Master Programme in Archaeology and Ancient History – Theory and Practice

Canossa Castle and Azuchi Castle:

A comparative study of the

castle-building phenomenon

in Italy and Japan

Abstract

This thesis aims at evaluating the castle-building phenomenon in Italy and Japan through a comparative study of Canossa Castle in Italy and Azuchi Castle in Japan. By comparing Canossa Castle and Azuchi Castle, this thesis firstly investigates the definition of the word *castle* in Italian, Japanese and English to understand how languages influence the understanding of this phenomenon.

By using previous studies on the general concept of castles and on the history of Italy and Japan, the study then examines the historical and cultural contexts in which both castles were built and how they influenced their design and purpose.

As last, an analysis of both castles in terms of archaeological data given by excavations is used to describe both castles and compare them on an architectural level to identify buildings that even though do not seem the same, share a common purpose in both countries.

Then, by exploring the historical context, cultural significance of these castles, and archaeological data the study focuses on the similarities that can be found in castle construction practices between Italy and Japan and tries to answer if the phenomenon of castles is only a European feature or can be broadened to other countries, specifically, Japan.

Keywords: Canossa Castle, Azuchi Castle, castle-building phenomenon, Italy, Japan, castles, comparative study, archaeological data, architectural features, historical context, cultural significance.

Acknowledgements

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Premise

From a Eurocentric perspective, castles have become part of the world of myths, legends, chivalry and literature: this is mostly due to the impact that the Romantic period had all over Europe and the idea of the Middle Ages that it left behind (Kirk, Sternberg and Przystupa 2020). Castles have become stereotyped since the 18th Century and most of the literature up to this day has tried to describe the phenomenon as a complex building structure with different architectural elements and a military-defensive purpose. The term itself comes from the Latin word "*castrum*" or "*castellum*" and it refers to the military building used by the legions to control the borders of the empire (Brogiolo and Gelichi 1996).

Many researchers have tried to shed light on what the word "castle" means as, throughout time, it is stated that the word has been either too broad or too narrow (Kirk, Sternberg and Przystupa 2020) and there is no fixed meaning or description to what the building should look like or represent.

In the past, the field study of castlellology – a specific field for the study of castles, born in France in the twentieth Century with the aim of studying castles as military, warring and housing structures (Großmann 2005) – had become very affirmed, especially in Italy where the name takes after the phenomenon of *incastellamento* – a phase during the Ninetieth and Tenth Century characterized by the construction of these buildings throughout the peninsula – as highlighted by Pierre Toubert in his study of castles in the Lazio region in 1973. The continuous contribution to the study by researchers gives us the opportunity to explore different settings and typologies of castles: on hilltops, on lake islands, and overlooking the sea (Johnson 2013) but all of these investigations are mainly focused on the castle itself as a structure and as a single case: how it was built, for whom it was built, its purpose and for how long it was in use (Bini et al. 2010).

Brogiolo and Gelichi (1996), in their study of North Italy's early medieval castles, stated that the case studies could be classified into categories in terms of their position in the landscape and their purpose and thus, could be linked and treated the same way because of the social implications and the time they were active. This is also reflected in the British Isles where the study also mainly focuses on the structural aspect first and then on the binomial of castle and landscape second (Thacker 2020). This has then created a downside to the research field as it

focuses on specific aspects and neglects others such as the relationship with the surrounding areas and the castle's environment (Campbell 2017). As Creighton and Liddiard point out (2008), some castles do not have a military purpose at all as they were built either in times of peace or in places that were not touched by war; the study of castles based only on spatial-temporal settings and purpose is not sustainable anymore.

Additionally, the study of the phenomenon seems to take place majorly in Europe and the overall view of it seems to point at something only European and Western-centered while, it is well known that other countries and cultures have buildings that serve the same purpose and are representative of the same ideology (Hansson 2006). It is then true that the study is very stereotyped and based on the European aspect and ideology that the Romantic period constructed.

Furthermore, Matthew Johnson affirms (2013, 176) that we can then make a comparative study of castles by looking at different regional and national traditions of building techniques, instead of focusing on the question if castles are a product of diffusion. Other researchers (Hansson 2006; Kirk, Sternberg and Przystupa 2020) wrote that since castles share some similarities, a study that focuses on those can help the development of the study on a global scale, can help give the word a possibly new and complete meaning and in the end will potentially take away the aura of uniqueness that the medieval European castles seem to have around them and open the discussion on castles on a global level.

1.2 Background research

For this topic, the background research was mostly focused on understanding how researchers see and refer to castles as a phenomenon, as the previous idea for this thesis was a study of how castles relate to the landscape and environment around them. In the literature, a clear understanding of castles as a European-based phenomenon was explained thoroughly with the use of mostly single case studies or regarding a specific area of investigation; but it was at that point that the question of why only this part of the world was taken into account, even though

the existence of this types of structures were acknowledged to be spread through other countries and cultures.

This is also the case for Japanese castles: researching using the term *castle* gave very few results while instead using terms like *fortress* or *stronghold* prompted more results. Most of the sources that I found and used for this thesis are authored by non-Japanese English speakers and this might seem a small detail, but it also influences the terminology used and how the Japanese culture is viewed. This entails that there will always be a little of the Eurocentric stereotype and view on something that it is not: this also goes for me, I cannot claim that my perspective on the topics will not contain any influence based on my being European and having a very fixed image of what a castle looks like. It is also why, to differentiate the Japanese aspect of the topic from the European one, this thesis will use romanized Japanese terms when describing specific parts of the Japanese castles.

Additionally, this research topic has not been discussed exhaustively before – like instead has happened for single castle studies of castles in Europe or Japan –and the two categories of castles have not been compared before. One of the sources for this thesis is, in fact, the master's thesis "Fields and Armor: a comparative analysis of English Feudalism and Japanese Hokensei" by Arthur Thomas Garrison (2011). The thesis is not specifically focused on castles but tried to instead compare the two types of power that were in action from the Tenth to the Firteenth Century. Even though it is a Master's Thesis, it has given me a starting point for the part of the comparison that regards the social and economic aspects, while the paper "The History of Japanese Castles with the Perspective of British Castles" by Hiromichi Nishino (2010) gives a somewhat complete representation of the different Japanese periods that involved castles and compared them to the development of castles in the British Isles.

One important thing to acknowledge from the start is that Japanese castles as we see them nowadays are not completely original from their period: most of them have been destroyed with the advent of the Tokugawa Shogunate up to the mid of the Nineteenth Century and then some – Nagoya and Osaka are an example– have been restored during the Meiji Restoration in the years between 1850 and 1890. Nowadays, most of the surviving castles are under government control and protection, making it difficult for excavation to take place.

Nevertheless, the sources used were reliable and provided good data for the comparative study presented here and provided a good insight into the castle-building phenomenon of both countries during their feudal period.

1.3 Research Theory and Methods

Most of the research about castles is based on qualitative data, as researchers use single case studies to make a point and explain different points of view in this specific field of study; as it was explained briefly previously, this field of research has not come to an agreement regarding the definition of the term "castle", therefore, research have adapted and developed by area of interest and as such, very few research focus on the macro topic of castles by using bigger data. Usually the theorizing goes bottom-up as it allows to focus of the analysis on specific characteristics that then can be shared to other case studies or to the main topic.

This will also be my approach: as I want to explore a topic that has not been discussed at length, the aim will be to describe via qualitative data two case studies of what the below-mentioned definition highlights as "castles". Drawing from the phenomenological approach, the study will focus on the relationship between humans and the landscape and how places and environments are a display of powers; since places are part of the human experience (Tilley 1994) they are also connected to the identity and action and their place in the space is also a resource for specific purposes (Tilley 1994).

Furthermore, with the use of plenty of written sources, images, and observations there will be a discourse and thematic analysis based on the social, political, economic, and architectural styles of both cases.

1.4 Purpose

As stated previously, there is the idea that castles around the world share similarities both in terms of how and why they were built and on the social implications level: it is agreed that building a castle is also a way for the wealthy class to express their power, higher status and military capability; the castle is, therefore, the symbol for the ordering of the landscape around it and a way to try and control the world (Hansson 2006). Castles become, then, an integral part of the everyday life and economy of the landscape and environment they are in and cannot be separated from it as it helps shed light on the societal aspect of the area, on the economic processes and the progress overall that the area is subjected to.

In recent years it has also been acknowledged that, in the past, castlellology has focused only on European castles and even then the study centred the attention on single case studies instead of opting for a broader view (Creighton 2002). This thesis will, therefore, try to briefly explore the definition of "*castle*"– as plenty has been written already over the years – by using past and present literature from European and Japanese literature and languages to then explore, the castle-building phenomenon by focusing on the similarities of these structures spread in Italy and Japan.

For this, I have chosen two case studies: one castle from Italy and one castle from Japan; both case studies would come from the same period recognized as *Feudal* or *Medieval* but for obvious reasons the environmental and societal settings were different.

The in-depth study and analysis of the similarities that can be found both in the archaeological aspects and in the historical–social–economic aspects will possibly help me understand if both the castles are part of a phenomenon that developed as an ideology in connection and as a result of the historical–social implications of the time and finally if the focus given to castles can be expanded to include a worldwide study of castles instead of focusing on the Europe area only.

Considering all these points and by using the archaeological material collected through surveys, and investigations and the social and economic data from historical accounts and studies the research questions will try to answer:

- How are castles defined in Italy and Japan and are these definitions similar to each other?

- Do castles from Italy and Japan share similarities based on both cultural and historical, social, and economic aspects?

- How did castles come to be and are they the result of a common ideology/implication of their time?

2. Italy and Japan – a brief history of the "Feudal" Periods

2.1 About Feudalism

On the concept of feudalism, a lot has been written and explained already over the years; important to state though, is that even with the incredible amount of research and papers available, there seems not to be a defined and agreed upon definition that satisfies everyone.

Over the decades, different definitions have been proposed and used to fit into the writers' ideologies and time periods they lived in: in 2009 Richard Abels wrote that the term *feudalism* is a historical construct derived from the Renaissance jurist Alvarotto; in his *De Feudis*, Alvarotto wrote that even though some areas and regions in Italy had differences, the regulations of their own government derived from common legal principles and that during the Twelfth Century, the term was expanded to incorporate also the institutions known as vassals (Abels 2009).

Since then, the definition has kept expanding with addition based both on the system itself and the small connotations the term started to have (Abels 2009). Karl Marx (1848) also wrote about feudalism, in his and Engels' "Manifest of the Communist Party", as an economic system between the slave economy of the ancient times and modern capitalism: *In the earlier epochs of history, we find almost everywhere a complicated arrangement of society into various orders, a manifold gradation of social rank. In ancient Rome we have patricians, knights, plebeians, slaves; in the Middle Ages, feudal lords, vassals, guild-masters, journeymen, apprentices, serfs; in almost all of these classes, again, subordinate gradations. The modern bourgeois society that has sprouted from the ruins of feudal society has not done away with class antagonisms. It has but established new classes, new conditions of oppression, new forms of struggle in place of the old ones.*

American and British scholars define feudalism as a social system brought together by warrior aristocracy in Europe between the Tenth and Thirteenth Centuries (Abels 2009). Feudalism has also been thought of as a military system with the knights under the lord with one of the major points being the protection of the lord's lands (Hansson 2006).

