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Castles of Northwestern Bohemia in the Middle Ages

Introduction

The 13th century was not only a radiant period of the reign of the last kings of the charismatic Přemyslid dynasty, but also a period of gradual and lengthy transformation of the lands of the Czech Kingdom, which fundamentally changed its appearance and ways of life. In addition to constituting the nobility as a social group represented by a wide variety of visual symbols, one of the manifestations of this transformation was the replacement of Early Medieval hillforts with the new stone castles. High Medieval castles, unlike their predecessors, had a more diverse range of functions, which was also quite variable in individual cases. The castles of Early Middle Ages variously combined, preferred or suppressed mainly residential, military, central, administrative, economic, legal and symbolic functions. The aim of this paper is not only to present the complicated beginnings of castles in Northwestern Bohemia (today's Ústí region), but also to try to describe the developmental tendencies of castle architecture in a wider period of the High and Late Middle Ages. Since it is not possible to give a systematic and exhaustive explanation in the limited space, I will focus on the description and interpretation of several key objects and an outline of general trends.

The beginnings of High Medieval castles in Northwestern Bohemia

The oldest stone Medieval castle in Northwestern Bohemia is Roudnice nad Labem, built by the bishop of Prague and Duke Jindřich Břetislav of the Přemyslid dynasty. We know the date of construction very precisely, based on dendrochronological dating this happened sometime after the turn of the years 1189/1190. In the mass of today's Ba-

roque chateau a part of the massive Romanesque palace with solid towers has been preserved. The other buildings of the castle are known from earlier descriptions and depictions, but cannot be dated exactly. Perhaps in its beginnings, the castle was equipped with the outer bailey with a gate tower and the inner bailey dominated by the aforementioned palace (Fig. 1). Roudnice Castle, the seat of Prague's bishops and archbishops, is completely unique. At a time when the Czech principality was still dominated by Early Medieval castles, such as Litoměřice, the architectural type of a High Medieval stone castle, which was already quite common in contemporary Western Europe, appeared for the first time. However, the expansion of their construction did not occur until the reign of the Czech King Wenceslas I (1230–1253) [1].

One of the oldest Wenceslas castles in Northwestern Bohemia is the Most Castle, later also called Landeswarte, built together with the royal city [2, pp. 31–39]. The original appearance of the castle has been changed by the construction of a restaurant and a lookout tower from the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. However, preserved Medieval parts, descriptions and old depictions assist us in reconstructing its appearance. The castle, located on the top of a hill above the city, was divided into two sections – the outer bailey and the inner bailey. The inner bailey was dominated by a massive circular Bergfried (a free-standing, fighting-tower) with a diameter of 14 m. To the west of it was a two-storey palace with a chapel, king's chambers and a great hall. To the east of the tower was another palace with a prismatic tower. We assume agricultural and operational development in the outer bailey, perhaps even burgrave dwellings. The original gatehouse was located on the northern side. At the end of the 15th century, the castle was rebuilt in late Gothic style, while new flanking towers and towers were also built and the gatehouse was moved to the south (Fig. 2).

During the reign of Wenceslas I, the royal towns of Ústí nad Labem and Žatec were also established, within

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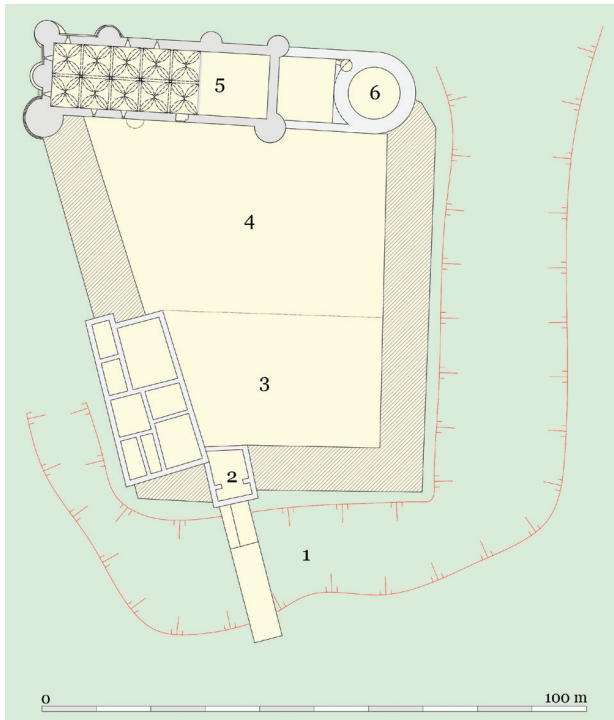


Fig. 1. Roudnice nad Labem Castle: 1 – moat, 2 – tower gate, 3 – outer bailey, 4 – inner bailey, 5 – Romanesque palace, 6 – large tower from the 2nd half of the 14th century (drawing by M. Sýkora)

Il. 1. Zamek Roudnice nad Labem: 1 – fosa, 2 – wieża bramna, 3 – podzámce, 4 – podzámce wewnętrzne, 5 – pałac romański, 6 – duża wieża z 2. połowy XIV w. (rys. M. Sýkora)

which castles were built. Unfortunately, their appearance remains completely unknown. The same is true with the appearance of one of the oldest nobility castles – Bílina, on the site of which a Baroque chateau was built. We know from written sources that the core was dominated by a circular Bergfried, next to which there was a gatehouse and in the back part stood a donjon [2, p. 40]. Such an economical approach will be typical for the residences of the nobility throughout the 13th century.

In Northwestern Bohemia, Rýzmburk, later referred to as Osek, is one of the most complex and extensive castles (Fig. 3). Sometime before or exactly in 1249, it was founded by one of the most important nobles in the kingdom, Boreš of Rýzmburk. Its former appearance with a Bergfried, a modest palace and an outer bailey with a cistern corresponds to contemporary nobility buildings. Only the additional construction of a high prismatic donjon with elaborate architectural details from the period after 1260 was motivated by the effort to increase the representational function of the building [3, pp. 149–203].

During the reign of King Přemysl Otakar II (1253–1278), the town of Kadaň was established. On the western side of it a castle was built above the slopes of the Ohře river, which then or shortly afterwards took the form of a rectangular castle with four corner towers and periphery housing. In addition to the main wall, the castle was fortified against the city by an outer ward with a wall

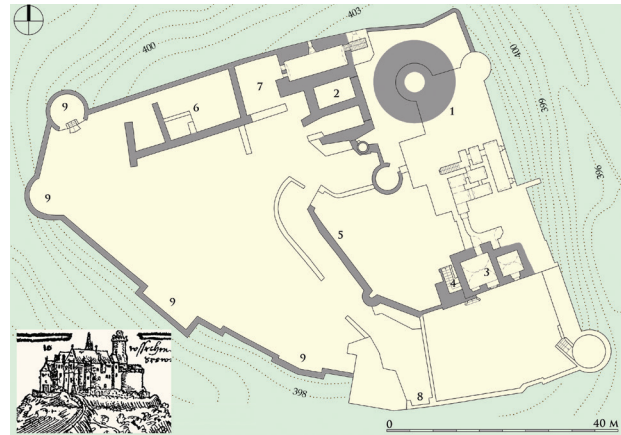


Fig. 2. Floor plan of Most Castle and its depiction from the beginning of the 17th century by Jan Willenberg: 1 – Bergfried, 2 – royal palace, 3 – palace, 4 – prismatic tower, 5 – wall separating the inner bailey from the outer bailey, 6 – building, 7 – old gate, 8 – new gate from the 15th century, 9 – flanking towers (drawing by M. Sýkora)

Il. 2. Plan piętra zamku Most i jego widok z początku XVII w. według Jana Willenberga:

1 – Bergfried, 2 – pałac królewski, 3 – pałac, 4 – wieża graniastosłupowa, 5 – mur oddzielający podzámce wewnętrzne od podzámca zewnętrznego, 6 – budynek, 7 – stara brama, 8 – nowa brama z XV w., 9 – baszty flankujące (rys. M. Sýkora)

and a ditch (Fig. 4A) [4, pp. 235–237]. Another royal castle in Budyně nad Ohří, built on the site of an older Přemyslid curia on the edge of the newly founded royal town during the reign of Přemysl Otakar II, had the same form [4, pp. 90–92], [5, pp. 454–459]. The appearance of both castles was based not only on the monarch's demand on representation, but also on the confined conditions of cities, where the castle layout had to be adapted to the regular division of the city by street network.

