



## **CASTELLA MARIS BALTICI 6**

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## CONTENTS / ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

<b>Charlotte Boje Hilligsø Andersen</b>	Material culture in Danish castles .....9
<b>Aleksander Andrzejewski, Leszek Kajzer</b>	The Chelmno bishops' castle in Lubawa in the light of the latest research .....17
<b>Lars Bengtsson</b>	Three crowns – the royal castle in Stockholm .....23
<b>Maria-Letizia Boscardin</b>	Die Wasserversorgung auf Schweizer Höhenburgen .....35
<b>Tomáš Durdík</b>	Zur Einflussproblematik im Rahmen der böhmischen Burgenarchitektur .....41
<b>Aleh Dziarnovich</b>	Castella Alboruthenica: castle building in Belarus at the crossroads of cultural influences during the 12 <sup>th</sup> to 14 <sup>th</sup> centuries .....49
<b>Øystein Ekroll</b>	Norwegian castles north of the Arctic Circle .....55
<b>Nils Engberg</b>	Three castles on Hjelm island – their military, social political and significance.....63
<b>Giedrė Filipavičienė</b>	Retrospection of Trakai fortification system in the 14 <sup>th</sup> –15 <sup>th</sup> centuries .....83
<b>Jonas Glemža</b>	Medininkai castle .....93
<b>Christofer Herrmann</b>	Deutschordensburgen in der „Grossen Wildnis“ .....97
<b>Napaleonas Kitkauskas</b>	The primeval relief of the Lower castle of Vilnius and the earliest building .....105
<b>Raman Likhashapka</b>	The Western European articles and innovations in the castles' material culture of the Belarusian Nioman Region in the 14 <sup>th</sup> –17 <sup>th</sup> c .....111
<b>Werner Meyer</b>	Burgenbau und natürliche Umweltbedingungen .....115
<b>Terhi Mikkola</b>	Spatial organization in the late Medieval castle of Häme, Finland .....123
<b>Michail Miltschik</b>	Die Verteidigungssysteme von Iwangerod und Narva: Wechselwirkungen in der Entwicklung im 15.–18. Jahrhundert .....131

<b>Ieva Ose</b>	Die ersten Burgen mit regulärem Grundriss in Lettland .....141
<b>Tadeusz Poklewski-Koziell</b>	The royal castles and defensive towns on trading routes through Poland to the Baltic Sea in the 14 th–15 th century. A contribution to the history of country defence system planning.....147
<b>Kazimierz Pospieszny</b>	Der preussisch-livländische „Konventshaustyp“ als eine Kloster-und Herrschaftsidee .....153
<b>Gintautas Rackevičius</b>	The royal palace in Vilnius Upper castle – problems of reconstruction .....159
<b>Henriette Rensbro</b>	Stige castle 1314 AD – a Danish wooden castle ?.....165
<b>Anders Rejnert</b>	Some Scanian and Scandinavian castles and their relations to the Livonian Order .....173
<b>Heinz Sauer</b>	Vir nobilis Bernhardus de Lippia (1140–1224), Spurensuche im Balticum .....185
<b>Daiva Steponavičienė</b>	Gothic period music in the court of the Lithuanian Grand Duchy .....197
<b>Tomasz Torbus</b>	Die Untere Burg zu Wilna (Vilnius) und ihre möglichen Vorbilder .....201
<b>Gintautas Zabiela</b>	Castle warfare between Lithuania and the Order in Lower Panemunė in the late Middle Ages .....211
<b>Algirdas Žalnierius</b>	The first castle of Kaunas .....219
<b>Rita Mosiejienė</b>	Symposium Castella Maris Baltici VI ..... 231
	Bibliography / Literaturverzeichnis .....235

**O**n September 18–22, 2001 the Symposium Castella Maris Baltici VI was held in Lithuania. This is already the 6<sup>th</sup> symposium for the researchers of the medieval castles. The first symposium was held in Turku, Finland in 1991, the second – in Nyköping, Sweden in 1993, the third - in Malbork, Poland in 1995, the fourth - in Estonia in 1997, and the fifth – in Denmark in 1999.

The topic of the conference held in Lithuania was “Contacts and Genetically Dwellings in the Castle Buildings”. Over 40 scientists participated in the conference from Denmark, Belarus, Finland, Sweden, Switzerland, Germany, Russia, Great Britain, Poland, Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania. In the conference there were not only reports presented but also the most famous castles of Lithuania visited in Vilnius, Trakai, Kernavė, Kaunas and Klaipėda.

The time of this conference coincided with the European Heritage Days “Defensive Fortifications in Lithuania”.

This conference was organised by the Public Institution Academy of Cultural Heritage established by Vilnius University, Vilnius Academy of Arts, Vilnius Gediminas Technical University, Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Lithuania and Department of Cultural Heritage Protection. The Symposium Castella Maris Baltici VI was sponsored by the Department of Cultural Heritage Protection.