French historian Marc Bloch (1964) agrees that a cluster of changes prompted its development of it: the collapse of a stronger power that could keep control of the lands, rising of equally powerful lords that had to divide the land and the increasing number of knights and castles. All

these slightly different definitions are a result of a non-fixed ideology and one of the main reasons seems to be the fact that this organizational structure, spread throughout Europe, has common traits that are always recognizable but some minor differences that make a fixed definition falter. These small differences are recognized as the result of the vast diversity of dynamics that took place in Europe throughout the Middle Ages (Brown 1974, 1087)

In 1974, Elizabeth Brown wrote a critique on how feudalism was presented by historians, where she states that English historians based their definition of English feudalism on the phenomenon as it was seen in Europe and therefore their simplification of it could only be understood in relation to the European experience. Citing John Greville Agard Pocock, Brown criticizes how the term *feudalism* was first brought up by jurists to describe legal implications and then was expanded to include more features like the state of the society, the government system and the vanishing of public power (Brown 1974)

As said before, there is clearly a problem with the usage of the term and possibly not the term itself. This has happened because, as Aron Ia. Gurevich (2006) explained, the term has changed its content depending on who used it, their philosophical approach, and their affiliation with different schools of thought.

In his Master's thesis on English feudalism and Japanese Hokensei – the political system of Japan between the Kamakura period and the Meiji Restoration –, Garrison (2011) acknowledged how the term *feudalism*, which has been used in the European context, is also used to describe the Japanese political situation between the Eleventh and the Sixteenth Century, especially by Western researchers: this prompts the discussion on how the term medieval was originally applied only to Europe. Its meaning defines then a period between the end of the Western Roman Empire and the start of the Renaissance, where the government and the political scene were made up of small kingdoms and feudal rulers.

Brown (1974) further explains that the use of the term adapted to other countries outside Europe cannot be done if we compare the whole of Europe and the specific chosen country, because we are in fact generalizing an ensemble of countries within Europe that all have differences and specific characteristics. Therefore, she writes that comparative research between Europe and other parts of the world should be done by choosing specific countries and their political, economic, and social dynamics.

Another problem is that the term was clearly used at the beginning to represent something European but with time, colonialism, and globalization it has been used by scholars to describe phenomena around the world that resembled, either almost fully or just in part, the European social and economic situation of the Middle Ages: an example is clearly Japan. When the first contact between Japan and Europe happened in the mid of the Sixteenth Century through trading with Portuguese ships, European people were presented with a divided Japan controlled by lords – the most powerful stood above the others and controlled different portions of the country – and this prompted them to see the resemblance with medieval Europe (Hall 1962).

John Whitney Hall (1962, 19) states that comparative research between European and Japanese feudalism is too generalized precisely because the term does not have a standardized definition He asks if Japan has at any point shown any similarities to the dynamics of Europe and can therefore be deemed as *feudal* (Hall 1962, 20). Even if it is not the focus of this thesis, this point is still a good starting point for analyzing the castle-building phenomenon in both Italy and Japan as we can ask the same question. It is also recognised (Brogiolo and Gelichi 1996; Cammarosano 2008; Patitucci Uggenti 2010) that feudalism is strictly connected to the phenomenon of castles appearing all over Europe and therefore it could be very possible that the political and territorial fragmentation of Japan as described by researchers in the past could also have been connected to the appearance of castles in Japan.

2.2 Italy in the Middle Ages

In Italy, it is commonly known that the term "Middle Ages" refers to the timeframe between the fall of the Western Roman Empire –usually assigned to the year 476 AD – and the arrival of Columbus in the Americas in 1492 AD. This division is not standardized throughout Europe, for example, Scandinavia (Helle, Kouri and Olesen, 2003) sees the start of the medieval period around 1000 AD and its end around 1520 AD.

During this period, except for the Roman Catholic Church, most of Europe is characterized by political and social instability with the division of territories and wars (Encyclopedia

Britannica, *Middle Ages*). This period is usually divided into three macro periods distinguished in Late Antiquity, Early Middle Ages and Late Middle Ages.

Regarding Italy, the first period can be discussed as something that led to the Middle Ages as it was still a transition between the remains of the Roman Empire and the tumultuous aftermath of it that ultimately led to the proper Middle Ages (Cammarosano, 2008). Italy especially was subjected to a more prolonged period of Late Antiquity with the Ostrogothic Kingdom and then the Lombard rule in 751 AD; this period saw a different number of powers battling for the control of different areas of the peninsula: for example, the Venetia and Histria regions were subjected to Goths and Lombards, the south of Italy – especially Sicily – was under the control of the Muslim Caliphate and central Italy was divided into Langobard duchies, territories governed by the Byzantine Empire and autonomous cities (Luisi, 1996). This situation slightly changed in 774 when Charlemagne defeated the Langobard and annexed part of Italy to the Frankish Kingdom. During the Ninth and Tenth Centuries, Italy was once again very fragmented with lords and aristocrats trying to gain more power and control over the lands (Cammarosano 2008).

It is important to address that during these times, the Church also played an important role in the peninsula; it was, in fact, the only power that was able to maintain a certain degree of control thanks to the religious aspects that helped merge the different areas of Italy. This, though, brought conflicts from the year 1000 AD on, as both the Holy Roman Empire and the Church wanted to have the right to install new bishops (Cammarosano 2008, 332)

Around the Tenth Century Italy was split into an enormous number of small states. This situation was made even more permanent in 1037: small vassals rebelled against the Emperor and through the *Constitutio de Feudis* gained heredity of their lands, something that previously was only allowed to the big vassals (Cammarosano 2008, 260)

Figure 1. The political situation in Italy around the 10th Century: the peninsula is divided into different political areas. As shown, some of these territories belonged to or were connected to the Holy Roman Empire. The region Romagna was also connected to the Papal State.
(Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Italy_1000_AD_alt1.svg)

After this complex division into territories, Italy also saw the advent of a new form of governance: the communes. This period is known as a change from the governance of the Empire, where cities started to organize themselves autonomously both economically and politically (Luisi, 1996).

It is known that this change came along because of the fragmentation and conflicts of the different powers present on Italian territories that were not able to keep control over their lands (Luisi 1996; Cammarosano 2008)

This situation continued even during the Renaissance, with Italy still divided into territories, duchies, and cities (Cammarosano, 2008); Italy's political situation remained divided almost up until the Unification: the peninsula remained fragmented and controlled by different rulers and powers like the Spanish Crown, The Byzantyne Empire, Napoleon, and the Maritime Republics (Wells, n.d).

2.3 "Medieval/feudal" Japan

When we refer to *feudal Japan*, the term refers especially to the Kamakura (1185–1333), the Muromachi (1336–1573) and the Azuchi-Momoyama (1575–1600) periods when the authority of the Empire was weak, and warlords played an important role in the organization and governance of the divided lands.

These new eras start after the Nara (710–794) and the Heian (794–1185) periods when Japan underwent a transformation that saw the creation of a first shogunate – also called *bakufu*; in early times it defined the title for commanders of the army of the Emperor; later on its meaning changed (Encyclopedia Britannica, *shogunate*) – and therefore the division of power between the Empire and different lords (Benesch 2018). This though, was not a sudden clear change, as more scholars (Hall 1962; Arnason 1988; Ferejohn and Rosenbluth 2010; Benesch 2018) nowadays see the Kamakura period as still a somewhat transitional period where the royal Yamato house – that before stood first among equals regional chieftains - lost power and the provincial hegemons kept their titles only nominally related to the court while in reality, it had become a permanent and hereditary title.

The Kamakura period was, then, one where the power was shared between the shogunate and the imperial government in Kyoto with the first managing the warriors and the latter supervising aristocracy, temples, and civilians (Segal 2008). The first shogunate was officially

created in 1192 when Minamoto Yorimoto decided to proclaim the existence of an independent state in the east, supported by the eastern provinces (Mitchelhill 2018, 16). He negotiated accords with the court and established the Kamakura Bakufu, which became both part and distinct from the court in Kyoto as its role was to exercise governing powers and authority over the warriors that were also recognized as vassals (Mitchelhill, 2018).

In 1331 the Kamakura shogunate was destroyed by Emperor GoDaigo and one of Kamakura's leading generals Takauji; the Emperor's plan was to give power back to the Empire and Takauji then rebelled leading it to a siege and taking control of the capital (Encyclopedia Britannica, *Muromachi Period*). This led finally to the creation of the Muromachi shogunate - due to their headquarters being in the Muromachi district of Kyoto.

During the Muromachi period, warriors became patrons of the arts and of the tea ceremony: it was and still is considered an important part of the Japanese culture; every ceremony is seen as a representation of life, beauty, harmony and peacefulness (Ali et al. 2013, 2391). Japanese economy boomed during this period and markets began to appear around the country; this also helped the spread of coins from China and thus substituted the usage of silk, rice and other goods that the Japanese people used as money during the Heian period (Segal 2008).

After the Oni War (1467–1477), the Muromachi shogunate had little control outside of the provinces that it directly controlled and by 1573 the provincial and regional lords known as *Daimyo* dominated Japan, without any connection either to the Emperor or to the shogunate. It is therefore this period that might have resembled the feudalism present in Europe, with a weak and divided central authority (Arnason 1988).

The period known as the Warring State Period, which stretches from 1477 to 1576, is characterized by violent and frequent changes in power and by a very divided territory with more than 20 warlords and even more subordinates. In this period, fortifications on mountaintops were erected together with baileys and enclosures; these were the precursors of the castles (Turnbull 2008; Mitchelhill 2018). During this period one of the lords, Oda Nobunaga, that controlled the territory near Kyoto marched to the city and became one of the three recognized "unifiers of Japan" (Mitchelhill 2018, 23–25). At his death, Totoyomi Hideyoshi succeeded him and complete the unification of Japan through peace treaties; he ruled the country not as shogun, a role that in 1600 went to Tokugawa Ieyasu when he managed to seize power for himself and built the base for the Tokugawa family that controlled Japan for the next 270 years (Mitchelhill, 2018, 25).

The Edo–Tokugawa period started in 1603 when Tokugawa Ieyasu established the shogunate in the city of Edo – now known as Tokyo – that lasted until 1867 with the start of the Meiji Restoration Era that saw the reinstatement of the imperial rule (Encyclopedia Britannica, *Edo-Tokugawa period*).
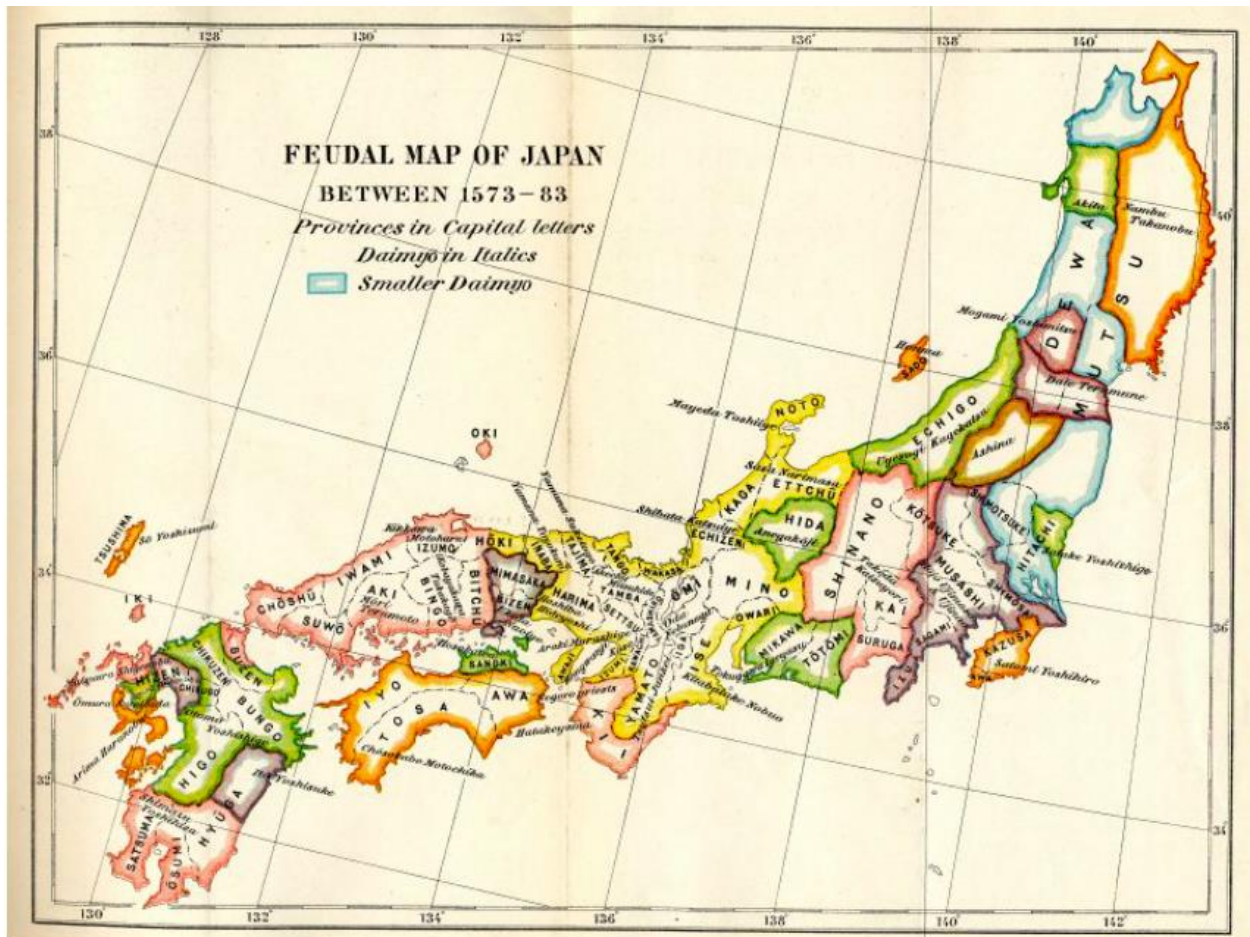

