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GUÉDELON: A CASTLE IN THE MAKING



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L'ame de l'entente s'ill
 Luc 2. Bertin Englatun
 Comestable de France
 et de l'ordre de la Toison d'Or

tues que auoient faitz d'auant d'aduer
 estoient brues. et que nulle roche
 que nulle ne vouloit tenir nulle

WHY BUILD A CASTLE?

In the Middle Ages

13th-century castles can be defined as centres of power, having a defensive role and enjoying certain legal and economic prerogatives over the pertaining lands and villages. The castellan would have had the right to bear arms. He and his family might have been permanently or temporarily resident. He would be vassal to one or more senior lords and in turn could be suzerain of neighbouring subordinate lords.

A series of historical events had brought this situation into being and many factors contributed to the rapid increase in castle-building in the 11th, 12th and 13th centuries. From the Carolingian period until 1000 AD, written sources state that the building of a castle, great tower or any other defensive fortification could only be granted by a king, prince, or his representatives, secular or religious. This prerogative also conferred other rights: the right to dispense justice, to maintain men-at-arms and to levy

taxes and tolls. This *droit de ban* stimulated local economic development, as well as providing an income for the lord of the manor. The more extensive the fiefdom, the greater the revenue available for financing the most visible symbols of economic power: castle-building. From the 11th century, taking advantage of the weakening of royal power, new lords carved out territories, grabbed castles for themselves and increased the building of unauthorised strongholds.



LEFT

CASTLE UNDER ASSAULT.

Pierre Le Baud, *Compilation des cronicques et ystoires des Bretons*, xv^e century. Paris, BnF, ms. fr. 8266, f^o 281. © BnF.

ABOVE

MASONS ON A STAINED GLASS WINDOW IN BOURGES CATHEDRAL.

© Hervé Champollion

The Architect

Up until the 13th century, there was no notable difference between the master-mason and architect. However, the sheer number, and the complexity, of construction sites in the 13th century created a need for technicians capable of combining practical hands-on experience with theoretical knowledge.

The development of Gothic architecture, from the end of the 12th century, demanded specialist technical mastery, in order to create ever more complex structures. Construction projects which had been on hold for decades were restarted, necessitating new plans and an updating of architectural styles. Only master-masons with a solid grounding in geometry, mathematics and theology were capable of designing challenging new architectural forms and features. From the 13th century onwards, royal and religious patrons came to rely on their skills.

This marked the emergence of the job of architect as it is known today, that is the one who draws up, and implements, the building plans. Illuminated manuscripts and stained-glass windows often represent the following hierarchy: the master-of-works financed, the architect designed, and the master-mason built. It was only the Renaissance which saw architects achieve complete technical and aesthetic control of building projects.

The master-of-works/architect was an important figure from the 13th century on and enjoyed the protection of the rich and powerful, in the same way as engineers specialized



OPPOSITE

HUGES LIBERGIER, THIRTEENTH-CENTURY ARCHITECT. He was the designer of Saint-Nicaise abbey church in Reims. In his right hand he carries a wooden model of the church. Around him are the symbols of his trade: compass, set square and rule. © Hervé Champollion.



in war machines. Some even became close friends of kings, for example, Eude de Montreuil, who accompanied Louis IX on crusade and was captured along with him.

The identity of many master-of-works/architects remains a mystery; however the names of some of the most prominent, Jehan de Chelles, Pierre de Montreuil, Robert de Luzarches, Robert de Coucy, Jean d'Orbais, Jean-le-Loup, Gaucher de Reims, and Bernard de Soisson can be found engraved on their works, or on their tombstones.

OPPOSITE
"THE GREAT
ARCHITECT OF THE
UNIVERSE."

Codex Vindobonensis,
XIII^e century. Autriche,
Bibliothèque nationale,
ms. 2554, f^o 1 v^o. © AKG.

An Architect's Skill

From the Carolingian period up until the 11th century, education in the Middle Ages was provided by monastic schools, the most famous being Cluny, in Burgundy. Then, from the 12th century, education became the preserve of cathedral schools in large urban centres. Under the authority of an *écolâtre*, the schoolmasters (*magisters*) educated students in the seven liberal arts, the *septivium*, the basis of all theoretical knowledge in the Middle Ages. The first three, *trivium*, were grammar, dialectics and rhetoric. The other four, *quadrivium*, were arithmetic, geometry, astronomy and music. The sketchbooks of Villard de Honnecourt illustrate that the architects who created the Gothic masterpieces were proficient in quadrivium.



ABOVE
A MASTER AND HIS STUDENTS.

Chambéry, BM, ms. 27, f^o 151. © IRHT-CNRS.



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