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**Dr. Albinas Kuncevičius**

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*Charlotte Boje Hilligsø Andersen*

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## MATERIAL CULTURE IN DANISH CASTLES. COMPARISON OF FINDS FROM EGHOLM, ABSALONS SKANSE AND BORINGHOLM

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### Materielle Kultur in dänischen Burgen. Ein Vergleich zwischen Funden aus Egholm, Absalons Schanze und Boringholm

In der traditionellen dänischen Burgenforschung ist der Fokus nur selten auf die Funde gerichtet worden. Die Architekturgeschichte und politische Geschichte der Burgen sind oft als interessanter angesehen worden. Der Zweck des Ph.D.-Projektes, das hier präsentiert wird, besteht darin, die Fundsammlungen aus 13 ausgewählten Burgen zu untersuchen, um den Charakter des Fundmaterials festzulegen. Die zentralen Problemstellungen des Projektes sind aus den Funden und Befunde Funktionen und soziale Schichtung der Burgen festzustellen.

In diesem Aufsatz ist das Material von drei Burgen verglichen worden. Die Befunde und die Funde indizieren zusammen, daß diese drei Burgen sehr verschiedene Funktionen gehabt haben.

Egholm in Nordjütland ist ein kleiner Holzturm in einem Moor. Die Funde repräsentieren wenige Funktionen – hauptsächlich Haushalt –, und der Turm wurde vermutlich nur als zeitweiligen Zufluchtsort benutzt.

In Absalons Schanze sind auch nur die Spuren eines Holzturms ausgegraben worden. Dieser Turm war aber von umfangreichen Wallanlagen umgeben, und er lag strategisch günstig an der Südküste einer Ostseeinsel im südlichen Dänemark. Die Funde aus Absalons Schanze sind vielschichtiger betreffend Typen und Funktionen. Hier sind mehrere Waffen, Handwerksspuren und Münzen gefunden worden. Die Funde und der Turm mögen von einer Kriegsgruppe, die mit Bewachung und vielleicht Steuereintreibung beschäftigt war, verwendet worden sein.

Die größere Burg Boringholm in Ostjütland ist auch aus Holz gebaut, aber wie ein befestigter Bauernhof gestaltet. Die Funde sind – dank der günstigen Erhaltung organischer Materialien – sehr vielartig und umfassend. Die Gebäude und die Funde müssen einen großen Haushalt, der auch mit Landwirtschaft, Handwerk (Hauswerk) und militärischen Aktivitäten beschäftigt war, repräsentieren. Daß eine Familie auf Boringholm lebte, zeigen u.a. Spielzeug und Kinderschuhe.

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What can finds tell about functions and activities in castles? Which types of artefacts occur particularly at castles? How does the material culture of the military aristocracy manifest itself in the Middle Ages? These are some of the questions that are in focus of my Ph.D.-project: *Material Culture of the Medieval Military Aristocracy – Finds from Danish Castles* (The Ph.D.-project started 1<sup>st</sup> October 1999 and will end 31<sup>st</sup> January 2003). The project is made in collaboration between the National Museum and the Department of Medieval Archaeology at the University of Aarhus. The Danish Research Council for the Humanities finances the project, and it is a part of War, Defence & Aristocracy. A research project on war and the threat of war as factors behind the development of the European societies 500 BC–1500 AD. Supervisors are: Jan Kock, Lecturer, Department of Medieval Archaeology, University of Aarhus, Per Kristian Madsen, Head of Department, National Museum and Lars Jørgensen, Curator, National Museum.). As the title indicates, the research subject of the project is the material culture of the military aristocracy from an archaeological point of view, and artefacts are the primary source material. The castles known to be privately owned quite certainly belonged to the military aristocracy of the high Middle Ages. Therefore, it is obvious to work with artefacts from excavations of such sites. In this connection the term “castle” covers a wide range of installations from large brick-built royal residences to fortified sites with quite small buildings that we today know as castle mounds with no buildings left. The defining parameters of a castle are fortification and a remote position in the landscape, often combined with information about seigniorial ownership.

There is a long tradition of castleresearch in Denmark, and a lot of excavations have been carried out (Lecturer Jan Kock from the Department of Medieval Archaeology, University of Aarhus gave a presentation of the Danish castle research tradition at the *Castella Maris Baltici VI* seminar. See his article in this volume). And since the excavators did not find it interesting, we have a large, unpublished body of finds-material from these excavations. The archaeological finds have almost exclusively been used for dating and have otherwise remained undiscussed. No one has used the artefacts to depict life on the castles and no one has until now compared material culture from Danish castles. Though an important exception from this rule is Vilhelm la Cours book from 1961 about the castle Næsholm, where the finds are presented and used in the discussion of the functions and ownership of the castle (Vilhelm la Cour 1961. This book is still a crucial work in Danish Medieval Archaeology).