Figure 2. A map of Japan between 1573–1583 with the main territories under the control of different Daimyo. In yellow are the territories under the control of Oda Nobunaga.
(Source: A History of Japan during the Century of early foreign intercourse (1542-1651), 1903 by James Murdoch in collaboration with Isoh Yamagata)

Takeshi Toyoda (1957) wrote that the feudal society in Japan differed from that in Europe due to the geographical circumstances of Japan itself: being an archipelago, Japan didn't have direct contact with China or other countries and, by not having international trading until later, the feudal system continued up until the Sixteenth Century.

According to the same paper, Japanese feudalism was very different from the European type as it was very rigid with the relationship between lord and vassal, which was seen as that of a family (Toyoda 1957, 32).

Furthermore, if a lord was in ruin, the vassals were discharged and could serve under another lord. The main difference between the two types of feudalism was then mostly based on the morality and loyalty that were absolute prerogatives in Japan.

In Japan the division in societal classes was very strong and controlled including also via the heredity of occupation; furthermore, the supremacy of Japan shifted little by little towards the warrior class as did their economic and political power, as some of the *Samurai* ascended to aristocracy and gained the title of *Daimyo* (Oppenheimer 1945).

Daimyo, other than the vassals, had power over the Samurai too: Samurai were the military gentry that was educated both in martial arts and combat on horse and sword. They worked to protect the lord and his properties, and they were pushed by the honour they would gain for themselves and their ancestors through battle. Samurai's demise started with the Meiji Restoration in 1868 when the new democratic ideals spread and this class' *raison d'être* was incompatible with them (Mitchelhill 2018, 76).

It is in this setting – especially in the Azuchi-Momoyama period – that castles started to be built, quite late in comparison to Europe and Italy, but the main purpose has been indicated as the same: protect the territory, act as a base from where to rule and finally, to symbolize one's power.

Chapter 3: Italian Castles and Japanese Castles

3.1 The definition of castle in the relevant languages of the research – what can the language say about it? Is it a shared concept?

If the chapter before has introduced us to the political, societal, and economic situation of Italy and Japan during their respective *feudal* periods, and given us insights on the possible *why* of the castle-building phenomenon, this chapter will dig into the first research question that this thesis is trying to answer: how are castles defined in the interested countries of the research? And is there a somewhat shared definition of what a castle is?

To recap what has been briefly said in the introduction chapter, nowadays, there is really no fixed definition of what a castle is; the term is used either too broadly or too narrowly (Kirk, Sternberg and Przystupa 2020) on plenty of occasions and, depending on the country we are examining, the definition changes, even if slightly.

Johnson (2013, 3), even though he writes about British castles, explains that castles might not have only been a defensive measurement nor only to reflect social status: they were an active part of the landscape and of the dynamics that played around Europe. The argument is that castles cannot be reduced to simple and settled definition.

In line with this thought, therefore, I will specifically highlight the literal definition of *castle* extracted from encyclopedias, in the three languages relevant for the thesis: English, Italian and Japanese. The analysis will mostly focus on the terms and linguistic choices used for the definition of the word, as the discussion on the definition is oftern spurred from the fact that different languages have different terminology or different ways of explaining, based both on grammar and vocabulary and on cultural history.

What we need to acknowledge here is that I am analyzing the definition in the three languages provided by encyclopedias and dictionaries but each language has also a spoken side where things and ideas are described differently according also to the environment they are raised in; it also must be noted that encyclopedias are edited by people and can have different versions; this, therefore, provides with the argumentation that it is very difficult to keep a fixed definition for concepts that have so many variations both linguistically and spatially.

The English *Encyclopedia Britannica* defines a castle as:

- *a large building usually with high, thick walls and towers that was built in the past to protect against attack*;

the Italian *Enciclopedia Treccani* defines a castle as

- *Firstly it was a Roman fortification on the Empire's border, less equipped than a castrum and could be permanent or temporary; during the Middle Ages the name castle was used to define the fortified house of the feudal lords, in the beginning it was composed of rooms inside the towers and main building while then developing into a complex with walls, the living units, church, storage space and the high tower for the surveillance of the surrounding area*. (il *castellum* era un'opera di fortificazione, generalmente di minore entità rispetto al *castrum*, lungo i confini dell'Impero; erano temporanei o permanenti. Nel Medioevo il nome passò alla residenza fortificata, che costituì la dimora del signore feudale. Dapprima fu un fortilizio isolato nel quale l'abitazione del feudatario si riduce a pochi vasti ambienti ricavati all'interno delle torri e delle muraglie. In seguito divenne un organismo complesso, del quale fecero parte l'apparato difensivo con mura e mastio, il nucleo abitato, la cappella, magazzini e servizi comuni.).

To compare, the Japanese Kanji character for castle is 城 and can be read in four different ways even though the most common are "*jo*" and "*shiro*". Online it was very difficult to find a definition like the other two, especially from an encyclopedia but it was described as:

- *A building used for defense in time of war and as a residence of hereditary rulers in time of peace. 城（しろ、き）戦時における防御のための建築物で、平時には世襲の統治者の居館として利用される建築物* (takoboto.jp, 城;)

Firstly, it is important to notice that to all these definitions, the common denominator is that castles seem to be recognized as something purposely built to fortify and defend from attacks and that it is described as *fortified* meaning the idea behind it was for it to be able to sustain prolonged damage or siege.

It is a key point that this aspect is described as the first thing in all three descriptions: it is perhaps a consequence of how the Middle Ages are seen as a period of relative political and

governmental instability throughout Europe. This small yet important point, either explicitly or not, also indicates that castles are seen as a symbol of power too, as it is the house of lords that controls the surrounding area; worth noting is that both English and Italian descriptions refer to a specific part of the complex: the tower(s). As I will explain later in the chapter about the Italian and Japanese castles and in the case studies chapter, both variants of castles present one or multiple towers that allow an overview of the surrounding landscape.

Regarding the definition in Italian and Japanese, it is essential to stress that they seem to divide the definition into a before and after timeline where it is explained that in the beginning castles were built to control and defend in times of war and later on they became a more complex structure that permanently housed the lord in time of peace further implementing the complex with other buildings and purposes, but this is also somewhat wrong as there are plenty of cases – an example is the ones we will examine later on – that indicates how castles didn't necessarily have the division of purposes but rather merged them.

This greatly connects with the idea that has been discussed in the past two decades (Creighton and Liddiard 2008; Johnson 2013) regarding how not all castles are built and specifically used for defensive purposes; in fact, some analyzed castles – especially those around the Fifteent and Sixteenth Century – in Europe were built in relatively peaceful times or spatially far from warzones and the purpose of defending did not apply to them, their purpose was more that of representation and show of power through decorations and imposing size. Nevertheless, some of them still presented some kind of defensive mechanism, being moats, watchtowers, or smaller walls.

Another point worth stressing is connected to the idea of feudalism that we explored in the previous chapter: both Italy and Japan, even though in different time periods, underwent what is referred to as the *feudal* period. This period, as we know, saw the fragmentation of the land in both the geographical and political sense and the definitions presented here underline how castles were the residences of *feudal lords* and *hereditary rulers*, meaning that it was not a singular phenomenon related to one person but a multiplicity of castles for each and possibly any of the lords involved in that time frame.

To answer the research question on how castles are defined and if the used definitions present common traits, the possible answer is yes: as analyzed above, all three of them seem to have a base concept on what a *castle* should be constituted of and explains also on the social aspect that these residences were built for someone respected and powerful, regardless of the period

and area. The above-given explanation is therefore what also will drive the research further: by considering the three definitions I have selected two case studies that fit into the categories and that, therefore, fulfil the requirements to be determined as castles in the context of this thesis.

3.2 Italian Castles and the castle-building phenomenon

As introduced before, Toubert's hypothesis explains that the appearance of castles throughout the peninsula and especially the Lazio region was the main reason why the landscape underwent an economic and demographic transformation: farmers and small landowners aggregated around castles changing the organization of the settlements and of the production chain (Cantini and Cirelli 2018).

The Italian phenomenon has been studied extensively in the last sixty years and researchers (Brogiolo and Gelichi 1996a; Bini et al. 2010; Augenti and Galetti 2018; Bianchi 2014) have been able to identify features that revolved around Italian castles:

- Commonly, castles built between the Tenth and Eleventh centuries were situated in areas not previously used.

- Castles became the main place for population settlements and were therefore the main reason various and open settlements disappeared that up to that moment resembled the roman model of towns.

- Castles were the focus point for the redistribution and control of lands by the lords.

- Building techniques inside the castles predominantly used stone (Francovich 1996).

As it happened around Europe, the castle-building phenomenon appeared in a time with limited political and governmental stability after the end of the Carolingian Empire, when lords started to gain more individual power (Francovich, 1995; Cammarosano, 2008).

In Italy there are around 20.000 castles and this has therefore helped create a very broad field of study and countless research all over the Italian peninsula. Moreover, Italian researcher Francovich (1995) divides the phenomenon into two main phases: the first-generation castles

that started the *encastlement* phenomenon around the year 1000 AD and a later phase that saw the consolidation of the concept and its transformation in castle towns and less adapted for military purposes structures.

Carlo Citter (2008) states that castles, wherever they were built, were a result of the desegregation of the central power and increased wealth of aristocrats; moreover, the reason for choosing hilltops is linked to the will of showing their power and control over the surrounding lands and resources.

