

Vordingborg – a Danish Centre for medieval Castles

A presentation of a project

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Denmark is inhabited by approximately 5,4 mill. Danes. The country is quite small: 43.000 km² (12% of the size of Germany). We have around 2000 medieval churches still standing and a guess is, that in the middle ages around 1500 moated sites and castles were built (fig. 1). Almost all the castles have been demolished or rebuild. Even the most important royal castles have disappeared. Fortunately we still have some of their history from the written sources, and in many of them archaeological excavations have been made, but only a minor part of the results have been currently published.

Until now, no Danish institution has specialized in the medieval castles. At the Danish National Museum we have an institution studying churches (www.danmarkskirker.dk); Den Gamle By, Danmarks Købstadsmuseum (www.dengamleby.dk), studies medieval towns, and the history of agriculture is in the hands of Gammel Estrup, Dansk Landbrugsmuseum (www.gl-estrup.dk) – but no institutions have till this day the study of castles as their main task. The museum in Vordingborg (www.museerne.dk) located in the ruins of the largest royal medieval castle wants to take this challenge.

We think that Vordingborg is the natural place for a castle centre because in middle ages the castle played a major role in Danish history (fig. 2). When it was first built, it served as the military base for crusades against the Vends south of the Baltic Sea. Each year from 1160 onwards the king's fleet took off from here to fight for God. Year after year the king called for the most important men in Denmark to meet in Vordingborg to discuss the ruling of Denmark. Here the law was given, the king was crowned, and here king Valdemar Atterdag IV (1340–75), after beating the Hansa in 1362 built a marvellous castle after some for the Danish king very prosperous negotiations with the Hansa that also took place in this castle, the first "Frieden von Vordingborg" from November 1365. Vordingborg is in short in Denmark a symbol of the monarchy and foreign policy in medieval Denmark.

Why Vordingborg?

Fig. 1: Most of the Danish moated sites were small private strongholds. Hunesøborg at Møn.





Fig. 2: Vordingborg today.

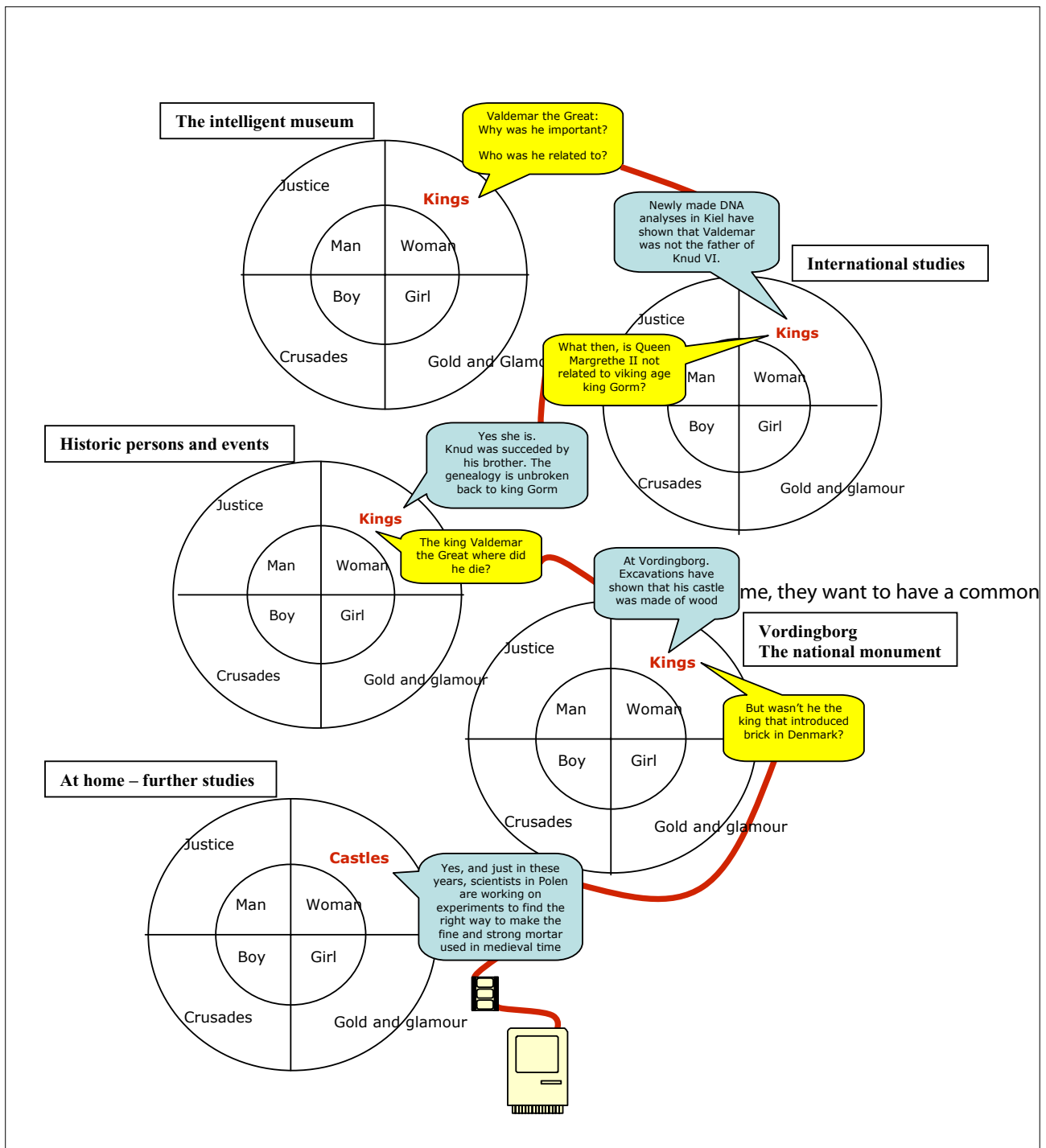
A histoarium for castles, kings and power