I have experienced that there is a lot of information on the small finds, especially in cases where the written sources don't tell us anything about who owned the castle, and who lived there. In this paper I

will present the approach of my investigation and give a few examples of results from my work I have to emphasise that I have not finished my investigation for the time being, so most of it is a presentation of tendencies in the material.

## The source material – selected castles and artefacts

In the project I have decided to focus on castle material culture from the 14<sup>th</sup> century. These castles were built in a period in Danish history when the royal power was weak and in some years in the period from about 1320 to 1340 even absent. In a coronation charter from 1326 the knights and esquires got the right to construct fortified buildings of timber and stone on their farmsteads. After that it became widely common that noblemen built a castle or a stronghold near their farm, and for the owner the castles meant security and possibilities for political influence. The construction of private castles continued in the following reign of the strong King Valdemar Atterdag from 1340 to 1375, which meant a lot of struggle between king and noblemen. In 1397 Queen Margaret banned the construction of new private castles after that she and her father, King Valdemar Atterdag, before her had taken over and abolished many of the existing castles. From this troubled century we have remains of a lot of private castles, some built of stone and some built of timber.

For the investigation I have picked out material from 14 castles (Fig. 1). As a consequence of the possibilities to find usable source material, I have primarily selected private castles, owned and built and in some cases also inhabited by members of the military aristocracy. When we know the name of the actual owners of the selected private castles, they appear to be esquires, lords or knights, who were great landowners and influential politicians. Of the selected sites are three royal castles that were in use for two hundred years or more, while the privately owned castles had a short lifetime and were in use for about 20 to 60 years. The differing ranges of the “lifetime” of the castles have quite some consequence for the amount of finds, and that has to be taken into consideration when it comes to comparison of finds.

One of the selection criteria for castles for the investigation is that there should be a certain amount of finds, that finds and documentation shall be available and, if possible, that a larger part of the castle has been excavated. One single section is not enough. It has not been possible to demand for a high quality in excavation techniques and methods because of the fact that a large part of the castle ex-