Italian studies of castles focus on specific areas which then categorize the types of castles : Po Valley castles, Southern and Sicilian castles, alpine castles, and Center Italy castles (Cantini and Cirelli 2018).
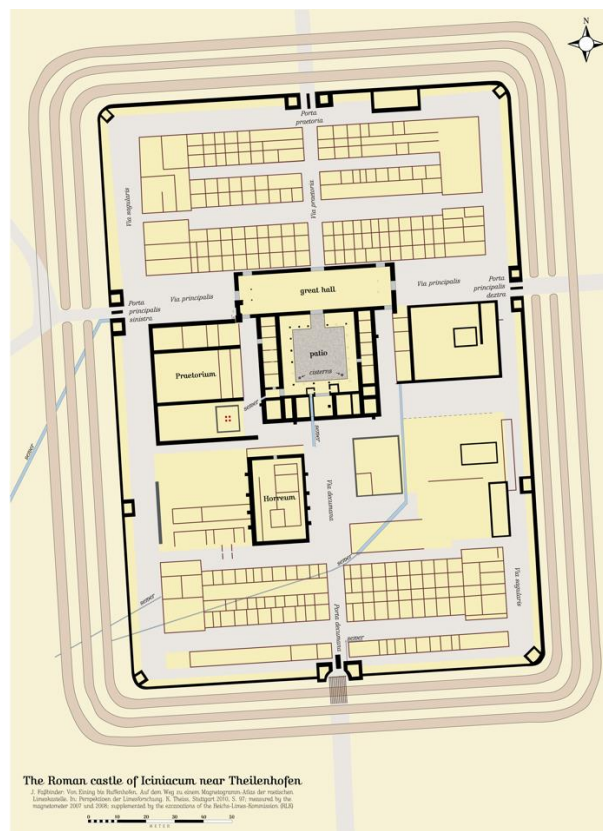

Figure 3. Roman Castrum plan
(Source: Mediatus - Own work, CC BY-SA 3.0, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=25563531)

The first Italian castles based their plan structure on the *castrum* model of the Roman camps (*Figure 3*). With a square or rectangular shape and towers at the four corners (Kilimnik and Kholodova, 2018). With the Holy Roman Empire present in Italy from the Twelfth Century, German type of castles start to be built, especially in the Northern part of the peninsula: a basic defensive wall surrounds the area irregularly by following the landscape, and the main building

sits inside the walls together with a courtyard. This style is also present in Western and Central Europe (Kilimnik and Kholodova, 2018). To understand the structure of Italian castles we need to refer mainly to written sources. Riccardo Luisi (1996) states that there are different patterns and layouts throughout Italy but all castles present common features like the keep, towers at the corners of the defensive walls, the chapel, some storage buildings, and the courtyard.
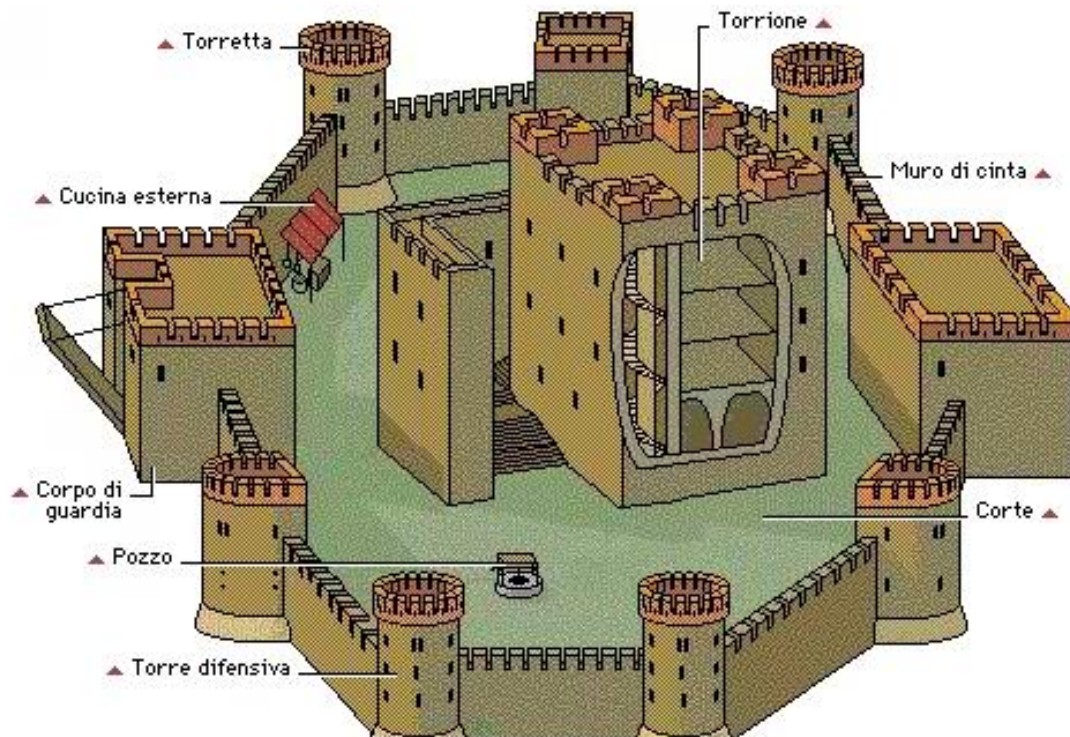

Figure 4. One of the most common plans of a castle that can be found in Italy: defensive walls with watchtowers, a courtyard, the keep, the entrance gate with the guard posts.
(Source: https://www.focusjunior.it/scuola/storia/come-erano-fatti-i-castelli-nel-medioevo/)

It is worth mentioning that the castle-building phenomenon is a, as said before, a consequence of the political, economic and social dynamics of the time but this does not mean that it was a stagnant period with no interaction between different zones: it is, in fact, recognized (Patitucci Uggeri 2010; Brogiolo and Gelichi 1996) that these complexes had traded with other areas of Italy, Europe and even the Mediterranean basin as shown by artefacts excavated in different areas.

3.3 Japanese Castles and the castle-building phenomenon

To this day, there is not much written about *encastlement* and the relationship between castles and settlement in medieval Japan; however, researchers (Arnason, 1988; Ferejohn and Rosenbluth, 2010; Benesch, 2018) now see the period between 1300 and 1500 as the first stage of a form of *encastlement* with a major implementation during the Azuchi-Momoyama period. This underlines how Japanese castles were, in fact, built a couple of centuries after the start of the medieval castle-building phenomenon in Europe. Furthermore, Japanese archaeology started out as antiquarian studies during the Edo-Tokugawa period, under the influence of European antiquary and trading and the interest was mostly focused on material culture (Andrén, 1998).

Nevertheless, castles played an important part in the history of Japan just like some castles played a role in the history of Europe and Italy (Brogiolo and Gelichi 1996a; Augenti and Galetti 2018) as will be exemplified in the case studies chapter. As of today, very few of the original ones from the Kamakura and up to the Azuchi-Muromachi period survive; most of them were demolished when the country was unified by Hideyoshi in 1582 and more were later destroyed by the Tokugawa shogunate (Mitchelhill 2018, 13). Before the Edo period, the castles in Japan were more widespread but during the Edo period only 300 remained. This combined with the period of the Meiji Restoration after 1868 and after World War II, has left us with only around 100 castle sites visible (Mitchelhill 2018, 30).

The first recordings of some kind of simple fortifications with the purpose of defence come from the *Nihon Shoki*, written in the eighth Century: here it is described how some mansions of noble families were fortified through palisades and moats. Later on, with the fear of China possibly invading Korea and Japan, multiple walls and towers were built along the west coast of Kyushu as points of observation (Turnbull 2008).

As stated before, Japanese castles started to appear later in time than in any European country but the mechanisms, both social and architectural, that were used in the construction of these were not that different from the European area: to build those enormous palaces and to supply for it the *daimyo* used local farmers, merchants, and Samurai under their command (Mitchelhill, 2018).

They were first built as defensive strongholds to last in periods of uncertainty but became later administrative centres and expressions of power once the Japanese political scene started to

stabilize. As in Europe, these castles were built in very different types of environments: hilltops, mountaintops, and relevant places for the control and organization of the surrounding territories (Turnbull, 2008). This choice in locations was also connected to the political situation of their time: mountain castles are more present during the Warring States period when a multitude of lords and warriors were fighting for the supremacy of territories and therefore needed a somewhat inaccessible area for the opponents (Mitchelhill 2018, 37).

Differently from any other European castle, Japanese castles seem to follow one pattern in how they were built: the main tower was situated in the highest and innermost enclosure, while other smaller enclosures housed the lord's residence, some quarters for the warriors and the storehouses; these enclosures were divided from each other by stone walls and moats and sometimes earthworks. The layout of these enclosures was the focal point in guaranteeing the castle's defence, as their purpose was to confuse and hinder access to the main tower to the enemies in case of an attack (Mitchelhill, 2008). Each enclosure had different names depending on their position in the layout: *Honmaru* was the innermost one and usually housed the *tenshu*; the second most inner enclosure was the *Ninomaru* and the lord's house would usually be built there; the third enclosure was called *Sannomaru* and the fourth one called *Nishinomaru* were the area of the retainer's quarters and storehouses (Takayanagi and Akira 1977; Mitchelhill 2018).

The layout of the enclosures (*Figure. 5*) could be fairly simple or intricate with the aim of confusing the enemies and blocking the way to the *tenshu* and the house of the lord (Mitchelhill 2018, 34): the *doshinen* was the most simple layout, with the *tenshu* at the centre and the secondary enclosures developing from that; the *hashigokaku* place the *honmaru* at the top and the other enclosures would develop from that going down; the *renkaku* had the honmaru at the centre with the other enclosures developing sideways and the complex layout presented an intricate way of accessing the tenshu through gateways and other enclosures (Mitchelhill 2018, 34-37).
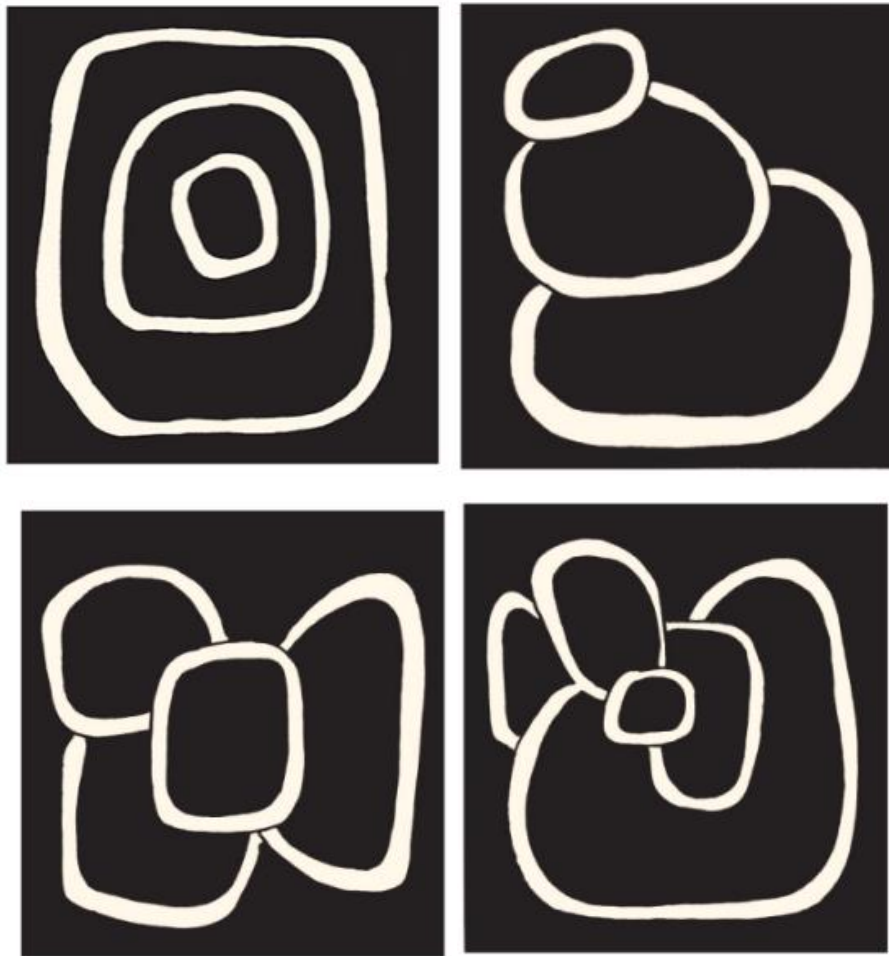
Figure 5. The different possible layouts used in Japanese castles: *doshinen*, *hashigokaku*, *renkaku* and *complex*. they all develop for the main enclosure, the *honmaru*, where the *tenshu* is located.
(Source: Samurai Castles, Mitchelhill Jennifer, 2018)

When it comes to stonewall though, the building technique does not differ much from the Western way and two types were used: the embankment – stone placed against an already existing higher ground that could also reach the height of 30 meters – and free–standing walls, much lower and constituted of two external rows of stone filled in the core with pebbles and earth.

