

# English summaries

(Michael Swithinbank)

**Andreas Kieseler**

## **Central Slavic castle mounds in northern Lower Silesia**

Few fortifications dating from before the mid-ninth century are known in those parts of the northern West Slavic region that are distant from the coast, extending from Brandenburg through Northern Silesia, Wielkopolska and Central Poland to Mazovia. In these central settlement areas, widespread construction of castles only began a few centuries later than in the hinterland of the southern Baltic coast and the foothills of the Western Carpathians and Sudetes. There, fortifications with large surface areas, some of them comprising multiple components, started to be built as early as the second half of the eighth century. Early castle-building in these regions can most likely be attributed to external factors (the threat posed by the Kingdom of the Franks and the growing threat from the Avars). In addition, economic development in the areas between Eastern Holstein and Eastern Pomerania was rapid, particularly on account of the sea-trading settlements that were being established on the Baltic coast, linked to long-distance trading routes. Inland landscapes on the middle reaches of the Oder, the Warta and the central Vistula developed quite differently; the social and economic progress of the Slavs who arrived in the seventh century was far slower. Farming was largely for subsistence purposes, while the material culture was modest; in areas that were still sparsely populated and not exposed to external dangers, to supraregional trading or to influences that promoted economic and cultural development, the inhabitants of settlements which were presumably still entirely independent of overlords or at most had only weak hierarchical structures lived in a self-governing manner in unfortified rural settlements – there was neither any need to build castles nor any basis for doing so. Only from the mid-ninth century were fortifications extensively built in the northern West Slavic region – mostly small concentric castles. These existed in particularly large numbers in Lusatia, the Berlin area, Lower Silesia, Wielkopolska and northern Mazovia, but also on the southern coast of the Baltic Sea. Generally speaking, the small, massively fortified concentric castles, with buildings on their periphery, are assumed to have served the needs of territorial rulers, and most are interpreted as the seats of a Slavic elite. In northern Lower Silesia, the region on the middle reaches of the Oder, there are around 40 castles which can be assigned to the Middle Slavic period, more precisely to the 9th and 10th centuries. Particularly in the past 30 years, many of them have been investigated archaeologically. In addition to important findings about their layout and fortification, the occupation of their interiors and the material culture, it has been possible to obtain dendrodates from a number of castles, enabling them to be dated with precision. The article draws on key findings from research at small concentric castles in northern Lower Silesia to describe their general characteristics, including with regard to castle mounds outside the specific area under consideration, after which the historical background and the functions of the castles are discussed.

**Jens Friedhoff**

## **Mespelbrunn Castle in the Spessart**

Since the late 1950s, when the film ‘The Spessart Inn’ was shot there, this water castle, situated in a remote valley, has been one of the most photographed locations in Franconia. Study of the rich historical archive belonging to the current owners, the Counts Ingelheim, has for the first time made it clear just how very complicated the castle’s architectural history has been. Surviving elements of the original building, dating from the late Middle Ages, constructed by the Echter von Mespelbrunn family in the first quarter of the 15th century, include the lower parts of the round principal tower and sections of the east wing. The overall impression given by the castle is strongly influenced by the changes made during the Renaissance, between 1551 and 1593. Peter III Echter (1520–1576) and his son Adolf turned it into a magnificent chateau while retaining medieval elements (heightening the principal tower), bearing unmistakable witness to the family’s desire to impress at a time when it had risen to greater prominence in the service of the Archbishop of Mainz. In the first quarter of the 18th century, the castle was again extensively altered, this time by the heirs of the Echter von Mespelbrunn family, the Ingelheims, who were authorised to use the title Freiherr and later Count. The baroque conversion of the south wing took the Renaissance fabric as a basis. Once the west wing had been demolished, the previously small internal courtyard had been opened up to the moat after 1857, and various smaller architectural alterations had been made at the beginning of the 20th century (including adding the stepped gable and oriel windows in the south wing), the castle finally attained the form which currently still attracts large numbers of visitors, that of a ‘romantic water castle’.

**Himar Schwarz**

The rediscovered ground plan of the Wartburg drawn by master builder Nickel Gromann in 1558 and the fate of the associated historic documents in Weimar concerning the Wartburg Distinguishing features of the Wartburg, near Eisenach, are its importance to German history and its architecture. The oldest surviving ground plan, drawn by Nickel Gromann, dates from 1558; the original was briefly lost but was rediscovered in 2017 in the Weimar Regional Archives and is presented here. Five partial ground plans are published as illustrations here for the first time. These can likewise be attributed to Gromann, concern the Wartburg and can be dated to 1550. The fate of the set of historic documents containing these drawings sheds light on the past of the Wartburg archive. The article concludes with an overview of the Wartburg plans as reflected in historical writings and in copies of historic documents.

The article describes the exciting rediscovery of a ground plan of the Wartburg which was thought to have been lost – at the same time, this is a dramatic archive-related story and will be of significance for further research into the Wartburg.