Přemysl Otakar II built the Svádov castle near the royal town of Ústí nad Labem as a stronghold. The castle was divided into two parts – the outer bailey and the inner bailey. The inner bailey was built around on almost all sides. At the northern section of the wall was the main palace, headed by a cylindrical Bergfried (Fig. 4B) [4, p. 530].

While royal castles usually took the form of a castellum or a layout with compact stone buildings, nobility castles in the 2nd half of the 13th century were far more modest. The main elements were usually a circular Bergfried and a palace (a typical example is the Unknown Castle near Albrechtice), but sometimes the core was occupied only by a large donjon (Unknown Castle on Josefina Skála, Fig. 4C). The towers did not always have to be cylindrical, but also prismatic, while they could also fulfil a residential function (Starý Žeberk, Fig. 4D). However, the castles could also stand free of towers – the castle in Žerotín had only two palace wings perpendicular to each other, while the remaining sides of the courtyard were surrounded by a moat [6, pp. 77–114].

Přemysl's successor Wenceslas II (1283–1305) probably only continued the completion of castles founded under his father, his only foundation is the establishment of a castle



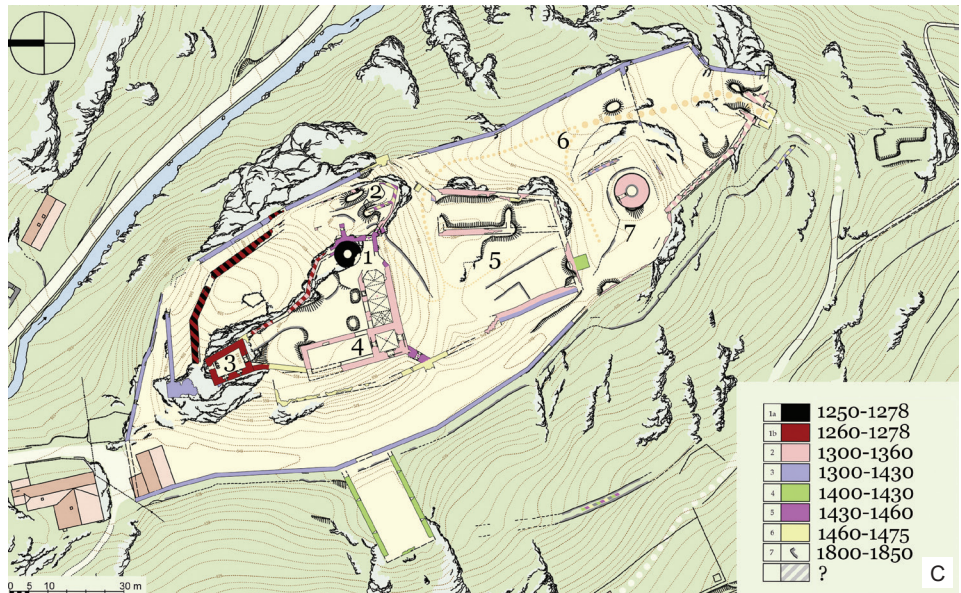
A



B

Fig. 3. Rýzmburk Castle:
 A – hypothetical reconstruction of the form at the end of the 13th century,
 B – hypothetical reconstruction of the form at the end of the 15th century,
 C – ground floor plan of the castle,
 1 – Bergfried, 2 – old palace,
 3 – donjon, 4 – palace with tower and chapel from the 1st half of the 14th century,
 5 – first outer bailey,
 6 – second outer bailey,
 7 – Bergfried
 (drawing and 3D model by I. Lehký)

Il. 3. Zamek Rýzmburk:
 A – hipotetyczna rekonstrukcja formy z końca XIII w.,
 B – hipotetyczna rekonstrukcja formy z końca XV w.,
 C – plan przyziemia zamku,
 1 – Bergfried, 2 – stary pałac,
 3 – donżon, 4 – pałac z wieżą i kaplicą z 1. połowy XIV w.,
 5 – I podzamecze,
 6 – II podzamecze, 7 – Bergfried
 (oprac. I. Lehký)



C

in Litoměřice, which, however, was not completed until the reign of John the Blind (of Luxembourg). Also Wenceslas III (1305–1306) was not active in founding, having too short a life, ended with an insidious attack by an unknown murderer. During the subsequent struggles for the Czech Kingdom, when Rudolf I of Habsburg (1306–

1307) and Henry of Carinthia (1307–1310) took turns on the throne, no other settlements were built, but some of the royal castles got into temporary possession of the nobility.

In 1310, the royal estates included the castles of Budyně nad Ohří, Kadaň (in temporary possession of the nobility), Königstein, Litoměřice, Most (temporary possession

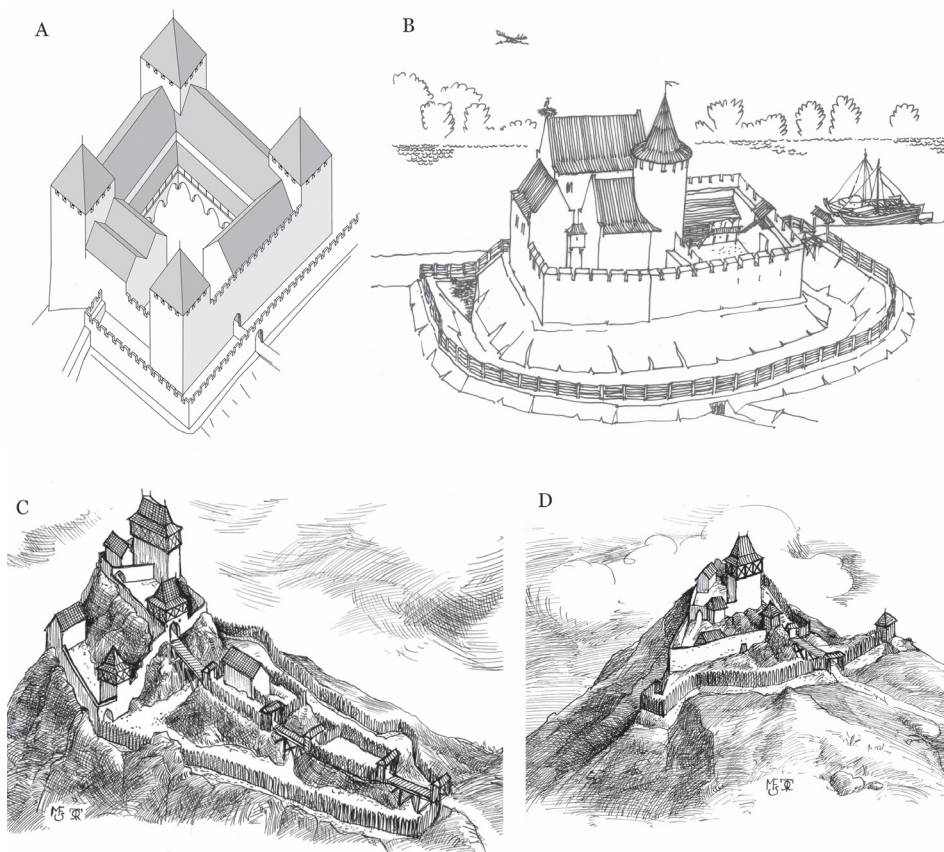


Fig. 4. Castles of the 2nd half of the 13th century: A – Kadaň, B – Svádov, C – Unknown castle on Josefina skála, D – Starý Žeberk (drawings by J. Novotný, J. Otradovec, M. Sýkora and F. Záruba)