Common to both castle-building phenomena the use of different types of stone is directly influenced by the financial resources of the lord, the timeframe of the construction and most importantly the availability of stones if locally sourced or imported. Contrary to most castles built in Italy, for example, Japanese castles did not use mortar to stabilize the stone in the walls

(Mitchelhill 2018, 39) as to permit adjustments to the structure in case of earthquakes, which are more common in the country.

The *tenshu* – the main tower of the complex – can be juxtaposed to the keep and main building of a European castle, there is though one slight difference between the two structures: the *tenshu* was not the residence of the lord itself but more of a stronghold employed in different defensive purposes. The height provided a good overlook of the surrounding area, and the multiple roof and levels created the best opportunities for arrow firing and later on, shooting holes (Mitchelhill 2018, 55–60).

Figure 6. Reconstruction of the *tenshu* of Azuchi Castle in Ise City, Mie Prefecture. The structure is composed of different floors with terraces and tiled roofs.
(Source: Taro Nagoya, 2011; https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:110305_Imitation_of_Aduchi_cstl.jpg)

Nevertheless, the role of an enormous *tenshu* was that of symbolizing the power and wealth of the lord too (Mitchellhill 2018, 46): mostly via the decorative tiles and architectural style in which it was built. Most of the records about these tenshu state that they were painted black, had white plaster or a combination of both, especially those built before the Sixteenth Century (Nishino 2010).

Turrets were also an addition to the layout of the complex: they were used both as watchtowers for lower ground and as defence points in close–range attacks, like those present in European

castles they were situated in less protected areas of the walls that could be easily scaled and, in the gateways, to control the entering of people. Japanese castles also had what we call corridor-tower: a passageway from one tower to another (Mitchelhill 2018, 62–64). At the gates' entrances, guardhouses and posts could be found and they were manned by warriors of the lord or Samurai (Turnbull 1996, 2008; Mitchelhill 2018).

Coming back to the lord's residence or *goten*, castles built later in the Sixteenth Century had it incorporated in the *tenshu,* while after that period this shifted and the *goten* came to be a self-standing building where ceremonies, administration and representation activities took place (Mitchelhill 2018, 68–71).

Just like the *tenshu* and other parts of the castle, the *goten* was made from wood and usually spread on one floor surrounded by gardens. As said before, this division between so many buildings with different purposes optimized the defensiveness of the whole complex and for the lord to live away from the main *tenshu* made it easier to escape in case of failure in combat and/or siege by the enemies (Mitchelhill, 2018).

It is worth mentioning once more that Japanese castles, except for the foundations and walls, were mostly made from timber and different types of wood. This feature is not only a stylistic-cultural choice but also due to the seismic nature of Japan, where earthquakes are frequent even these days; wood, in fact, is naturally elastic while also being strong and lightweight and this ensures durability and stability during a seismic wave: the wood bends and adapts – to some extent – to the oscillation of the earth's crust preventing the building from collapsing; furthermore wood is a humidity regulator perfect for the Japanese weather (Kawasaki, 2018).
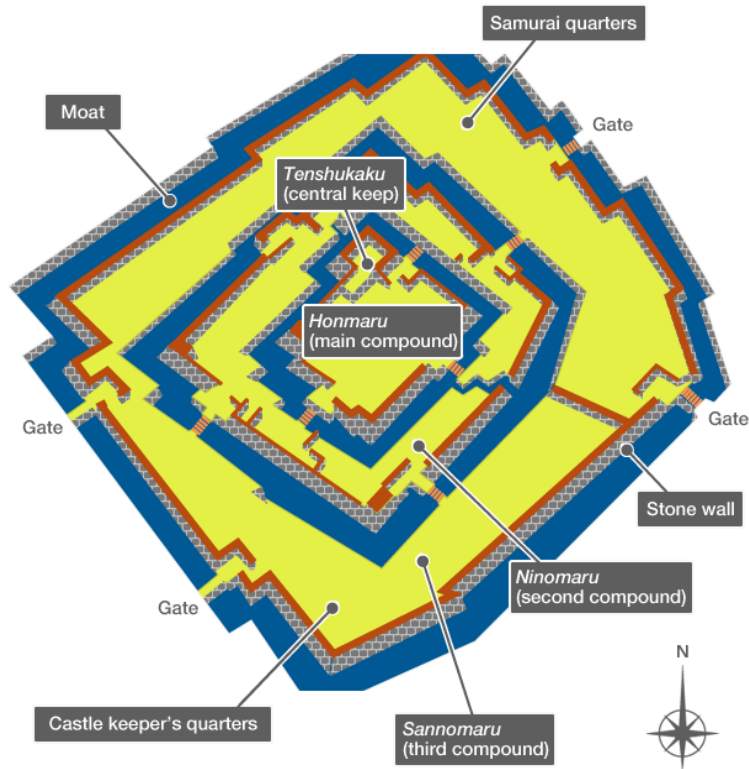
Samurai quarters

Moat

Gate

Tenshukaku
(central keep)

Honmaru
(main compound)

Gate

Gate

Stone wall

Gate

Ninomaru
(second compound)

Castle keeper's quarters

Sannomaru
(third compound)

N

Figure 7. An example of *doshinen* layout with the additional gates, walls, and ditches at the former Sunpu
castle in the Shizoka Prefectture.
(Source: Nippon.com, 2017; https://www.nippon.com/en/features/jg00105/)

3.4 Castles and Warfare

Fortified structures both in Italy and Japan were first built with wood and perishable materials (Luisi, 1996 and Turnbull, 2008) like rammed earth walls and palisades. In Italy, due to the need for continued maintenance work, fortifications started to be built with masonry techniques that could withstand sieges for longer periods, as the warfare techniques started to evolve and become more effective (Luisi 1996).

Furthermore, castles in general underwent a long process of destruction, reconstruction and development that sometimes is difficult to analyze and categorize, but especially Italian castles present common features: battlements, turrets, embankments, and walls (Luisi 1996, 48).

Japanese castle sieges were not common: the country is hilly and transportation of siege weapons was not easy, furthermore, since castles were built out of wood fire arrows were used

to start fires that would gradually destroy the castles (Turnbull 1996). Japanese castles were also equipped with holes along the defensive walls to permit arrow firing and dropping windows were placed along the higher points of the towers or walls; from here stones, boiling water or hot sand were dropped to stop invaders from climbing the castle wall (Mitchelhill, 2018). Japanese castles up until the end of the Twelfth Century were defended with crossbows operated by a team of men, other than firing arrows this machine was also used as a catapult for stones (Turnbull 2008, 9).

Figure 8. Siege of Osaka Castle in 1615 – 日本語: 「大坂夏の陣図屏風」右隻（部分）
(Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_Siege_of_Osaka_Castle.jpg)

The introduction of firearms in Japan in 1550 did not change the castle warfare from the start as Samurai saw guns as a cowardly way to fight and preferred hand-to-hand combat (Turnbull 1996, 93) (*Figure 8.*). During Oda Nobunaga's period, guns and firearms in general were still uncommon but with Hideyoshi firearms started to spread and were supplied to the armies (Brown 1948, 239). Hideyoshi also implemented the use of cannons that arrived from Europe and the construction of the imposing Osaka castle might have been the result of the adoption

of firearms and artillery in siege warfare (Brown 1948). The new use of firearms also affected the organization of the army that saw the displacement of the cavalry by infantry and battles became long-ranged (Brown 1948; Turnbull 1996).

Regarding Italian castles, siege techniques required the development of new strategies to be able to withstand them. Implementations included battlements that granted fast reactions to arrow firing and moving from one area of the wall to the other; double doors were also used to sustain attacks of war rams and burnings (Luisi 1996, 53).

Figure 9. "A siege of the fifteenth century, from a manuscript belonging to Edward IV., now in Sir <u>John Soane's</u> Museum. The walls, having been breached by artillery, are being stormed through the breaches; the stormers are covered by the fire of hand- gun-men, crossbowmen and archers." Fifteenth Century
(Source: Charles Oman (1926) Castles, The Great Western Railway, pp. front piece)

Finally, both countries show proof (Brown 1948; Luisi 1996; Turnbull 1996) that the techniques employed in siege warfare for castles were certainly effective in terms of destruction and damage (*Figure 9.)* but what usually granted the invaders victory was the inability of castles to sustain long-period sieges also in terms of food provisions, hygiene and psychological health. These factors were maybe the most crucial in winning a siege.

Chapter 4: Case Studies

4.1 Canossa Castle

The Canossa castle is situated on top of a hill at 576 meters above sea level, in the municipality of Canossa, in the Reggio Emilia district, Emilia Romagna region (*Figure 10.* and *Figure 11*.) and it has been recognized as a National Monument since 1878. The Canossa castle was chosen as a case study because its history is tied mainly to the Canossa family that similarly to Oda Nobunaga – as we will see later – managed to become very powerful in the Italian political scene to even battle the Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire. It is said that Matilda was such an important figure in Medieval Emilia-Romagna that in the cultural history of the region, it is recognized as a time before and after her rule (Morini 2022).

Figure 10. Map of Italy; Emilia-Romagna region is located on the northeast side of the peninsula, below Veneto.
Canossa is signalled with a red dot on the map.
(Source: Italy-facts.net, 2013; https://www.italy-facts.net/italy-regions-map.html)

Figure 11. Map of Emilia-Romagna, Canossa il located southwest of Reggio Emilia.
(Source: Regione Emilia Romagna, 2018; https://fesr.regione.emilia-romagna.it/notizie/2018/aprile/online-il-sito-dei-cammini-dellemilia-romagna)

The castle was built in the middle of the Tenth Century by Adalberto Atto, the first count of Canossa and up to the Twelfth Century was the main housing for the Canossa family, one of the most influential families of the Italian Middle Ages: the castle, like the family, has been involved in the relationship between the Empire and the Church for the most part of their history; worth noting in this context is that, in 1077, the castle – owned by Matilde of Canossa, the head of the Canossa family at that time and one of the most influential personalities of her time – was the location of the meeting between Henry IV of the Holy Roman Empire and Pope Gregory VIII during the investiture conflict. The Pope excommunicated the Emperor as a way to gain supremacy in the investiture process and at the castle, the Emperor waited outside for the Pope to revoke the excommunication (Cammarosano 2008). Furthermore, in 1092 the castle was under siege by the Emperor himself, but Matilde managed to defeat him (Saggioro et al. 2018).