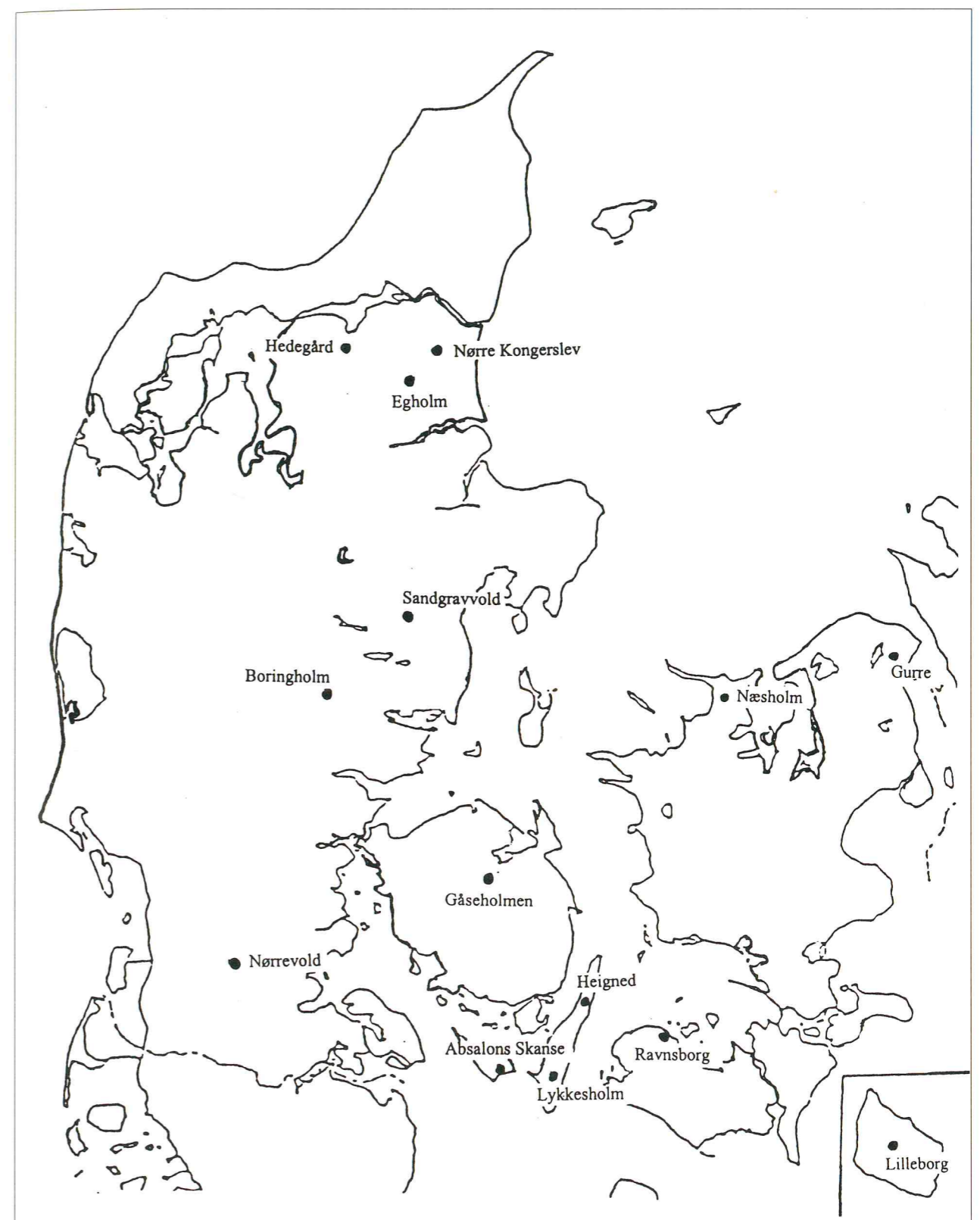


Fig. 1. Map showing castles selected for the investigation

cavations were carried out in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and at that time modern archaeological methods were not invented. Nowadays only a few castle excavations are carried out in Denmark on larger scale, but luckily it has been possible to include

material from modern excavations in the investigation.

From the selected 14 castles I have seen about 25.000 artefacts, which I have put into a database. The backbone in this recording is a set of functional

## FUNCTIONAL CATEGORIES

No.	Artefact category
1	Parts of buildings
2	Furniture, interior details etc.
3a	Pottery
3b	Other kitchen utensils
4	Clothes, garments, jewelry
5	Personal effects
6	Arms and armour
7	Riding gear, horse equipment
8	Farming gear
9	Fishing and hunting gear
10a	Tools from metal crafts
10b	Tools from wood crafts
10c	Tools from textile crafts
10d	Other tools, raw material and waste from crafts
11	Means of transport
12	Coins
13	Administration items
14	Games, toys, music instruments
15	Items related to spiritual life
16	Items with unknown function
17	Unworked bones
18	Clearly older or younger items

Fig. 2. Functional categories devised for the investigation

categories and each artefact is categorised recording to its function (Fig. 2). The functional categories are designed to match the problems of this investigation. They are inspired by work on material from Norwegian and Swedish castles (Pettersson 1995; Eriksson 1995. In Molaug 1998 the use of functional categories is discussed, and a lot more detailed category system, that will be used on material from Oslo, is presented). The main purpose of the project is to look at the daily life and the material standards as reflected in the finds, and to discuss the possibilities of identifying particular aristocratic elements among the finds, compared to finds from cities and rural settlements. The focus will to some extent be set on arms and armour, riding gear, garments, jewellery and imported pottery, since these find groups can be related to the military functions and the social status of the aristocracy.

Central questions are:

- which finds are characteristic for the castles, and how is the distribution of quality and/or imported goods compared to other settlements?
- which functions and activities took place in the castles?
- what are the differences and similarities between finds from wooden and stone castles? Is there a connection between the castle's physical appearance and the character of the artefacts?

- what is the character of the material culture at the medieval castles, compared to the sites of the pre-historic elite and the fortresses of the Viking Age?

## Source criticism

What is then the archaeological situation at the castles? Castle finds are quite different in their composition of artefacts types and their numbers. The explanations of these differences seem to be multiple, and it is quite important to find out the reasons for the differences and to discuss representativity questions. In general almost all the found items are waste objects that have been discarded, because they were useless. Only a few items might have been lost or hidden, since they still seem complete, or the owners have left them behind, because they had to leave the location in a hurry. Before the castle finds are interpreted it is of crucial importance to engage in a thorough source criticism. It is necessary to know the history behind each finds assemblage. And it is important to know how preservation conditions and the excavation methods have influenced the compositions of the finds. It will not be possible to compare finds from different sites without considering the following aspects:

Medieval conditions that might have influenced the compositions of finds

- what is the structure of the cultural strata in the castle? Did the builders collect soil or other materials from elsewhere to build up a mound or an artificial islet, and did that soil contain artefacts, which came from a completely different and older context?
- how large a part of the finds is waste? How did they handle waste in the castle? Did they clean up often? Did they burn the waste, did they deposit it within the castle, or was it perhaps thrown in the moat or outside the castle site?
- under which circumstances was the castle site abandoned – by fire, war or as a result of negotiations?
- how long time do the finds represent - 20 or 200 years?

Later conditions that might have influenced the composition of finds as well as the possibilities for comparing them

- what are the preservation conditions in the site and after excavation?
- why was the excavation done? How and when did they excavate? Which methods were used?
- how many finds were not collected? How many finds were discarded after excavation?
- is the archaeological documentation of an acceptable quality?