Il. 4. Zamki 2. polowy XIII w.: A – Kadaň, B – Svádov, C – nieznany zamek na skale Josefíny, D – Stare Žeberka (rys. J. Novotný, J. Otradovec, M. Sýkora i F. Záruba)

of the nobility) and Svádov. Bílina was a fief in the possession of the lords of Friedberk. Noble families held Děčín (until 1305 a royal town with a castle), Egerberk, Unknown Castle upon Kotvina, Klapý (Házmburk), Mašřov, Mojžíř, Unknown Castle near Albrechtice, Unknown Castle on Josefina Skála, Šarfenštejn/Ostrý, Rýzmburk (Osek), Starý Žeberk, Šebín, Těchlovice, Velké Březno I, Vinařice and Žerotín. The spectrum of fortifications is complemented by three localities of unknown type and owner – fortified settlements near Brandov, Český Jiřetín and Levín, as well as commandery of knightly orders in Kadaň, Chomutov, Most, Býčkovice and Ploskovic, and the bishop's castle in Roudnice nad Labem [7, pp. 124–135].

Castles during the reign of The Luxembourgs

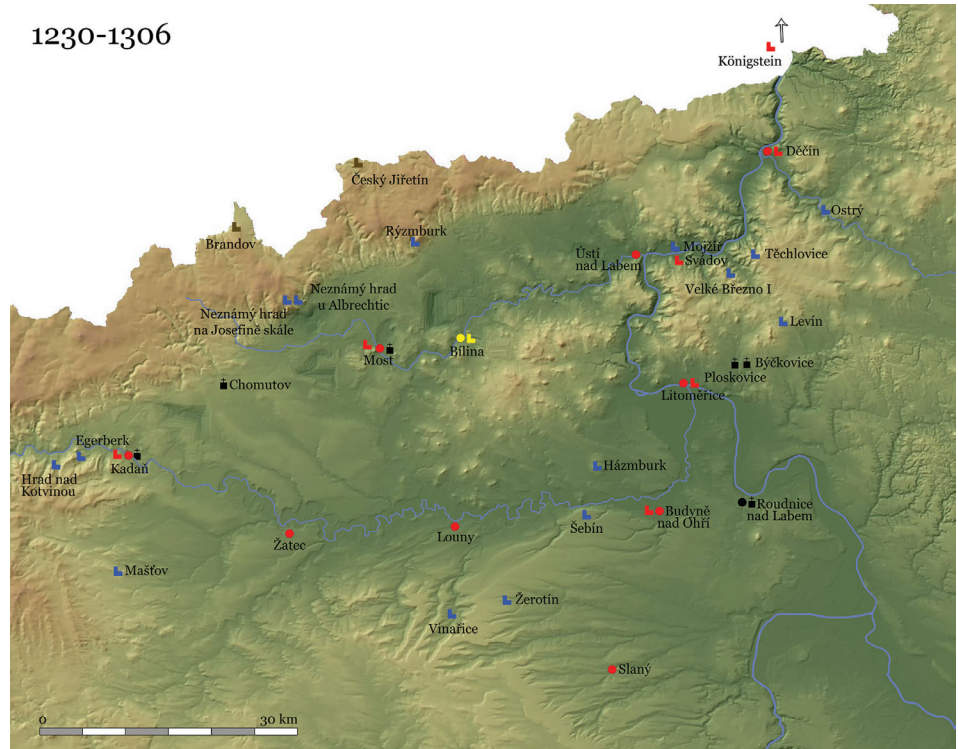
Until recently, the reign of the first Czech king of the Luxembourg family, John the Blind (1310–1346), was perceived as a time with insignificant castle founding activity, especially in comparison with the Přemyslid predecessors and an extraordinarily capable successor, namely Charles IV. It is true that very few new foundations date from the time of his reign, but it must be noted that the basic network of castles had already been completed, and that the construction and completion of previously established settlements continued. In addition, a large number of newly built castles were established as fief castles [8], where the owner was obliged to the monarch not only for military service, but the castle had to remain open for the needs of the king. The military conflict was only one of a number of reasons for the construction of a network of

Northwest Bohemian castles as a support to royal power, while economic interests had the same or perhaps greater importance. A colonization wave entered the interior of the Ore Mountains as early as the 13th century, creating mostly isolated settlements. Attractive deposits of ores and precious metals, as well as a dense network of long-distance routes, could be a valuable source of finance for the royal treasury, while uninhabited territories could satisfy ambitions of the representatives of the elites.

The combination of all these factors led King Jan to the completion of the network of castles in Northwestern Bohemia. After taking the throne, Jan regained ownership of the Most and Kadaň castles and completed the castle in Litoměřice. At the same time, he supported the construction of new fief castles Perštejn, Hasištejn, Nový Žeberk, Krupka, Kyšperk, Střekov and Kamýk, while the owners of the older castles of Starý Žeberk and Rýzmburk also joined the network of fief castles (Fig. 5) [7].

Undoubtedly the most interesting castle building of the 14th century is the town castle in Litoměřice [7], [9, pp. 182, 183]. The castle originally stood outside the city walls, only under Charles IV it was included in their fortifications during the expansion of Litoměřice. According to archaeological findings, the beginnings of its construction are connected with the reign of Wenceslas II, though only the foundations of buildings of unclear purpose, perhaps a residential building, date from this period. Later, during the reign of John the Blind of Luxembourg a regular castle was built, the front of which was strengthened by two cylindrical towers, between which a gate with portcullis was placed in the wall. In the third corner of the layout

1230-1306



1310-1333

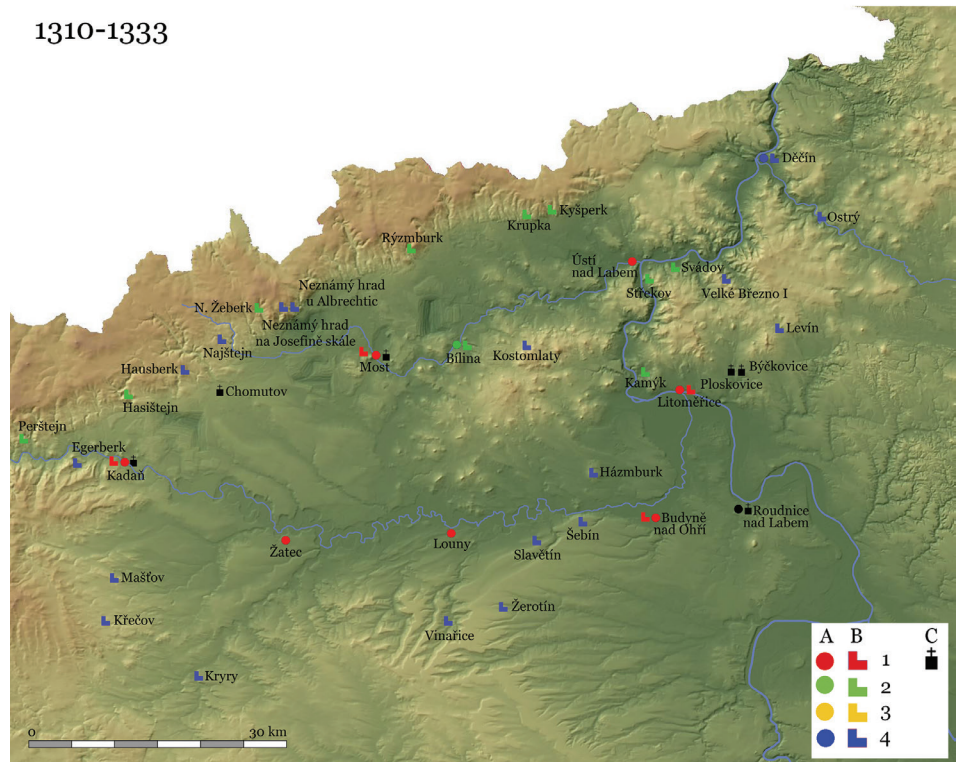


Fig. 5. Castles in Northwestern Bohemia:
 A – town, B – castle,
 C – commandery,
 1 – royal property, 2 – fief,
 3 – temporary possession of the nobility, 4 – nobility property
 (map by M. Sýkora)