After the Canossa, the castle was owned by different influential families and lords like the Estensi, Ludovico Ariosto and the Valentini up to 1878 when the Italian Government bought it and registered it as a National Monument.
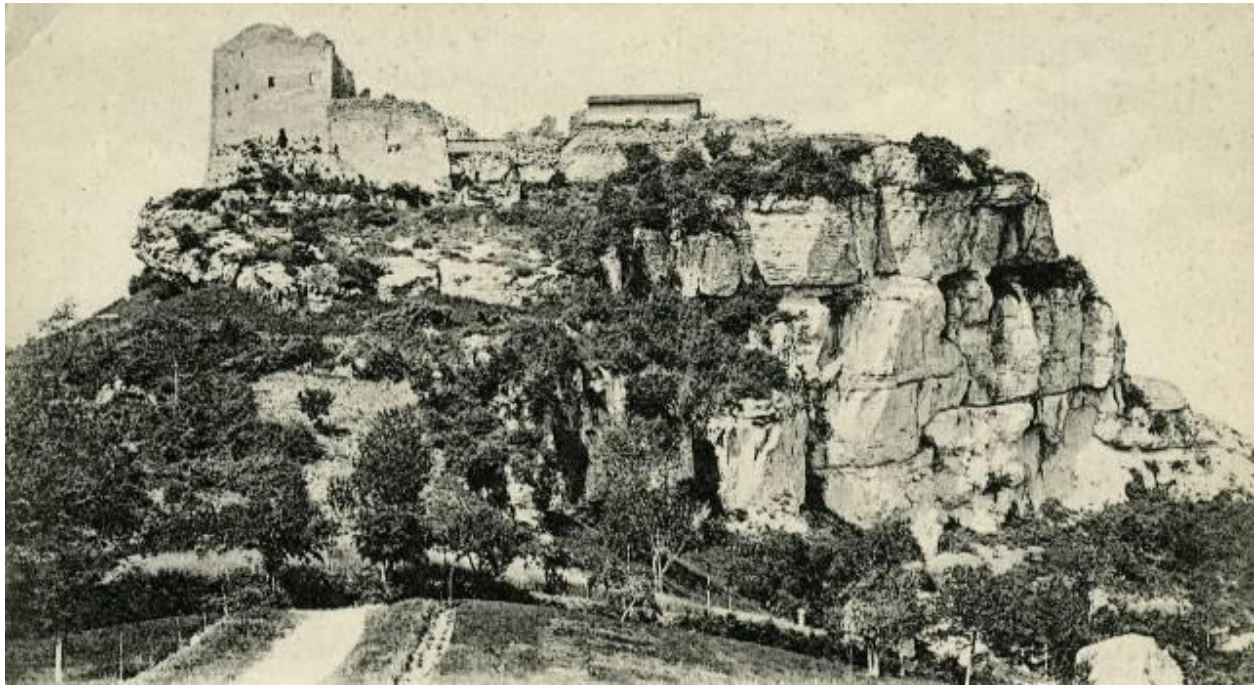

Figure 12. Canossa castle at the end of the Nineteenth Century.
(Source: photo of the CAI member Alessandro Cassarini -Claudio Conti collection from "Ancora a Canossa", Comitato Scientifico Centrale, 2022)

The castle was part of the Canossa's properties but differently to the other estates, this one is referred to as *arx* in Donizone's poem from 115 about Matilda (Capurso 2022) to highlight its importance in contrast to the other estates in the territory that were called *castra* or *turris* to identify them as strictly military and defensive–related. The same author states that it was referred to as the identity of the Canossa family but also as a fortified site ready to sustain attacks and sieges. The castle had, during its long life, undergone several improvements and slowly transformed into a magnificent, fortified palace (Catellani, Ferrari and Zanazzi 2021). The whole complex was therefore a place not only of military practice but most importantly of wealth and power and of religion, highlighting how it was used for everyday life.

To this day, intense excavations have taken place: the first one was by Gaetano Chierici in between 1877 and 1880 (*Figure 13.*), from 1890 to 1893 by Naborre Campanini, in 2009 by Renata Curina and in 2017 by the University of Verona and University of Bologna. To understand the timeline of the complex, it has been divided into differently named buildings:

the *Palatium*, the main structure of the building with two towers on the perimeter, the crypt of the church, storage spaces for the monastery, the late medieval building that was built on top of the earlier structures, plus the 12 meters long wall proceeding west to east with a width of 1,8meters. The complex furthermore has a more external wall that was used as the main defensive system (Capurso 2022).
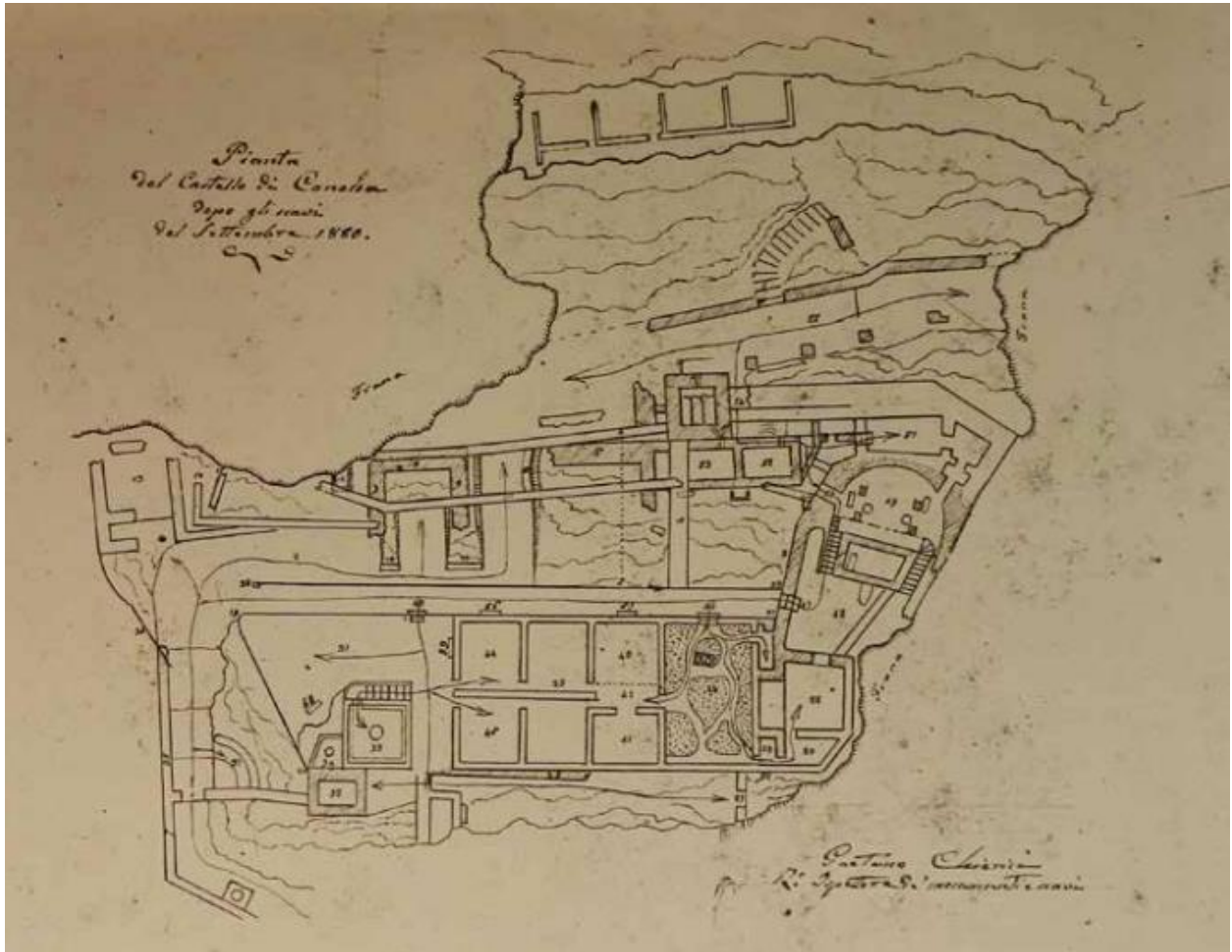

Figure 13. Plan of Canossa castle's excavations by Gaetano Chierici in 1880.
(Source: ACS, Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione Dir. Gen. AA. BB. aa. 1860-1890, busta n. 559, fasc. 857, Reggio Emilia-Castello di Canossa; from "Ancora a Canossa", Comitato Scientifico Centrale, 2022)

A survey in 2017, brought to light seven different walls that were possibly structures present on a lower level of the castle: three of these are identified as part of a wall that surrounded the complex; a small building was also found in connection to the wall in the south-east corner (Saggioro et al. 2018). Due to the minerals the hill is made of, part of it collapsed, reducing the surface for buildings and destroying already existing structures (Russo et al. 2023).

The first excavation by Chierici brought to light the crypt and the storage rooms, in his reports he gave a detailed description of the structures and data collected as he wanted the site to become known and to revive its history (Cantatore 2021) implementing and securing the present structures.

All the various archaeological excavations (Capurso 2022) agreed that the first instalment of the site, back in the Tenth Century, had a keep connected to the feudal lord's house; after that, the palace and the church followed. The main entrance was on the west side while the second entrance was on the south side; the monastery entrance was on the east side. As of today, there is no concrete data available regarding the keep but the 2009 excavations indicate that two parallel walls, distanced from each other by 7 meters, might be the base for the keep. The 2009 excavations also unearthed a 1.80-meter-thick wall on the southeast side of the complex, probably built during the 1Twelfth Century (Capurso 2022). The church is today indicated by the crypt and part of the still intact walls; it was composed of a central aisle that led to the presbytery. During the Chierici and 2009 excavations, human remains were discovered, signaling a possible graveyard connected to the monastery that was built in connection to the church (Catellani, Ferrari and Zanazzi 2021) (*Figure 14.*).

Dating to Matilde's ownership of the castle, from 1076 and 115, there are three circles of walls: the lowest one protected the village below; the second one was situated on the south side of the hill and reached the top of it while the third wall surrounded the top of the hill (Capurso 2022). The walls, furthermore, were connected to the road system of the area and connected the castle to the village below and to the main roads to other cities.
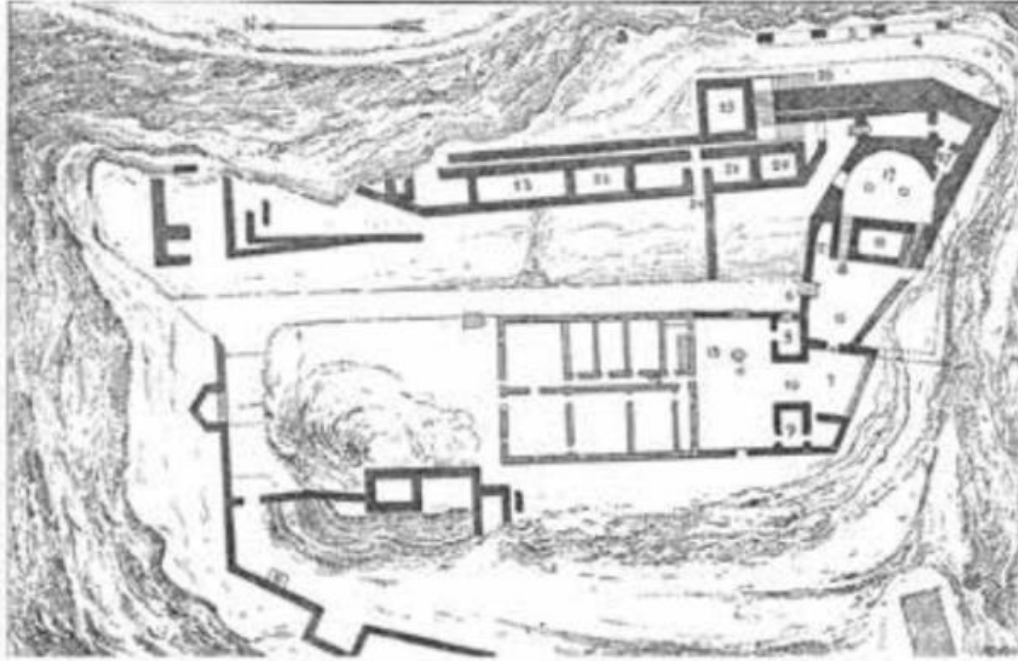
Figure 14. Plan of the hilltop with the crypt at the right upper corner, place right below it and extending to the left and the keep connecte to the natural rock of the hill.
(Source: plan by N.Campanini in 1894 and elaboration by A. Capurso, 2018; from "Ancora a Canossa",
Comitato Scientifico Centrale, 2022 - no high quality images were available)

Even though castles in Italy have gradually gained a duality regarding their purpose, with the Canossa castle the double purpose of both defence/protection and representation of power happened very quickly: although we do not have a complete archaeological dataset for the castle we know from historical sources and events that the castle was built especially to house the Canossa family and to show their magnificence (Lazzari, n.d.), the fact that both the Emperor and the Pope stayed in the castle highlights how important the family was deemed and what a great role it played in the political dynamics of Medieval Italy.

