed to artistic development in adjacent fields such as fine arts and crafts.

Developments in the art of castle building generated new compositional techniques and geometric shapes, often borrowed from other types of civil and religious building design (bows, battlements, avant-corps (porch or pavilion jutting out from the main wall) and solutions for widening the visual range of wall apertures). This was most prominent in the Roman and Gothic period-architecture and in replicas built in subsequent epochs (for example, in the eclectic period). In no other area of construction was the problem of the relationship between artificial constructions and the natural landscape solved at such a high level.

The specific character of castle-building - the use of available environmental features, cultural and historical traditions and socio-cultural conditions - is directly reflected in advantages and disadvantages of regional

15 Ibid.
castle shapes, from the point of view of solving defensive tasks. These conditions, according to field research, played a decisive role in choosing the shape of each individual castle complex.

Based on this, it is possible to see two ways in which compositional decisions were dictated by nature itself. In the first case, natural elevations were often used when building castles, such that the construction became a kind of continuation of the relief, a natural development of it, such that it is often quite difficult to differentiate between natural and artificial forms. As a result, these castles give a sense of blending with nature, where the constituent elements are inseparable. In the second case, where construction took place on flat land, horizontal lines have a dominant role in the landscape, while the castle offers vertical divisions in opposition. In this case, the flat landscape accentuates the shape of the castle, emphasising its power, whilst such castles themselves enrich the plains through a contrast as pleasing to the eye as the blending of castles on promontories.\footnote{Kilimnik 2011a, p. 326.}

It is in the art of castle building that the specific features of these compositional techniques were used to the breaking point of their expressive possibilities.\footnote{Ulmer 1999, p. 303.} At the same time, the need to create a perfect defensive feudal residence eventually brought castle design to the highest aesthetic level, proving the highly organised character of the evolving system, analogous to the processes of evolution and growth in nature.

The castle, born in depths of medieval history, was the centre from which European and western Russian civilization formed. The feudal castle symbolised military, political, economic and legal power. It was the centre of knightly culture and feudal traditions, it presented a fortified base for further conquest of new lands, defended the inner state and trade routes, protected against attack from neighbouring territories and served as a factor of political stability, while at the same time contributing to an increase in feudal disunity.\footnote{Kilimnik 2011b, p. 98.} The defensive castle, as a phenomenon of medieval culture, unites the various regions of Europe and the lands of west and south-western Russia - lands which were otherwise divided by differing levels of political, economic, military, social and cultural development.
The Medieval Castle as a Symbol of Military-Political, Economic and Legal Power in the European Regions of the 10th-17th Centuries

(Abstract)

This article is based on a cultural-historical approach to the analysis of the medieval feudal castle as a phenomenon of European culture. The synthesis of artistic, functional and constructive elements in castle architecture is analysed, illustrating the historical essence of feudal castles.

The feudal castle symbolised military, political, economic and legal power. It was the centre of knightly culture and feudal traditions, it presented a fortified base for further conquest of new lands, defended the inner state and trade routes, protected against attack from neighbouring territories and served as a factor of political stability, while at the same time contributing to an increase in feudal disunity.

Through field research, architectural and historical analysis, and the study of the geographical location of European castles, the author offers a new classification of European castle complexes based on the typical, generic and specific features, from a genetic core with historical roots in antiquity to subsequent defensive constructions with characteristic regional differences in shape and design.

The feudal castle, with its unique cultural values, represents cultural and historical integrity. Every individual castle can be seen as an example of historical regional architecture, in conjunction with other common European architectural and artistic traditions of medieval civic culture. This article summarises the diversity found within the architectural and artistic characteristics of medieval Europe’s feudal castles, showing that they represented an integral space, synthesising the natural environment, social order and psychology of the Middle Ages.

The study of the historical and cultural heritage of the Middle Ages - in particular of monuments of chivalric culture - bears a special significance today in reminding people of these striking manifestations of the unique culture of medieval Europe.