Il. 5. Zamki w północno-zachodnich Czechach:
 A – miasto, B – zamek,
 C – komandoria,
 1 – własność królewska,
 2 – lenno, 3 – czasowa własność szlachecka,
 4 – majątek szlachecki
 (oprac. M. Sýkora)

there was a prismatic tower, the fourth was later completely destroyed by the construction of a brewery. The inner development included a palace with courtyard galleries on the west side. The inner bailey of the castle was surrounded by a wall with an outer ward, on the eastern side there was an outer bailey belonging to the castle (Fig. 6). Litoměřice was the only royal castle in Northwestern Bohemia, among many existing fief castles owned by the nobility.

Two castles were held by a German family of lords from Šumburk (Schönburg). Perštejn Castle first appears

in written sources in 1343, according to archaeological findings, its origins date back to the 1st half of the 14th century. So far, minimal attention has been paid to the construction of this castle with a very complicated layout [4, pp. 425, 426]. It seems that the oldest phase, documented in relics, included an inner bailey with Bergfried, a palace, a gate, a perimeter wall and an outer ward. An additional section with compact buildings around the cramped courtyard was added to the inner bailey, and the castle was also significantly modified in the 15th century.



While in the case of Perštejn the reconstruction of its appearance is more or less hypothetical, in the case of Hasištejn Castle the uncertainty is significantly lower. It was built at the beginning of the reign of King Jan of the Šumburk family as the centre of the estate, where significant mining activities were carried out. In the oldest construction phase, Hasištejn was equipped with a free-standing Bergfried, which was entered through a nearby tower building. Opposite the Bergfried, a tower palace with massive buttresses connected to the perimeter wall stood out on a rock. A two-storey chapel building was tied to the wall. Today, the castle is accessible through a gate in the north-western part of the inner bailey, through a courtyard, which was built on a steep slope sometime around the middle of the 15th century. However, the original gate complex was located on the north-east side, where two gate towers were connected to the outer ward and the main wall. In front of the castle there used to be an outer bailey, equipped with farm and residential buildings, destroyed during the siege of the castle by the royal army in 1418 (Fig. 7) [10, pp. 75–88], [11, pp. 39–74].

Another of the fief castles, Nový Žeberk, was built sometime around 1321 as a residential building, which, for this purpose, was to replace the inconvenient Starý Žeberk built too high and far from the property. The oldest phase includes a palace with a stair tower, to which an outer bailey is connected with perimeter buildings, which seem to have complicated development. The castle is surrounded by an outer ward, from which two probably newer mural towers protrude, of the same age is probably a pentagonal bastion, protruding from the outer bailey, which guarded the entrance to the castle. On almost all sides, the castle was surrounded by a moat and an earth rampart in front of it, from which several earth towers also rise. However, this fortification, as well as two other

lines of embankments with moats, belong to the youngest construction phase from the 1st half of the 15th century (Fig. 9A) [12].

During the reign of King Jan, Rýzmburk also became a fief castle. Under the original inner bailey of the castle, a new complex of buildings was added to the rock in the 1st half of the 14th century. A prismatic tower was built in the corner and a palace adjoined it, which together formed a residential unit. Along the other side of the courtyard, a chapel was built at the same time, which is one of the largest castle buildings of its kind in Bohemia. Another outer bailey, a large cylindrical tower and part of the fortification of the first outer bailey were probably built in the same period (Fig. 3) [3].

Střekov Castle was founded in 1319. Part of the oldest phase of the castle on the dominant rock above the Elbe was a donjon with a courtyard surrounded by a wall at the highest point. Shortly after the castle was captured by a powerful lords family of Vartenberk, a new castle section was established, which blocked the way to the older royal fief castle. It was equipped with a Bergfried connected to the perimeter fortifications and a gate with a drawbridge. In the middle of the longer sides of the new complex there are small mural towers, the north-east corner included a subtle tower. On the south side, a large rectangular palace protrudes from the wall. Although the bastions and towers could have a military function (protection of the access road), their construction was motivated more by the desire for the visual attractiveness of the seat (Fig. 8) [13].

Kamýk Castle was founded in the same year as Střekov. The main structure of the oldest phase was a pentagonal donjon. Below it, the area was surrounded by a wall with an embedded gate and another building on the opposite side. To the south below the tower, a Renaissance palace was built at the wall in the 16th century. The whole

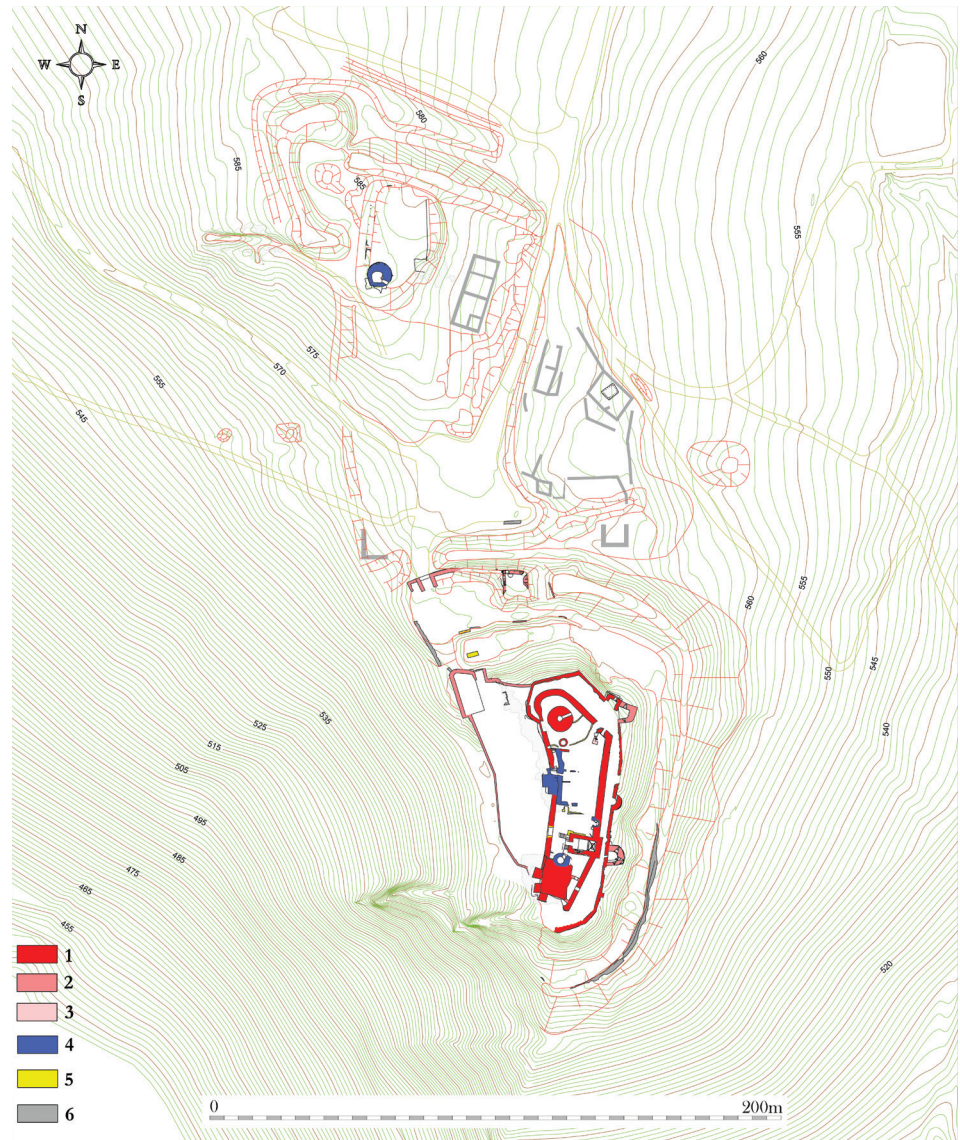


Fig. 7. Hasištejn Castle – ground floor plan of preserved parts and projection of the state around 1418.
 1 – masonry from 1310–1330,
 2 – masonry from the middle of the 14th century,
 3 – masonry from the end of the 14th century,
 4 – masonry around 1500,
 5 – 19th century, 6 – undated (drawing and 3D model by M. Sýkora)