4.2 Azuchi Castle

Azuchi Castle is situated on Lake Biwa in the Shiga Prefecture, in the Kansai region of Honshu, Japan; for context, Lake Biwa is the biggest freshwater lake in Japan and is home to one of the main roads to Kyoto (*Figure 15.*).

Figure 15. Map of Japan; Lake Biwa is the biggest lake in Japan (red dot). It is in the southern half of Honshu Island, the biggest of the archipelago.
(Source: Freeworldmaps.net; https://www.freeworldmaps.net/asia/japan/)

It is important to explain why Azuchi Castle was chosen for this research: during the time of the Warring States, from 1467 to 1576, Japan was divided and controlled by different lords. With Oda Nobunaga this situation slightly changes as he is able to get under his control more territories; elevating him above other warring lords and permitting him a power confrontation with the Emperor that is stationed in Kyoto.

Therefore, it is understandable why Azuchi castle was built in that specific area: to give him control of any roads to Kyoto and any traffic on the lake. Furthermore, the castle is a statement

of his power and a residential palace rather than a military fortress even though, as we will see later, the whole complex was still built with defensive features (Takayanagi and Akira 1977).

Figure 16. Iwasaki Ōu 岩崎鴎雨, Ōmi-kuni Gamō-gun Azuchi-jō no zu 訃近Ụ国蒲生郡□土城之図訊瑈 Painting of Azuchi Castle in Gamo District, Ōmi Province瑈; 1855, preface 1896, colors on silk, 87.8 × 121.9 cm; Osaka Castle Museum 大阪天□嫄, Osaka, Japan.
(Source: Erdmann, 2016)

The construction of the castle by will of Oda Nobunaga began in 1576 and was finished only three years later in 1579, the castle was situated on the hilltop of Mt.Azuchi and at that time the complex was surrounded by the lake's water on the eastern foot of the mountain as indicated by the ditches and slopes excavated in the 1990s (Shiga Prefecture Website, n.d.); the life of the castle was very short as in 1582 Nobunaga was killed and a couple of weeks after the castle was burnt to the ground (JCastle 2022).

The site was never reconstructed and in 1926 it was designated as a historical site with the Shiga Prefecture becoming responsible for the management of the whole complex. What is known nowadays about the Azuchi-jo is derived mainly from the report written by Portuguese missionary Luis Frois in 1581 when he visited the area under the guide of Nobunaga himself, he described it as *regards architecture, strength, wealth and grandeur may well be compared with the greatest buildings of Europe* and again *The entirefortress is encircled by towers built upon those great stone walls and within each of them are alarm bells and guards on duty day*

and night (Takayanagi and Akira 1977, 517); furthermore it is said that Nobunaga commissioned painted panels that represented the whole complex with extreme precision and that they were gifted to an Italian missionary that brought them to the Pope, but to this day there is no trace of these omiyage anywhere, which represents a great loss as they are the only possible way of knowing the full extent and magnificence of the castle (Takayanagi and Akira 1977, 518).

It is agreed upon that Azuchi castle represents a transition and also a new starting point in the phenomenon of castle-building in Japan: prior to this structure, castles were built with the sole purpose of defence and control of the territory, they were of smaller size and they had watchtowers; the castle was so important and known that it gave the name to the next architectural style era, the Azuchi-Momoyama period (ZoomingJapan 2018).
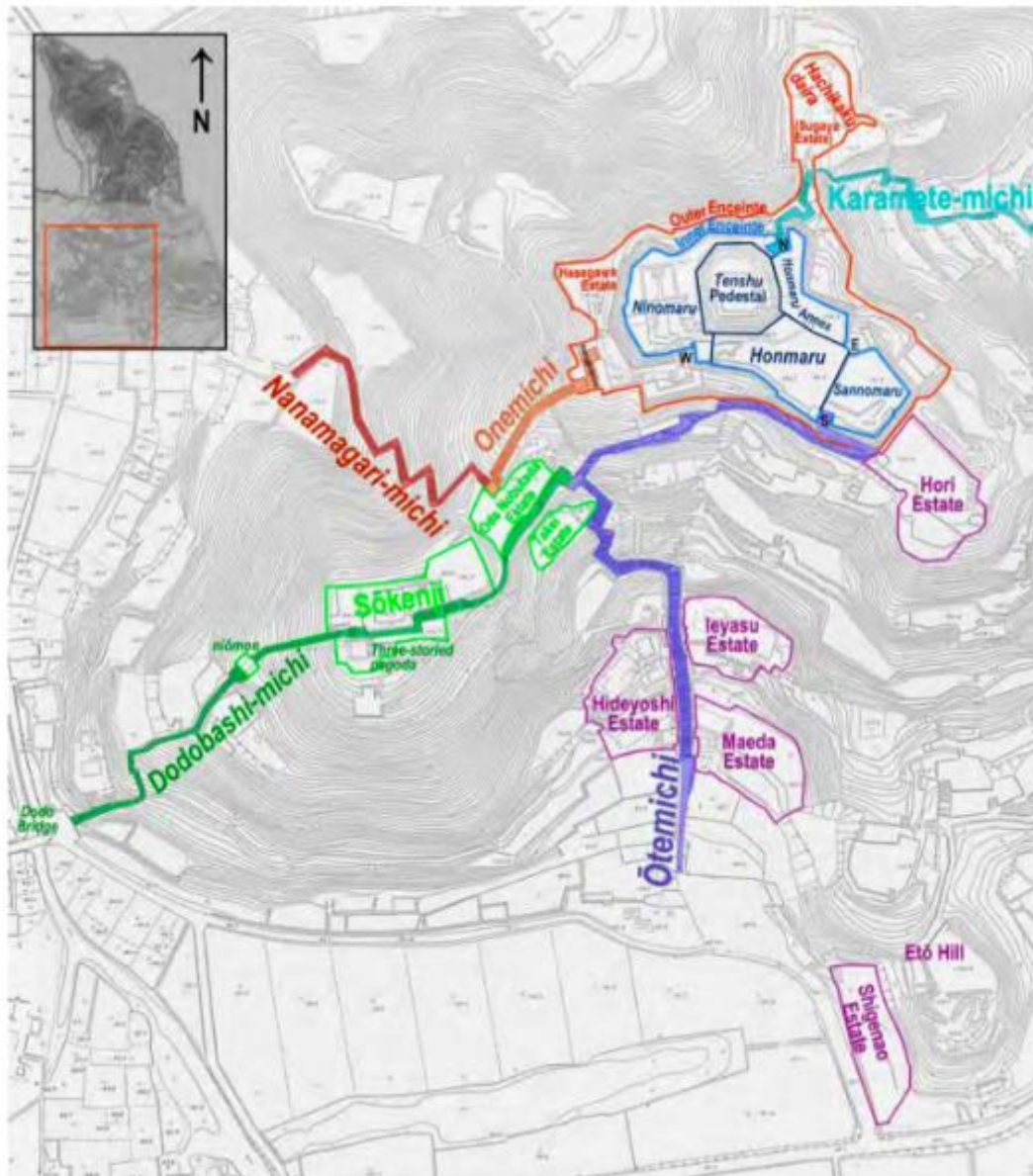
Figure 17. Plan of the hill with the main castle complex marked in blue while in orange is the outer wall. There the different enclosures and the *tenshu* can be recognized. Marked in pink are the estates of Oda's vassals Hideyoshi, Ieyasu and Maeda; in bright green are Oda's son's estate and the temple with the pagoda. The red-orange, green and purple lines are the roads that connected the base of the hill to the castle.
(Source: Erdmann, M. K (2016) *"Azuchi Castle: Architectural Innovation and Political Legitimacy in Sixteenth-Century Japan"*, [Doctoral Dissertation, Harvard University])

The main important structure was composed of 3 main different enclosures: the *Honmaru*, the *Ninomaru* and the *Sannomaru* plus 4 separated enclosures in the area identified as Nobunaga vassals' houses (Elisonas 2003). It occupied an area of 15 hectares at 105 meters above Lake Biwa water's level.

The focus though is pointed at the *tenshu*, a sort of watchtower on multiple levels with balconies around it. The *tenshu* of the Azuchi castle was the first of its type and was divided into six stories above ground and one below with a total height of 32 meters; it is said that

contrary to other times, Nobunaga lived in the *tenshu* to be able to keep watch on his territories, instead of leaving in the family house in the *honmaru* (Visit Omi 2020). The *tenshu* doesn't have a central pillar but a grid of foundation pillars distributed on an externally octagonal and internally hexagonal area. The following *tenshu* in other Japanese castles are different because the base is always quadrilateral (Erdmann 2016).

Each floor had a purpose (*Figure 18.*): the first mainly contained an entrance hall, waiting rooms, an audience hall and other minor rooms, possibly for storage. The second floor housed a big audience hall together with a stage for dance and music to be played; the third floor was supposedly Nobunaga's quarters and a tea-ceremony room, all connected by galleries. The upper floors up to the top were seemingly formed of rooms and decorated with paintings (Takayanagi and Akira 1977). In the past years there was a theory on how the central area of the *tenshu* might have been an open space, where from the top one could look down, this has been nowadays deemed improbable (Elisonas 2003).