I hope these critical questions will not lead to the conclusion that the finds I have selected are not comparable and no results are obtainable, because

conditions like preservation and excavation are too distinct. So it is important to find a uniform standard of reference for the finds and especially to take into consideration which factors marked the material from each site. For the same reason I will have to focus more at the qualitative informations, the character of the artefacts and the compositions of the find material than the quantities of artefacts. Because of the different standards of archaeological documentation it will not be possible to make a detailed spatial analysis of functions within the castles.

## Examples

To show examples of how the finds and their informations on material culture can be used in a discussion of the function and ownership of the castles, I have chosen three castle sites. Two of them – Egholm and Absalons Skanse - have been excavated within the last 20 years and are alike to some extent. They are both small wooden towers but with different kinds of surrounding fortifications, and as we will see, the finds have different characters. As a third example I will present Boringholm, which is also built in wood but where the buildings are larger and have a more permanent character. That site was excavated 90 years ago, which of course has some influence at the level of archaeological documentation. For each example I will give a short introduction to the castle and outline the characteristics of the material culture, as well as the indications it provide about the function of the site. It will not be possible to discuss all aspects here, but I will focus on indications of functions and material standards in the castle finds.

**Egholm** is a wooden tower covering an area of 36 square metres (Jantzen and Kock 1988; Jantzen 1992). It is situated on an islet in a bog and the only access to the tower is guarded by a gate (Fig. 3). The tower is built of timber felled in the autumn of 1334 and it might have belonged to a knight named Sigfred Sehested. The tower has had at least two storeys and on the preserved wooden floor were found the remains of a fireplace. Egholm might have been a stronghold for a noble family living on a larger farm nearby, which we do not know about. The tower must have been a place to go to, when it was too dangerous to stay at the farm. During the 1350's the owners of the stronghold presumably moved to a castle nearby with a brick-built tower and a residence house, so our tower can have been a temporary shelter, while the larger, real castle (which is not excavated) was under construction. This later castle has been dendrochronologically dated to the 1350'es.

The total amount of small finds from the Egholm-tower is 649. The majority of finds are pottery

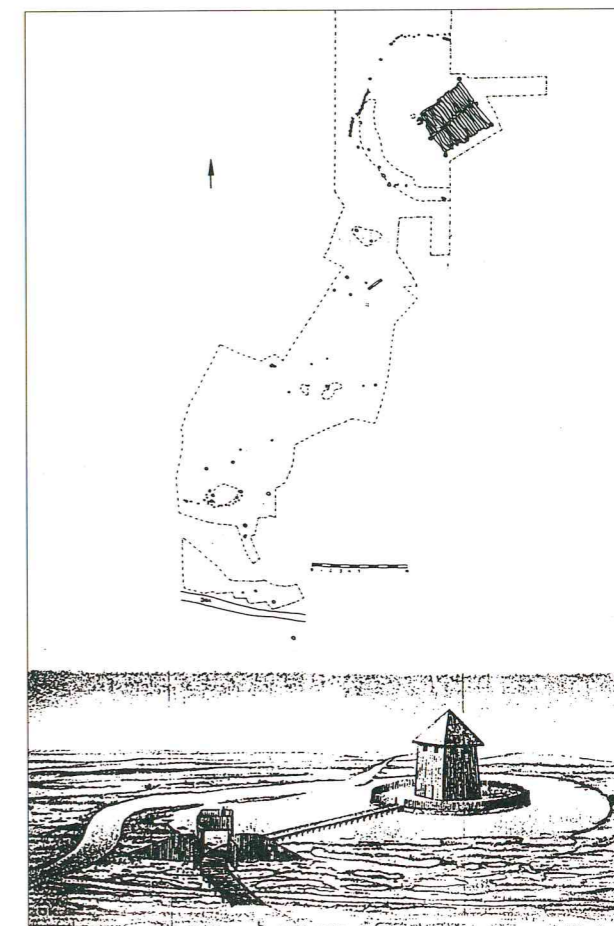


Fig. 3. Egholm. Plan of excavated area and reconstruction made by Jørgen Kraglund (Jantzen and Kock 1988)

fragments, counting 476 mostly small fragments and not representing many pots. Forty-nine items are fragments of kitchen utensils. The arms and armour-group counts as one single item and so does the riding gear group. No coins were found during the excavations, but they found a broken signet from the building layers, which connects a Holstein family (Sehested) to the site.

The elaboration and size of the tower tell us that it was not suitable as a permanent dwelling. That fact is fully supported by the finds. There were not many remains from other daily businesses than cooking and eating. Neither did the finds indicate that the tower was attacked – one fragment of a ballock knife, presumably lost during building activities, was the only trace of weapons, and a single fragment of a horseshoe was the only trace of horses.