Il. 7. Zamek Hasištejn – plan zachowanych części przyziemia i wizualizacja stanu około 1418 r.,
 1 – mury z lat 1310–1330,
 2 – mury z połowy XIV w.,
 3 – mury z końca XIV w.,
 4 – mury z ok. 1500,
 5 – XIX w., 6 – niedatowane (oprac. M. Sýkora)



castle was still surrounded by an outer ward (Fig. 9B) [4, pp. 241, 242].

During the reign of King Charles IV (1346–1378) no new royal castles were built in Northwestern Bohemia, even the reconstructions are very sporadic and partial, if we can distinguish them at all. New buildings of nobility provenance are also relatively rare, especially in compar-

ison with the previous period. This is quite understandable, considering that the settlement network with castles had basically been completed.

One of the few aristocratic buildings is Petrohrad Castle, which unfortunately has not been thoroughly researched so far, which, due to its relatively long existence until the middle of the 16th century, causes considerable difficulties

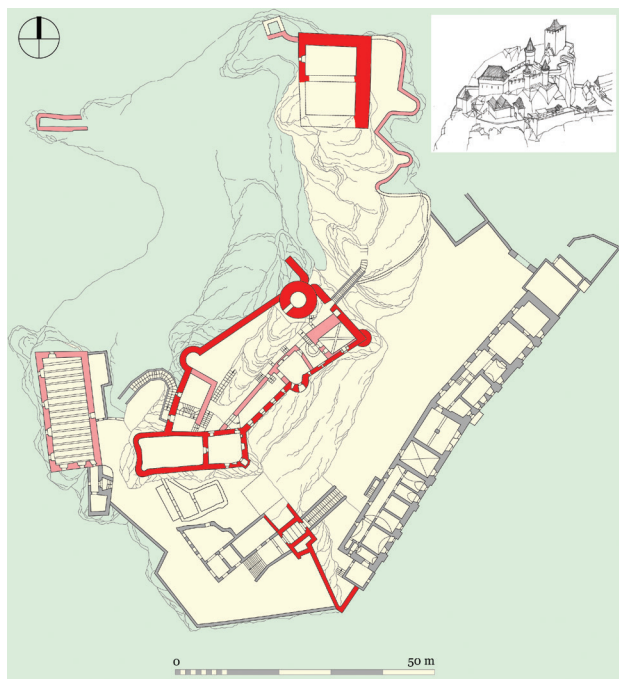


Fig. 8. Střekov Castle – ground floor plan of preserved parts and reconstruction of the state around 1500.

Dark red masonry from 1310–1330, light red masonry from the end of the 15th century

(floor plan by M. Sýkora acc. to D. Menclová, projection by J. Novotný)

Il. 8. Zamek Střekov – plan zachowanych części przyziemia i rekonstrukcja stanu około 1500 r.

Kolorem ciemnoczerwonym oznaczono mury z lat 1310–1330, a kolorem różowym mury z końca XV w.

(plan piętra oprac. M. Sýkora wg D. Menclovej, wizualizacja J. Novotný)

in distinguishing between individual construction phases [4, pp. 426–428]. The highest part of the castle hill was occupied by the inner bailey, which probably consisted of two complex buildings, arranged in a line. We have no data on their appearance and equipment, although we can assume residential purposes. This complex of buildings was surrounded by a wall in a massive oval down the slope, which formed another castle section on the north-west side. In it we have found the remains of a building, near which stood a massive Bergfried, guarding the access road to the castle. The entrance to the castle was located on the north side, where in a kind of barbican the road turned at a right angle and passed through two gates. Part of the protection of both gates was a prismatic tower standing above them.

The castle in Roudnice nad Labem underwent significant changes. In the times of Bishop John IV of Dražice and Archbishop Ernest of Pardubice, the castle grounds, consisting of a Romanesque palace with turrets, were significantly expanded. The palace was extended to the east, where it ended with the main tower (diameter of 15 m) with a chapel (Fig. 1).

Košťálov Castle is first mentioned in 1372, it was built shortly before by the Zajícové of Házmburk [14, pp. 66–75]. The inner bailey of the castle at the highest point of the hill was occupied by a tower palace building, which was surrounded by an outer ward on the front. Behind the inner

bailey on the slope below was another walled section of unknown function. In front of the castle there was an outer bailey with at least three buildings, documented by archaeological probes, two of which served as a residence of a large family of the castle owners in the 15th century. We are missing the dating of the outer bailey buildings, although we assume this section belongs to the original part of the castle. In front of the outer bailey we see traces of three sections from the 15th century, placed along the access road. The inner one had a stone fortification, the middle one was accessible by a brick gate and, like the outer one, was only fortified by an earth wall and a wooden wall-walk (Fig. 9D).

The tendency to develop comfortable residential buildings can also be observed at the castle called Jezeří (Eisenberg), which is first mentioned in 1365. The castle was later rebuilt several times, around 1549 in the Renaissance and after 1696 in the Baroque style, but thanks to architectural history research and analysis of the terrain situation we can partially describe its appearance [2, pp. 111–115]. The building reflected the period's tendency towards balanced two-pole layouts with two palaces opposite each other. These are complemented by two towers, one at the front and the other on a high rock at the back of the castle (Fig. 9C).

In addition to relatively large structures, we also find more economical buildings from the reign of Charles IV. Skalka Castle is first mentioned in 1357 [14, pp. 126–131]. To this day, only a Bergfried has been preserved from the castle, but we can assume that another building could have stood on a distinctive rock behind it, and below the tower – an outer bailey in front of a moat. The main living quarters were probably located on the site of today's chateau below the castle (Fig. 9F).

As in the case of Skalka, we also recognize a small structure in Oparno, the dimensions of which may be related to the not very large economic power of the builder, who built his seat sometime between 1341–1354 [15, pp. 233–255]. The highest point of the castle rock was occupied by the inner bailey, separated on both shorter sides by moats and surrounded by a high chemise wall with crenellation, inside it were two longitudinally oriented buildings, the remains of one of which allow us to interpret it as a residential building. On both shorter sides of the inner bailey we see two more castle sections. The front one undoubtedly had a defensive function and guarded the access, while the rear, and the lowest situated, fulfilled economic and operational functions. Later the castle was divided between two owners and also served residential purposes.