Bibliographical Abbreviations


Kilimnik 2011b - Eugene V. Kilimnik, Eugene V. Kilimnik, Feodal’ny zamok v
E. V. Kilimnik, L. P. Kholodova


**Keywords:** castle, phenomenon, culture, synthesis, functions, feudalism, Middle Ages.
# LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Name and Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AAMT</td>
<td>Advances in Archaeological Method and Theory. Orlando.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art-menedzher</td>
<td>Art-menedzher. Business magazine considering culture and art as a resource for the social and economic development of society and offering various technologies and methodologies of management of this process. Moscow.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Byilyie godyi</td>
<td>Byilyie godyi. Sochi State University. Sochi.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAn</td>
<td>Current Anthropology. Chicago.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHR</td>
<td>The Canadian Historical Review. University of Toronto Press. Toronto.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journal Code</td>
<td>Full Name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IAIAND</td>
<td>Istoriko-arkheologicheskie issledovaniya v g. Azove i na Nizhnem Donu v 2006 g., Don.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Istoriografiya</td>
<td>Istorografiya i istochnikovedenie istorii stran Azii i Afriki. Leningrad State University. Leningrad.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Istoriya i sovremennost’</td>
<td>Istoriya i sovremennost’. Moscow.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IzvSamarsk</td>
<td>Izvestiya Samarskogo nauchnogo tsentra RAN. Samara.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kulturnoe nasledie</td>
<td>Kulturnoe nasledie. Altai State University, Altai Territory, Barnaul.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LKK</td>
<td>Literatura i kultura v Kitaе. Moscow.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JIISV</td>
<td>Jekonomicheskie i istoricheskie issledovaniya na Severo-Vostoke SSSR. Economic and historical research in the North-East of the USSR. Magadan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing</td>
<td>Marketing. Centre for Marketing Research and Management. Moscow.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MENP</td>
<td>Materialy po evoliycii nazemnykh pozvochnykh. Moscow.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MIA</td>
<td>Materialy po istorii i archeologii SSSR. Moscow, Saint Petersburg.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MIFFK</td>
<td>Materialy po istorii fauna i flory Kazahstana. Kazakhstan.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Mir bibliografii - Mir bibliografii. Moscow.
MUSEUM - MUSEUM. UNESCO.
Narodnaya shkola - Narodnaya shkola. Saint Petersburg.
Nauchnye obozreniy - Nauchnye obozreniy, series 2, Gumanitarniy nauki. Lomonosov Moscow State University. Moscow.
NKOGK - Obshchestvo i gosudarstvo v Kitae: XXXIX nauchnaia konferentsiiia. Moscow.
Novosti - Russian News Agency “Novosti.” Moscow.
NTB - Nauchnyye i tekhnicheskiye biblioteki. The State Public Scientific and Technical Library Russia. Moscow.
ONS - Obshchestvennye nauki i sovremennost. Russian Academy of Sciences. Moscow.
OT - Otechestvennye zapiski. Saint Petersburg.

SV - Sovremennaya filologiya. Ufa.

SZ - Sociologicheskiy zhurnal. Moscow.


TKA - Tulski kraevedchesky almanah. Tula.


Trudovaya pomoshch’ - Trudovaya pomoshch’. Izdanie Popechitel’stva o trudovoj pomoshhi. Saint Petersburg.

Vestnik AAJ - Vestnik arheologii, antropologii i jetnografii. Institute of Problems of Development of the North, Russia. Tyumen.


Vestnik Kazak - Vestnik Akademii nauk Kazakhskoy SSR. Academy of Science of the Kazakh SSR. Kazakhstan.


Vestnik Samara - Vestnik Samarskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta. Samara State University. Samara.


Vestnik Semej - Vestnik gosudarstvеннogo universiteta imeni Shakarima goroda Semej. Shakarim State University of Samey.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Voprosi Literatury</td>
<td>Voprosi Literatury. Writer's Union of the USSR. Moscow.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VTP</td>
<td>Istoričeskiye, filosofskije, politicheskie i yuridicheskie nauki, kul'turologiya i iskusstvovedeniye. Voprosy teorii i praktiki. Tambov.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>