Nevertheless, the purpose of the tower has most possibly been to be a secure place, when the owners were fearing an attack. For such cases they most likely kept a stock of food there or they brought it there in ceramic pots and barrels. And when it was safe to return to the farm, they probably left the tower again. The tower was not placed there with a strategic purpose, but it was built to defend the owner, his family and his property. That is not contradicted by



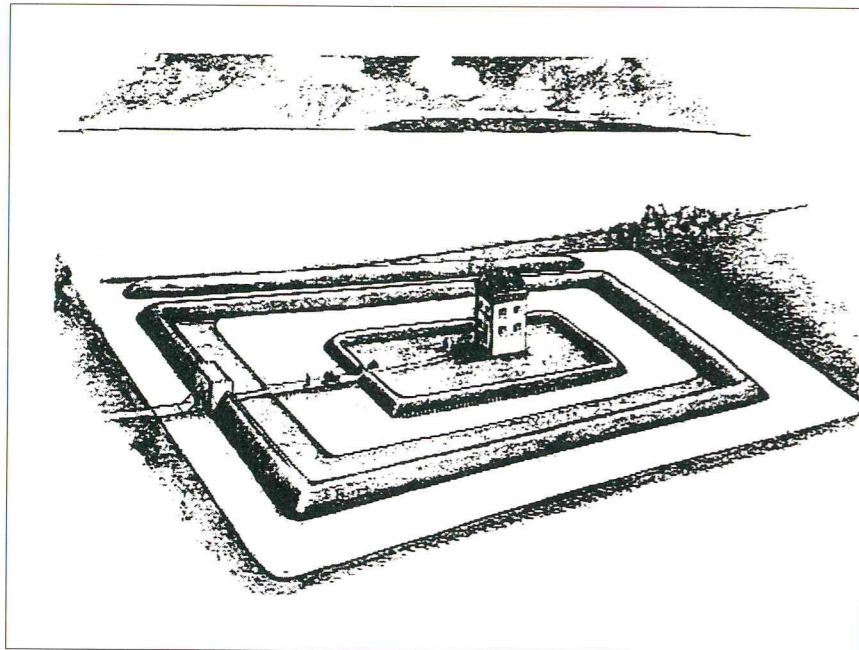


Fig. 4. Absalons Skanse. Reconstruction of excavated structures, made by Bjørn Skaarup (Skaarup 2000, p. 233). There might have been more buildings at the site

the finds – one would have expected more arms and horse gear, if it was the place of a military unit. That might rather be the case for the next castle.

**Absalons Skanse** is situated on an islet by the coast of the island Ærø (Jørgen Skaarup 2001). The islet is surrounded by a large double moat and banks (Fig. 4). On the islet Jørgen Skaarup has excavated a cellar from a presumed wooden tower covering 45 square metres with a tile roof. The tower might have had at least two storeys, and the cellar was divided into two rooms. A fireplace, cooking utensils and remains from meals tell us that people used the tower for some time. The tower, a well and a gate are the only traceable works, but it is most likely that there have been other buildings in the site, which is very damaged by modern tilling activities. Two candle-ticks, two chess-pieces and a dice tell about other indoor activities. Slags and an iron bar represent forging activities.

Wood from the moat is dated to the winter of 1318–19 and the tower must have been used in the first half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Jørgen Skaarup has suggested that the stronghold might have been owned by a Holstein (Laurids Joensen Panter) who was the king's vassal on Ærø, but no written sources confirm that.

From Absalons Skanse the amount of finds is in total 424 (109 potsherds, 12 fragments of kitchen utensils, 6 fragments of knives, 15 crossbow bolts and 15 fragments of horseshoes). One significant find group is coins – more than 100 coins are found in the area. The coins are of different types and not a result of coinage at the site. The finds from Absalons Skanse represent more activities than the finds from Egholm. The fact that there could and might have

been a dwelling house, a stable and a smithy next to the tower supports the impression of the find material as belonging to a more permanently inhabited castle site compared to Egholm. Two of the crossbow bolts were fused together by corrosion – probably because they were part of an arsenal and not from hostile arrows. The coins must represent some kind of administrative or tax collecting activity. The tower was probably inhabited and used by a smaller military unit with administrative and military functions rather than a family household – a fact that is also supported by the strategic position of the stronghold. Still, Absalons Skanse might have been owned by a nobleman or the Crown, who had interest in keeping this area.