From the reign of King Wenceslas IV (1378–1419) we know mainly two extensive reconstructions of older castles – Egerberk and Litoměřice. In 1384–1395, Egerberk was radically rebuilt by Jindřich Škopek of Dubá, the kingdom's Grand Master of the Household. At that time, a new palace with a bay chapel was built in the inner bailey and a half-cylindrical tower was rebuilt. Behind the inner bailey of the castle we find the outer bailey, another section spirals around the previous two and at its head is a high tower gate. It was accessible by a bridge over a moat and an outer embankment, at the top of which stood another gate accessible by a narrow forework enclosed by two walls. This

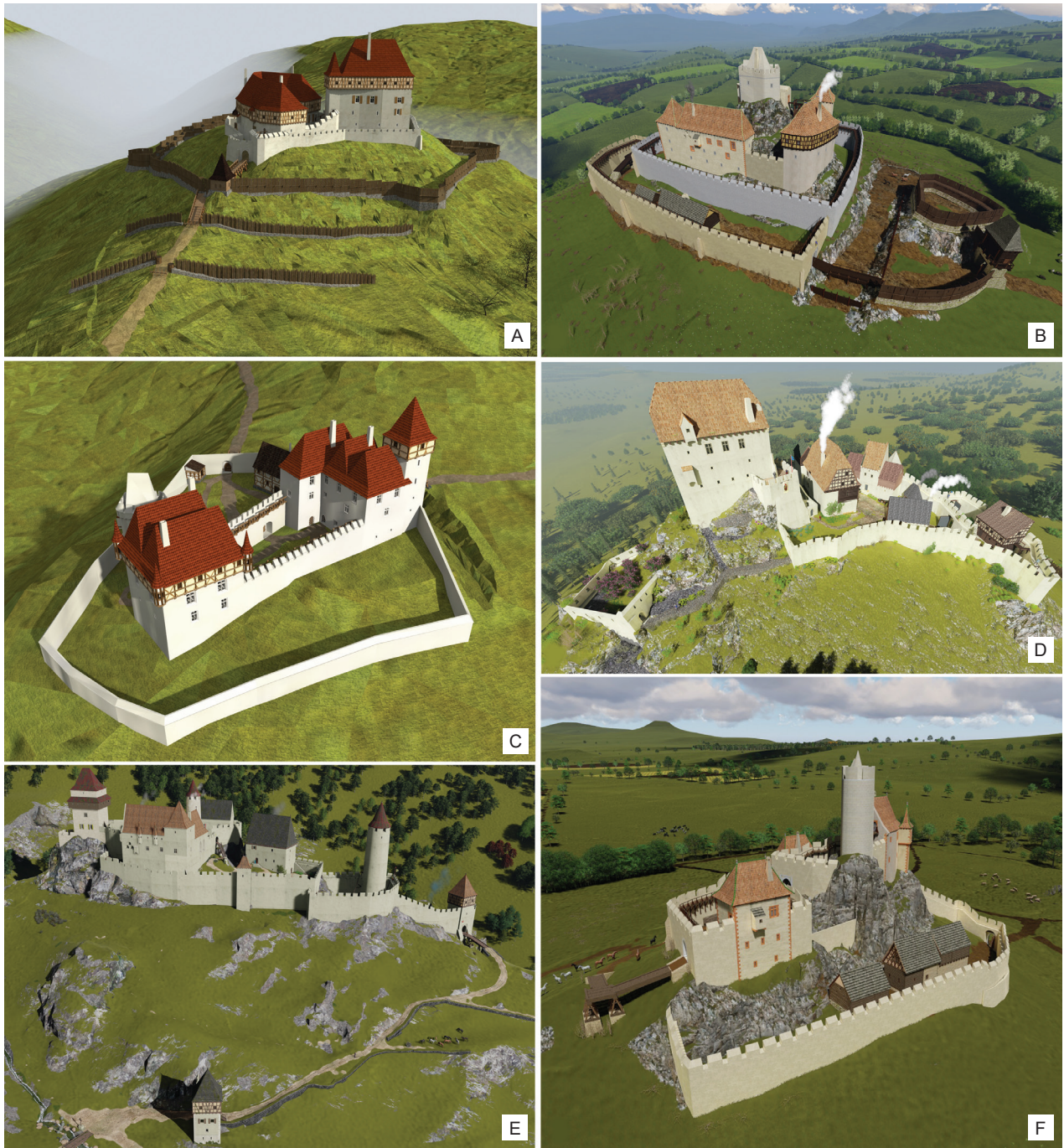


Fig. 9. Castles of the 14th century:

A – Nový Žeberk at the end of the 14th century (3D model by M. Sýkora), B – Kamýk at the end of the 15th century (3D model by M. Sýkora), C – Jezeří at the end of the 14th century (3D model by M. Sýkora), D – Košťálov at the end of the 15th century (3D model by I. Lehký), E – Rýzmburk at the end of the 14th century (3D model by I. Lehký), F – Skalka at the end of the 15th century (3D model by M. Sýkora)

Il. 9. Zamky z XIV w.:

A – Nový Žeberk pod koniec XIV w. (model 3D M. Sýkora),
 B – Kamýk pod koniec XV w. (model 3D M. Sýkora),
 C – Jezeří pod koniec XIV w. (model 3D M. Sýkora), D – Košťálov pod koniec XV w. (model 3D I. Lehký),
 E – Rýzmburk pod koniec XIV w. (model 3D I. Lehký), F – Skalka pod koniec XV w. (model 3D M. Sýkora)

forework is the first example of defensive elements, more examples of which we find later during the 15th century.

The castle of Litoměřice underwent similarly extensive reconstruction as Egerberk. Under Wenceslas IV a new palace was built, but because there was no place for it inside the castle, it was placed in front of the northern

wall. The palace, although it had only two floors above the ground, was a new feature of the castle due to its massiveness. The ground floor contained one living unit and a chapel area. On the first floor, accessible by a spiral staircase partially protruding from the courtyard façade, we find two more residential units. The courtyard façade



Fig. 10. Castles of the Hussite wars period:
A – Kalich at the end of the 15th century (3D model by I. Lehký),
B – Panna (3D model by M. Sýkora)

Il. 10. Zamki z okresu wojen husyckich:
A – Kalich pod koniec XV w. (model 3D I. Lehký),
B – Panna (model 3D M. Sýkora)

was equipped with a remarkable portal on the ground floor, and the first floor was equipped with large rectangular windows (Fig. 6).

During the reign of King John, we can observe the continuation of the building traditions of the Přemyslid period, as well as the tendency to develop residential components at the expense of defence capabilities. Certainly surprising is a large number of newly built fief castles, where the structural and artistic appearance varies greatly from ordinary small buildings to impressive structures, of which the undoubtedly most interesting one is the new expansion of Rýzmburk Castle with one of the largest castle chapels in the Czech lands.

Also in the 2nd half of the 14th century, castles of different quality were built in Northwestern Bohemia. From simple nobility residences, equipped with a Bergfried and a palace, or enclosed by a mantle wall or with a tower palace as the main building, to elaborately equipped residences, of which the most interesting and unique for its time is the Wenceslas reconstruction of the castle in Litoměřice. The peaceful period of the 14th century was reflected in architecture in the emphasis on the residential and representational qualities of settlements, often at the expense of the military ones. And it was this error that was soon to appear as absolutely fundamental.

Castles in the turmoil of the Hussite wars

After several decades of the reign of King Wenceslas IV latent economic, social and religious problems began to manifest themselves, which eventually resulted in the

Hussite Revolution (1419–1437). During the war times (the reign of Sigismund of Luxembourg, 1420–1437), the use of firearms and artillery grew gradually, and their effect was quite significant. Few castles could withstand the heavy siege and firepower of the increasingly effective artillery. As a temporary solution, at the time of the threat, earth ramparts were built around the castles, finished with various wooden or stone walls with wall-walks. However, thanks to their flexible construction, they proved to be the only possible solution for protecting castles [16, pp. 153–177].

Probably the first case of using such technologies in the area is Hasištejn Castle. After its conquest in 1418, the core of the castle was surrounded by a ring of walled earth rampart, on the crown of which stood unknown structures, replaced sometime in the 1840s by a wall fortification with a building and a gate (Fig. 7).