What we want to create in Vordingborg is a histoarium specializing in castles, kings and power and focusing on these elements as fundamental for the making of Denmark and the Danish identity today. *Histoarium* is a new word made from history and arium. The word indicates that the Danish Centre for Medieval Castles is a centre founded on history where you at the same time can be absorbed and entertained. Our goal is to offer unforgettable experiences and unconventional learning based on engaged studies and direct, high class special communication.

This we cannot do unless we build a fine-meshed network with scholars in Denmark and abroad. It will be a necessity to run a database with the latest news in castellology and studies in publication of castles especially around the Baltic Sea. One way of doing that is to participate in EU-projects (just now we have an Interreg-project running with Bereich Archäologie Lübeck). Also we must support students in collaboration with the Danish universities and the National Museum in Copenhagen.

The unforgettable experience

We want to give our visitors an unforgettable experience. Vordingborg is the proper place for this, while it is national monument where important persons have acted and national events have taken place. The experience should be based on international studies. The new Europe has opened for much new exchange of knowledge considering the medieval history of the Baltic with relevance for both Danish history and the location Vor-



dingborg. Following this concept, the goal is to present annual exhibitions of international relevance.

Another basal idea for the historiarium is to be meaningful – the history must have a “red line” where historic events relate to modern themes. Examples could be how parts of the medieval “Jyske Lov” still exist in modern Danish law, or how modern Danish monarchy has evolved from the first Danish kings (fig. 4).

Another way to make it meaningful- could be to create an ultimate individual experience in using “the intelligent museum” - A museum that through modern technology can guide you through the exhibitions, focusing on your special interests and wishes.

Let me give you an example: When a family is visiting the historiarium the different members might have different interests, while at the

Fig. 3: A construed visit at the Vordingborg historiarium.

“The intelligent museum”

Examples of historical influence on modern Denmark (in a globalized world)

- Medieval law - constitution - modern state
- Christianity - crusades - imperialism
- Danehof - absolute monarchy - constitutional monarchy



Fig. 4: Modern Denmark is founded in medieval history.

experience. At the beginning of their visit they give some information of their special wishes, and each member get his or hers special electronic guide. That is, each person gets a special designed tour in the common galleries or exhibition-sites. During the visit they are able to ask questions and thereby be guided to other topics. During the visit a personal chip has registered the guest's moves at the museum, and when she comes home, she is able to get further information by coding her chip-number into her computer (fig. 3).

In short: We want to create a modern centre with intelligent exhibitions, learning labs, laboratories for students and scholars, reconstruction and modelling. All based on the latest national and international studies. I am looking forward to seeing you at Danish Castle Centre in the year 201*.

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