As a third example I will mention **Boringholm** from where we

have a large and completely different find material (A publication of Boringholm is under preparation by i.a. the author of this article). Boringholm is also timber-built and situated in a bog on layers of clay, turf and farmyard manure (Fig. 5). Three or four large wooden buildings formed a central complex of dwelling houses and perhaps also space for horses and handicrafts. Here the buildings were covering up to 500 square metres, which is more than 10 times the ground floor area of the towers at Egholm and Absalons Skanse, and some of the houses at Boringholm might even have had two storeys. Boringholm was probably owned by some nobleman and built in 1368. It was taken in possession by Queen Margaret around

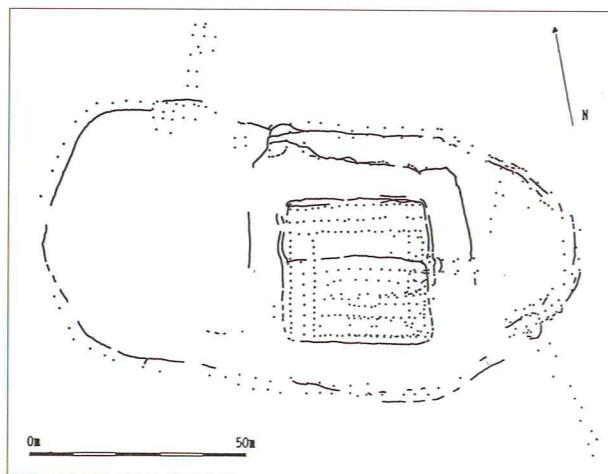


Fig. 5. Boringholm. Plan of excavated posts. In the central area one gets the impression of the structure of three or four large buildings. To the north and to the south are posts from bridges. Drawn by Ulla Johansen

1400 and after that no one lived there anymore. The buildings indicate that people lived here permanently for longer periods, and that fact is widely supported by the composition of the finds.

The finds from Boringholm cover all activities and the total amount of finds is 2050 items. Pottery, kitchen utensils, clothes and footwear, farming gear, tools, transport, leisure and childrens' toys give an impression of the daily life on a larger farm. Because of the humid surroundings a lot of organic material was preserved, for instance more than 500 fragments from shoes. The 68 objects from military activities

actually show that the site was not only a farm but also a castle with military and defending purposes. Elements of the material culture such as imported pottery from Neubrandenburg in eastern Germany and from Saintonge in France, many types of weapons, armour and precious riding gear also obviously show that the site was inhabited by members of the aristocracy. There are no pieces of precious jewellery among the finds, but it seems that some of the inhabitants wore modern-style dresses made of imported, dyed fabric.

Distribution of selected find groups (Percentage of total find amount)

Function groups	Egholm	Absalons Skanse	Boringholm
Pottery	73,0%	26,0%	15,0%
Kitchen utensils	7,5%	3,0%	15,0%
Dress, garments, jewelry	3,0%	2,0%	41,0%
Arms and armour	0,1%	3,0%	3,5%
Riding gear, horse equipm.	0,1%	3,5%	4,5%
Farming	1,0%	0,0%	2,5%
Crafts	6,0%	4,0%	6,0%
Coins	0,0%	26,0%	0,1%
Other findgroups	9,3%	32,5%	12,4%
Total amount of finds	649	424	2050

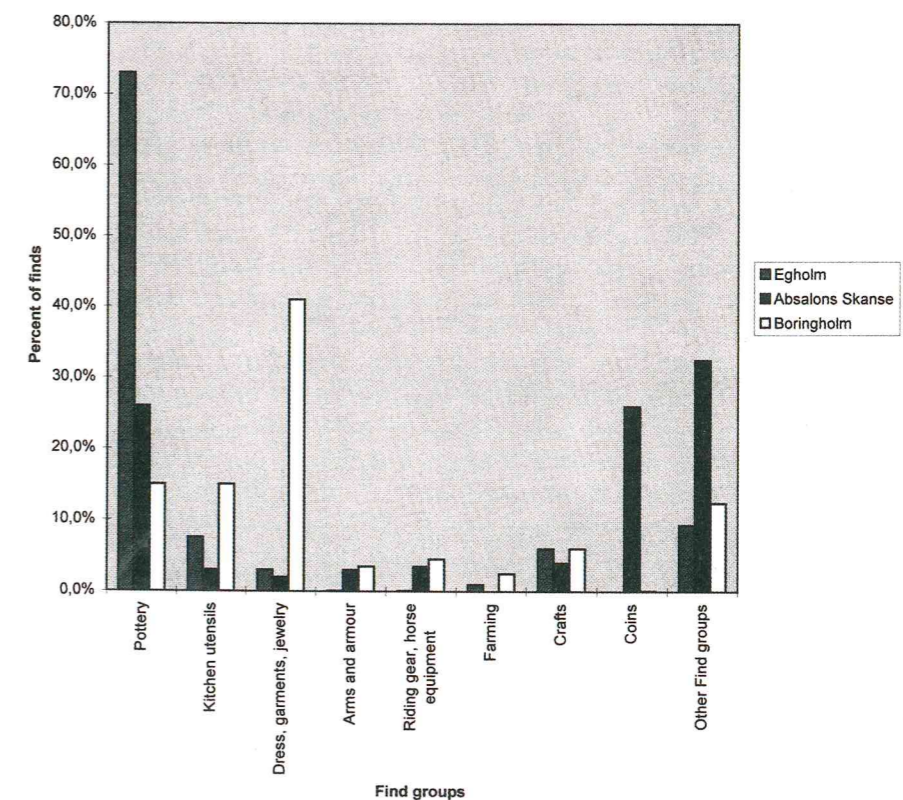


Fig. 6. The distribution of selected find groups from Egholm, Absalons Skanse and Boringholm