The earth rampart at Hasištejn was only a passive defence structure, but active defence systems soon appeared. Kalich Castle, built in May 1421 not far from Litoměřice by the Hussite military leader Jan Žižka [17], is a perfect example of military ingenuity and resourcefulness. The inner bailey of the castle was equipped with a three-part palace and several other buildings. At one of the highest places stood a tower, probably prismatic. The entire fortification of the inner bailey took the form of massive walled ramparts with wooden structures at their top, allowing not only flanking with firearms, but also resisting their attack. The key element of the fortification is the advanced work. It consisted of a corridor limited by parallel walls, which were connected at one end to the fortifications of the castle's inner bailey, at the other end stood a massive walled earth tower. Together with the vertically layered strips of the fortifications of the castle core, the advanced work allowed the flanking of a long section of a narrow road cut into the steep slope and the area around the castle, which completely eliminated the blind spots. Below the castle, fortified with more embankments and moats, there was an additional outwork section, which could serve as a place of temporary residence for Hussite troops (Fig. 10A). The fortifications of Kalich Castle were an unprecedentedly progressive solution in their time, combining passive and active defence. Due to its location on a solitary hill, the castle could hardly be endangered. Its qualities are also evidenced by the fact that it was not conquered during the sieges in 1421 and 1437. It stood until sometime around 1500.

The nearby Castle Panna (Litoměřice district) was built in 1421 by Catholic nobleman Zikmund Děčinský of Vartberk as a counterweight to Kalich Castle, as evidenced by its symbolic name. In 1423, the Hussites conquered the castle and occupied it with their garrison. The original small castle with three buildings (probably a tower, a residential building and another structure between them) and an outer bailey was extended by several other lines of fortifications, again formed by walled earth ramparts and wooden structures. Unlike Kalich, it was to be used for purely military functions and for temporary accommodation of the army, so we also do not find many permanent residential units, only a few smaller wooden buildings. Both large earth towers and small defensive fighting position protruded

from the line of fortifications, from where it was possible to effectively protect the forecourt and the access road (Fig. 10B). It is no wonder that the siege of this purely military building in the winter of 1437 lasted for several months and was successfully completed only by the sudden capture of the local governor. Emperor Sigismund of Luxembourg then ordered the demolition of this castle.

Sometime in 1421–1423, Zikmund of Vartenberk built another castle, Lityš, which then served as a seat until the 1st half of the 16th century. Earth ramparts and towers, which gradually descend from the inner bailey at the top and follow the access road, probably come from the oldest phase. The inner bailey was equipped with a gradually expanded three-winged palace and at the highest point probably a tower.

Military innovations have spread to other castles, regardless of the denominational affiliation of their owners. Ostrý Castle, built in 1433–1436, had two wall towers at the ends of the inner bailey and a palace in the middle between them. The outer fortifications consisted of walled earth ramparts and two protruding triangular walled earth towers. An extremely progressive element are the massive walled earth towers built on the slope, one triangular and the other pentagonal, from which it was possible to control a long section of the road to the castle. Ostrý is also a wonderful example of trends in everyday life in the 15th century, when a fortified castle on a high hill serves as a military structure, while residential – in this case a manor house in Bílý Újezd – is located at the bottom in a village or town.

Sometime in the 1st half of the 15th century, the fortification of Nový Žeberk Castle was reactivated, when a massive earth wall was built around almost the entire castle outside the moat, with five protruding earth towers. On the access side the fortifications were reinforced with two lines of moats and earth walls, limiting the advance of a potential attacker (Fig. 9A).

A very exceptional case is Žlutice, where Jakoubek of Vřesovice modernized an older town castle from the 13th century, surrounded the town with a new circle of fortifications and built two new castles Mazanec and Nevděk, whose function was predominantly military, and which served as a symbol of command over the landscape and the city.

Only a few cases from a wide range of buildings show us very clearly that at the beginning of the 15th century ingeniously fortified settlements were built in Bohemia. These stand on the very start of modern fortress construction. Elements such as massive earth ramparts, round, triangular or pentagonal earth towers (sometimes of enormous dimensions), advanced work or outwork appear here. We can observe the tendency to search for castle construction sites on high hills. In case of unfavourable geomorphological conditions, the valley is flooded by ponds or the castle is hidden behind a massive earth wall. The construction methods develop to the point where the defence no longer forms a continuous line, but rather a system of fortifications, which are able to cover each other by flanking. With the spread of Hussite mercenaries across Europe, these innovations spread to other Central European countries, where they found their use and, influenced by local architecture, led to the development of the bastion fortress. It is

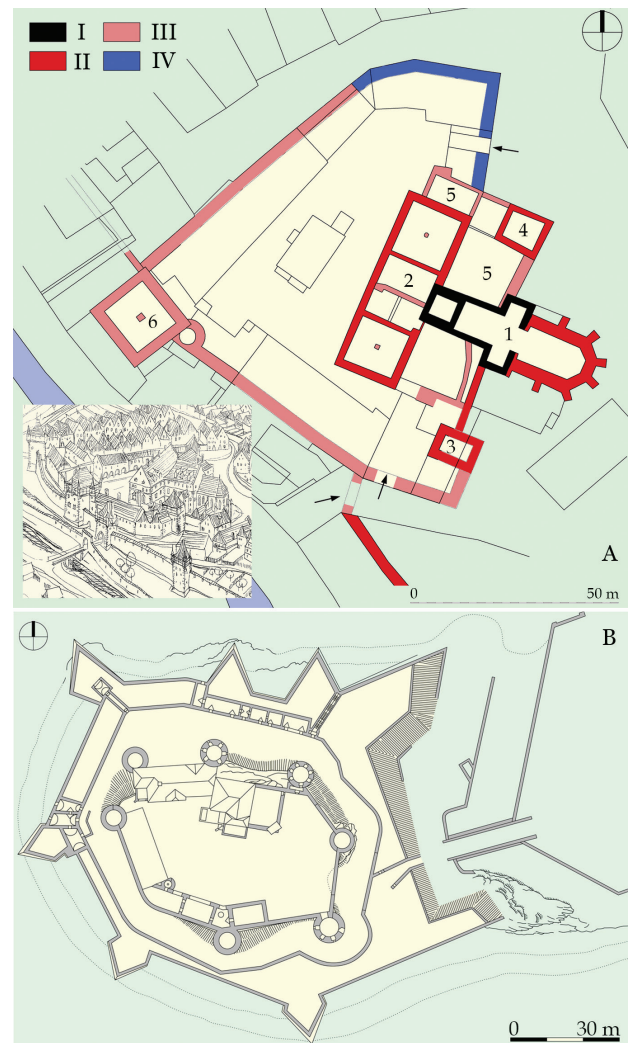


Fig. 11. Castles of the Late Middle Ages and Early Modern Period:

A – Chomutov (plan by M. Sýkora, projection of the state at the end of the 15th century by J. Pachner),
B – Doubravská hora (plan by M. Sýkora acc. to D. Menclová).

I – before 1250, II – 2nd half of the 13th century,
III – 2nd half of the 15th century, IV – beginning of the 16th century.

1 – Church of St. Catherine of Alexandria, 2 – commandery,
3 and 4 – tower, 5 – Late Gothic buildings, 6 – wall tower

II. 11. Zamki późnego średniowiecza i wczesnej epoki nowożytnej:

A – Chomutov

(plan M. Sýkora, widok stanu na koniec XV w. J. Pachnera),
B – Doubravská hora (plan M. Sýkora wg D. Menclovej).

I – przed 1250 r., II – 2. połowa XIII w.,
III – 2. połowa XV w., IV – początek XVI w.,

1 – kościół św. Katarzyny Aleksandryjskiej, 2 – komandoria,
3 i 4 – wieża, 5 – późnogotycka budowla, 6 – wieża murowa

a historical paradox that in Bohemia, after the situation calmed down after the Hussite wars, these discoveries were forgotten and the castle architecture was slowly moving towards chateau settlements.

