

## Call for Papers

### „Castles and fortresses in times of pestilence“ - international colloquium

A virtual conference of the Marburg Working Group for European Castle Research e.V. in collaboration with the Aarhus University, Department of Archaeology and Heritage Studies and its research programme "Materials, Culture and Heritage".

The virtual conference takes place on **December 17 2020** via a licence of the programme Zoom of Aarhus University, Department of Archaeology and Heritage Studies.

We are living in a very striking time right now. Entire countries, indeed the whole world is more or less in lockdown. In the meantime, there have been initial easing measures. While some welcome and enjoy the new/old life, others fear the next wave of infection. Throughout the whole year, our usual working tool of intellectual exchange, the conference, cannot be carried out – at least not in the traditional format. But we will not do entirely without and thus take the path, which nowadays is so popular: We will meet virtually.

Regarding the question of subject, we found: let us talk about the elephant in the room everybody is talking about anyhow: the pandemic. Covid 19 is a new epidemic, but pestilences are as old as humankind itself. Thus, the Black Death raged in Europe between 1346 and 1353 and caused 25 million deaths. It has recurred with many waves up to the 17th century and frightened people.

We now pose the question, which role castles and fortresses played in former centuries in the context of pandemics. Martin Luther wrote:

*"My confidence and my castle, my God in whom I hope. For he will deliver thee from the snare of the fowler and from the noisome pestilence."*

In Luther's view, the castle in this song turns out to be the symbol of divine protection against the pestilence. But what kind of function did real castles have in the case of a pandemic, was it the same? Do signs exist for a changed usage of weir systems during rampant epidemics? There is evidence that such security measures were carried out in the palace of the counts of Hanau in the 16th century. The palace was transformed into a high security district in which flour and timber were hoarded for half a year and also great stocks of firewood as big as possible "so that there is less local transport to the palace in deadly times". And there were archbuses provided for securing the palace against unauthorised intruders, people were virtually in the state of an armed quarantine.

The conference shall give an overview if there was or still is an interrelation between castles, palaces and fortresses with pestilence and what characterises this connection. Light can be shed on diverse aspects. To show an example, in a castle of the Rhineland region Jewish tombstones were built-in after a cemetery had been desecrated, because the Jews were blamed for the plague. Thus, the contributions can relate to single objects or it is also possible to give an overview. Also subjects regarding biological warfare with infected animal cadavers in the case of sieges are open for discussion.

The virtual conference gives us the opportunity to follow this trail of evidence on a large scale. Thus, the situation in Germany can be compared to that in France, England or the Baltic area, also Western Europe can be contrasted to Eastern Europe and further the Occident to the Orient and, last but not least, the Western World to the East Asian area. If Corona can act globally, so do we.

The topics of the contributions can cover the time up to the 19th century. Your contributions should not take longer than 10 minutes and are expected to be given in English. After the completion of two contributions a discussion, lasting 20 minutes, is scheduled.

We also plan to record and store your contributions for which we ask for your consent where necessary. When possible, there is the opportunity for a printed publication in our academic series „Castle Research“.

Please send us a short exposé (not more than one A4 page) and a curriculum vitae **October 31 2020** to:

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We look forward to your contributions!