## Comparison of finds

As already mentioned, the possibilities for comparison of finds from the castles depend on the preservation conditions and excavation methods as well as an understanding of the construction of the cultural layers and their contents of artefacts. Since the three castles have a position in anaerobic surroundings (which means good preservation conditions), items of organic material such as wood and leather are found in every site – though in varying numbers. Egholm and Absalons Skanse have been excavated by the use of modern excavation methods, while Boringholm was excavated in the beginning at the 20<sup>th</sup> century. That has some consequence for the quality of the documentation, and one gets the impression that small items such as fragments of local pottery and perhaps also small metal fragments probably were not seen and collected during excavation at Boringholm. Naturally no metal detector was used at that excavation.

Boringholm and Egholm are totally excavated, while presumably all preserved remains from buildings have been excavated at Absalons Skanse (All cultural layers except the cellar, the well and parts of the moats have been demolished by tilling). None of the castles were seized by fire, in case of which a lot of items would not have been preserved. So there is reason to believe that the finds do represent most of the activities that took place at the castles, and the positive presence of artefacts must be taken as a proof of the use of them at the site.

From a statistical point of view the distribution of selected functional groups can be seen in the diagram (Fig. 6). The almost total absence of waste products from other activities than cooking and eating at Egholm is clear. The coins from Absalons Skanse

are dominant, and compared to Egholm, there are more military items from Absalons Skanse. The castle with the most diverse composition of find material is Boringholm, and that indicates that more activities were taking place here (The large frequency of items in the dress-group from Boringholm is due to the many fragments of shoes).

Regarding the material standards of the finds, Boringholm includes most artefacts of high quality such as imported pottery, precious weapons and riding gear, ornamented shoes and clothes of dyed fabric. Some of the sherds from Egholm are from imported pottery and the seal matrix indicates a noble ownership, but no fragments of precious military equipment, garments or jewellery were found there. From Absalons Skanse we have no real high status indicators; there are no fragments of imported pottery except from stoneware, and there are only a few dress ornaments. That seems to support the composition of find types, that indicate that the castle was used as a military garrison and not as a noble mansion.

The differences between finds from the three castles are seen as proofs of differing functions and differing groups of users. The tendencies of the find material are not contradicting the structural remains of the castles, and it seems reasonable to interpret them as follows:

- Egholm was a temporarily occupied tower belonging to a noble family, who lived permanently on a farmstead nearby.
- Absalons Skanse was a military stronghold that might have been used as a garrison. The position was due to strategic purposes. No family household lived there.
- Boringholm was a permanently occupied larger construction with farm-like elements. It was inhabited by a noble family and probably also by servants and armed men.

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## THE CHELMNO BISHOPS' CASTLE IN LUBAWA IN THE LIGHT OF THE LATEST RESEARCH

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### Die Burg von Lubawa

Bereits am Anfang des 14. Jahrhunderts ist die Burg als eine symmetrische Vierflügelanlage entworfen worden, die an den Ecken kleine, leicht aus der Mauerflucht herausragende, fast quadratische Türme hatte. Das Innere der Festung war von einem Zwinger umgeben, hinter dem sich die äußeren Schutzmauern mit dem Burggraben befanden. Die Burg von Lubawa wurde also nach dem Ritterordensschema als Konventsburg gebaut, was für diese Gebiete am Ende des 13. Jahrhunderts und in der Wende zum 14. Jahrhunderts sehr typisch war.

Im zweiten Viertel des 15. Jahrhunderts entstand in der nord-östlichen Bastion der äußeren Ringmauern, ein zylindrischer Turm mit vier Schießscharten im unteren Stock und einer offenen Artillerieterrasse im oberen Stock.

Im zweiten Viertel des 17. Jahrhunderts wurde ein großer Umbau der Burg unternommen.

Man veränderte damals die Ausstattung der Kapelle, richtete die Bischofszimmer sowie die im südlichen und östlichen Flügel der Burg gelegenen Empfangssäle neu ein und schmückte sie mit Marmor-Dekorationen. Auch die anderen Räume wurden erneuert. Der frühbarocke Umbau hatte den Gesamteindruck der Burg nicht verändert, im Gegensatz zu dem, was bisher in der Fachliteratur behauptet wurde. Die einzige Neuerung bestand in der beträchtlichen Erhöhung des nord-westlichen Turms, der mit einem oktogonalen, barocken Helm verzierten Aufbau ausgestattet wurde.

1773 wurde der Bischofssitz nach Chelmża verlegt, und die verlassene, nicht mehr benötigte Burg in Lubawa wurde schließlich 1826 abgebrochen.

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