Castles in the late Gothic and Renaissance period

During the reign of George (lord of Kunštát and Po-děbrady, 1458–1471) and the Jagiellonians Vladislaus II (1471–1516), Matthias Corvinus (1469–1490) and Louis

(1516–1526), the main emphasis in castle architecture is again on the quality of housing. Although we can observe some effort for military ability of the seats in the form of construction of walls with allure or covered allure, wall towers, gun towers or outwork, sometimes their effectiveness is highly questionable and does not constitute a comprehensive and well-thought-out defence system.

Around the middle of the 15th century, Hasištejn Castle was equipped with a system of wall towers, which, around 1500, was supplemented by an outwork fortification with a gun tower and earth fortifications. However, a new large palace is also being built on the castle, as a substitution to the original compact residential tower (Fig. 7).

Far greater emphasis on the residential component is obvious in the reconstruction of the Most/Landeswarte Castle from the period after 1480, when the two older palaces were rebuilt and expanded, using the contemporary German late-Gothic style of Arnold von Westfalen (Fig. 2). The same sources of inspiration can be seen in the reconstruction of the former commandery of the Teutonic Order in the town of Chomutov from the same period, because Chomutov and Most had the same owner – the family of lords from Weitmile. The Chomutov mansion, which was equipped with only one defensive structure – a wall tower protruding from the fortification ring, was mainly a glamorous residence (Fig. 11A). However, the missing military component was substituted by the fortifications of the city itself. This example also shows us the tendency to build settlements within or near cities and towns, where there were far more opportunities for the representation of the family (decoration of churches – neopolises, town halls, gates and towers).

Although reconstructions of some settlements (e.g., Jezeří) took place during the 16th century, a number of castles were definitively abandoned in favour of more comfortable manor houses and chateaux. The last modifications of the castles are known from the period of the 1st half of the 17th century. Around 1600, Doubravská Hora was rebuilt, when not only 7 gun towers were built, but also a progressive bastion fortification (Fig. 11B) [2, pp. 172, 173]. During the Thirty Years' War, military garrisons appeared in castles that still served their purpose, and sometimes fortifications were improved – for example, three earth bastions built at Most Castle.

Conclusions

The oldest royal and nobility castles appear in North-western Bohemia, as well as in the whole kingdom, in the 2nd third of the 13th century, although we know rare exceptions from the previous period. Typologically, during the reign of the Přemyslids (until 1306), builders mainly use castles

with a Bergfried and a palace or with a donjon, regular castle dispositions remain limited to the environment of royal cities. While royal residences are concentrated in the traditional settlement areas in the lowlands, near the rivers and in the vicinity of the royal cities, the nobility castles penetrate the newly inhabited mountain areas. However, the growth in construction of nobility castles did not occur until the reign of John the Blind (1310–1346), when many of them were built as fief castles. These buildings were to serve not only as strongholds and power points of the king and his vassals, often nobles of non-Czech origin, but also as centres of colonization of mountain areas.

During the 14th century we can observe different tendencies in the construction of castles. Simple mansions equipped with Bergfried and a palace or with a donjon as the main building are still used. In addition to them, however, there are also more sophisticated mansions, where a large palace stands as the main building. While during almost the entire 14th century there is still an emphasis on the military component of castles in the form of multiplication of wall lines, towers or wall towers, in the last quarter we can already observe decline in the use of defensive components. The peaceful period of the 14th century was reflected in the improvement of the residential and representational component of the settlements.

The direction of the castle architecture towards comfortable settlements similar to later castles was disrupted by the Hussite wars and the massive development of firearms. During the war years in Bohemia, an ingenious architecture was being created using both passive and active defence means, which, together with military knowledge (cannons, composite iron lead ammunition) spread throughout Europe and formed one of the sources of inspiration for modern bastion fortresses.

After the Hussite wars, we see tendencies aimed at improving the quality of residential and representational components of settlements in the castle architecture tendencies aimed at improving the quality of residential and representational components of settlements, with inspiration often taken from contemporary constructions in neighbouring Saxony. Their military equipment was often demonstrative and representative in nature and was not adapted for combat at all. The downside last manifested itself during the Thirty Years' War, when castles were last used militarily. This final episode of the life of the proud residences of social elites symbolically closes the long period of existence of castles. Even after many centuries of gradual decay, however, they still tell us their stories and provide evidence of the daily lives of their owners.

*Translated by
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Abstract

Castles of Northwestern Bohemia in the Middle Ages

The oldest royal and nobility castles appear in Northwestern Bohemia in the 2nd third of the 13th century. Builders mainly use castles with a Bergfried and a palace or with a donjon, regular castle dispositions remain limited to the environment of royal cities. However, the growth in construction of nobility castles did not occur until the reign of John the Blind, when many of them were built as fief castles. During the 14th century we can observe different tendencies in the construction of castles. There are more sophisticated mansions, where a large palace stands as the main building. In the last quarter of the 14th century we can already observe decline in the use of defensive components. The direction of the castle architecture towards comfortable settlements was disrupted by the Hussite wars and the massive development of firearms. During the war years in Bohemia, an ingenious architecture was being created using both passive and active defence means, which spread throughout Europe and formed one of the sources of inspiration for modern bastion fortresses. After the Hussite wars, we see tendencies aimed at improving the quality of residential and representational components.

The purpose of this article is not only to present the complicated beginnings of castles in north-western Bohemia (today's Ústí region), but also to attempt to describe the development trends of castle architecture until the late Middle Ages. In his work, the author focused on the description and interpretation of several key objects and on the outline of general trends.

Key words: Northwestern Bohemia, High Middle Ages, castle

Streszczenie

Zamki północno-zachodnich Czech w średniowieczu

Trzynasty wiek był nie tylko świetlanym okresem panowania ostatnich królów charyzmatycznej dynastii Przemyślidów, ale także okresem stopniowej i długotrwałej transformacji ziem Królestwa Czeskiego, która zasadniczo zmieniła jego wygląd i sposób życia jego mieszkańców. Oprócz ukonstytuowania się szlachty jako grupy społecznej reprezentowanej przez różnorodne symbole wizualne, jednym z przejawów tej przemiany było zastąpienie wczesnośredniowiecznych grodów nowymi kamiennymi zamkami. Wysokie średniowieczne zamki, w przeciwieństwie do swoich poprzedników, miały bardziej zróżnicowane spektrum funkcji, które dodatkowo różniły się w zależności od poszczególnych przypadków. Zamki wczesnego średniowiecza w rozmaity sposób łączyły swoją główną funkcję mieszkalną z funkcjami wojskowymi, centrotwórczymi, administracyjnymi, gospodarczymi, prawnymi i symbolicznymi.

Celem artykułu jest nie tylko przedstawienie skomplikowanych początków zamków w północno-zachodnich Czechach (dzisiejszy region Ústí), ale także próba opisu tendencji rozwojowych architektury zamkowej aż do późnego średniowiecza. W swojej pracy autor skupił się na opisie i interpretacji kilku kluczowych obiektów oraz na zarysie ogólnych trendów.

Słowa kluczowe: północno-zachodnie Czechy, późne średniowiecze, zamek



Zagórze Śląskie, Grodno Castle.
The portal of the foregate
of the upper castle from around 1570.
The frieze presents the genealogy
of Georg von Logau
and Anna from the von Seidlitz house
(photo by A. Gryglewska, 2021)

Zagórze Śląskie, zamek Grodno.
Portal przedbramia górnego zamku
z około 1570 r. We fryzie przedstawienie
genealogii Georga von Logau
i Anny z domu von Seidlitz
(fot. A. Gryglewska, 2021)