Mark Karl Erdmann (2016, 248) proposes that the *tenshu*, made from timber, is an evolution of the *yagure* – unembellished small towers used a guardtowers and for siege – located at the corners and along the defesive walls.
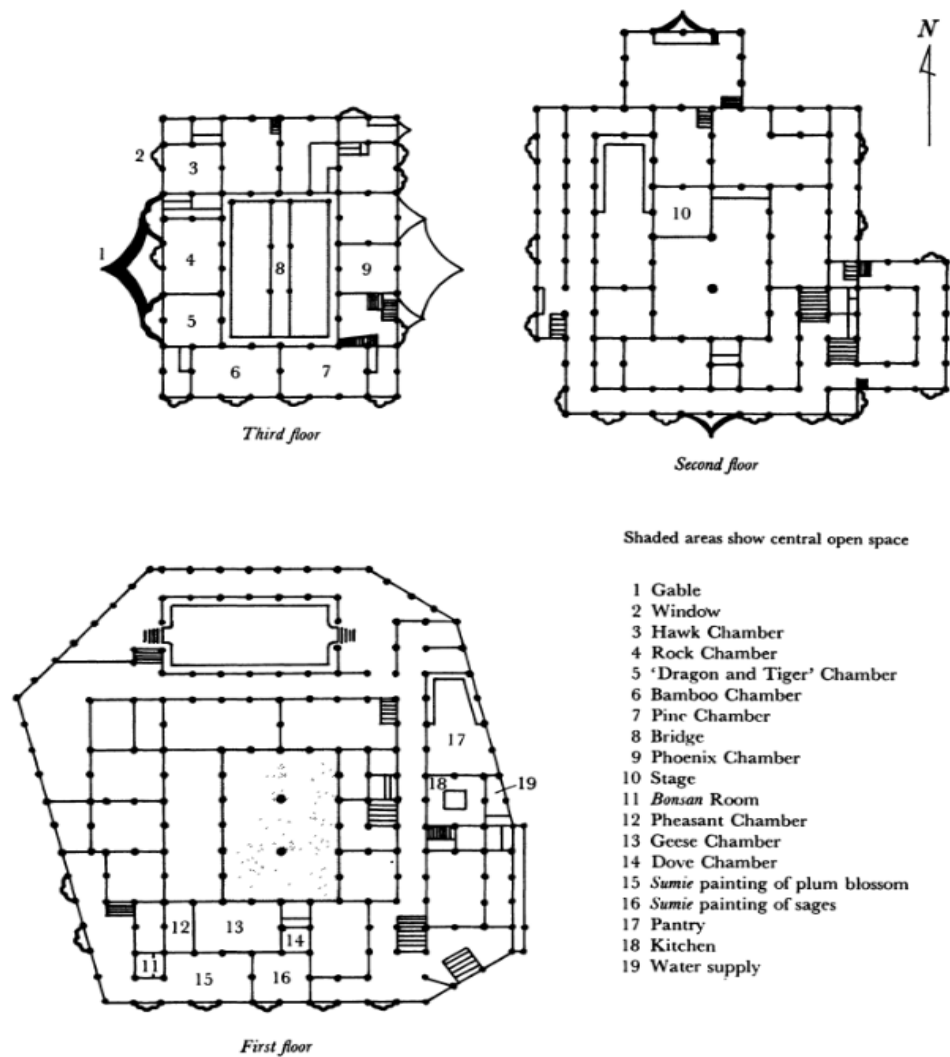
Third floor

Second floor

First floor

Shaded areas show central open space

1 Gable
2 Window
3 Hawk Chamber
4 Rock Chamber
5 'Dragon and Tiger' Chamber
6 Bamboo Chamber
7 Pine Chamber
8 Bridge
9 Phoenix Chamber
10 Stage
11 *Bonsan* Room
12 Pheasant Chamber
13 Geese Chamber
14 Dove Chamber
15 *Sumie* painting of plum blossom
16 *Sumie* painting of sages
17 Pantry
18 Kitchen
19 Water supply

Figure 18. Plan of the *tenshu* at Azuchi Castle as review by Takayanagi (1977)
(Source: Takayanagi, S. (1977) *The Glory that was Azuchi*, Monumenta Nipponica Vol.32, pp. 515-524)

The site has been excavated in different time periods: the first excavation happened in 1939–1941 and it is agreed nowadays that most of the interpretations of the *honmaru* and of the *tenshu* were wrong. The second round of excavations happened over 20 years, between 1989 and 2009, and most of the site was re-excavated; the material results were in line with the 1940s findings, but the interpretations of the features were revised (Erdmann 2016).

It was during these excavations that the plan of the area was partially unearthed: from the south of the mountain a road 180 meters long and 8 meters wide that led directly to the *honmaru* was discovered; it had two branches, one leading to the *Sannomaru* and the other leading to the *Kuroganemon* gate in the west. The road started at the *Otemon* gate, it was paved and had small

ditches and stone forts to defend and house the warriors during possible attacks (*Figure 19*. in purple) (Shiga Prefecture Website, n.d.).

In the *Ninomaru*, already known in the past, is present Nobunaga's mausoleum even though his body was never retrieved from Kyoto (Shiga Prefecture website, n.d.). The *Honmaru* contained the *tenshu*, and multiple spaces for soldiers along the perimeter to ensure defence. Furthermore, in this part of the castle, there is a structure that resembles the Inner Palace or Hall of the Imperial Palace in Kyoto and that is not present in previous castles: it is theorized that it served as a receiving hall for the Emperor and other important lords (Shiga Prefecture website, n.d.).
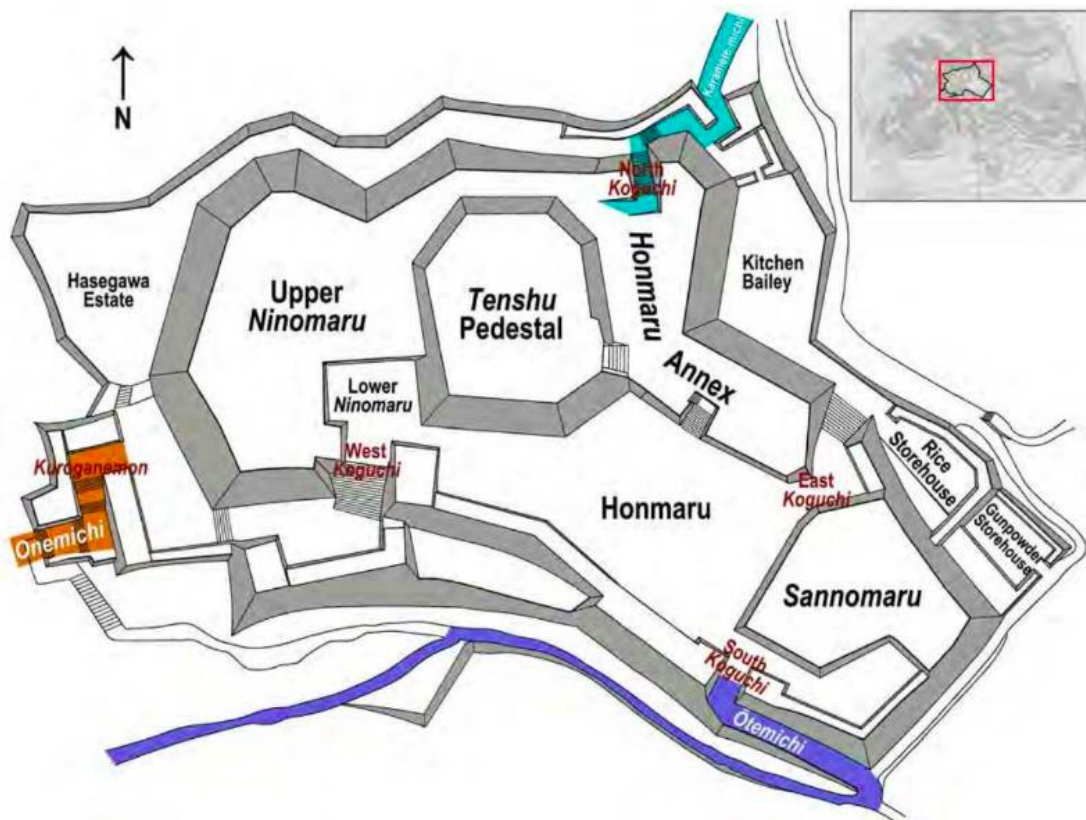
Figure 19. Close-up of the layout of the enclosures at Azuchi-jo.
(Source: Erdmann, M. K (2016) *"Azuchi Castle: Architectural Innovation and Political Legitimacy in Sixteenth-Century Japan"*, [Doctoral Dissertation, Harvard University])

Moreover, in the years 1998 and 1999 unearthed a lot of artefacts, burnt-down structures and traditional cooking stones all over the area; the burnt-down structure and traces of fire have been recorded all over the different enclosures and the *tenshu* (Erdmann 2016).

Further west of the Ninomaru, there was the former Sokenji Temple that burnt down in 1854, here excavations revealed the composition of the area which was made up of the worship hall,

the shrine, a three-story pagoda, a back and a front gate. To this day only the pagoda and the main entrance gate are visible (Shiga Prefecture website, n.d.).

Even though the main theory is that the complex was built as a way for Nobunaga to express his power and magnificence, it is undoubtedly true that the castle presented also the defensive aspect highlighted by the network of moats, monumental gateways with guard posts, the layout of the enclosures with walls and above all, the high *tenshu* that granted Nobunaga the complete control from above of the lake, the roads and of the overall area (Ittekuru website 2017).

In conclusion, Azuchi-jo, even though it was a kind of prototype for the later Japanese castles as we know them today, can also be considered a good case study for the research; the fact that pieces of evidence of everyday life were found, that Nobunaga's retainers had houses there, the presence of a temple combined with the military and defensive purpose, very much connects this castle to the ideology that we also have of European castles, where military and political purposes mix with everyday life.

4.3 Analysis of the case studies

To try and answer the second research question of this thesis, an analysis and short comparison of the case studies are needed. If we compare both castles based on their architectural style, they have very little in common that we can analyze but if the analysis is based on the components of the castles, on their reason to be and on how they came to be, the results might surprise.

As written before, the two castles are the results of their own time as one was built starting from the Tenth Century while the other in the mid of the Sicteenth Century, and while one had a centuries–long history, the other only lasted for four years; but both were built under the will of powerful lords that in one way or another changed or contributed to events that changed the history of their respective countries.

Structurally both castles were built on top of a hill that overlooked an important area for both countries – both locations were crucial to trade and connection to other main cities of the countries like Kyoto, Osaka and Milan and Mantua – to ensure that both lords could control them and be aware of enemies or other dangerous situations. The two complexes of buildings were, furthermore, surrounded by walls in different parts: one round of walls was at the bottom of the hills to protect the village and buildings connected to the main premises, a second one that contained other smaller buildings and a third one positioned around the top of the hill that served as a division and protection for the lord's house, the *tenshu* and in the Italian case the keep, the church and the palace. The presence of walls in both cases clearly shows how both parties deemed fortifications an important part of the castle itself and played the roles of both defending from attacks and dividing the lords from the villages and other people living in the area: this was to ensure that their power and wealth could be seen and felt. Both wall systems were, furthermore, connected to the main road to permit passage and trade from and to the castle via merchants.

Regarding the plan of both castles, we can clearly see that there were some structures that bear a similar purpose, mainly the lord's house and the *tenshu*. These two buildings, even if architectonically different, shared the same objective: they were the house where the lords lived and met their subjects, where they would have had meetings with other powerful people – like the Emperor or the Pope – and, for the *tenshu* the objective was to control and tower over the landscape both in the representation of the power of the lords and in a defensive way.

By stretching the analysis, we could also include the church, the temple and the mausoleum: these three structures were connected to religious practices, and it is interesting how both lords decided to have such buildings on their premises, while their power is strictly connected to the land and concrete resources. It is also worth noting that the church supposedly housed the tomb of both Matilda and her predecessor while, even though the mausoleum at Azuchi castle is empty, it was built to house Oda Nobunaga's vestige after his death: there is therefore a specific places for the lords even after their deaths where their subjects could pay homage.

Furthermore, excavations at both castles have unearthed different types of houseware showing the everyday life side of these complexes; they were then a mix of political, economic and military growth. This then brings forth the second research question regarding the topic if castles from different and far apart countries share similarities: the answer, by looking at these two case studies could very well be yes. Both castles, as explained plentifully above, have

similarities that we cannot dismiss as they connect strongly with the idea that we have of how power and wealth was represented during the Middle Ages and during the period that we try to define as *feudalism*.

Could these two case studies be the result of a common ideology? The answer is not completely settled; we have seen that they share structural and societal similarities but because we cannot certainly know the dynamics that were active at that time we cannot be certain. There is, therefore, still space for analysis.

Conclusion

The aim of this project was to try to understand if the concept of castles as known in Italy, and to an extent in Europe could also be used for castles in Japan and while there might not be a fixed answer, it is still an attempt at addressing the issue. What is compelling is that, as written above, there are different studies that address this issue and compare a European model with a Japanese one and therefore there is some foundation to this research.

Based on the explanations given in the chapters before, it is safe to say that Italian castles and Japanese ones share similarities based on a varied array of factors: the political scene in which they were built, namely the divided countries with different powerful lords sharing territories and battling for supremacy, the share purposes of all the structures that form a castle – on this matter, it is good to reprise the fact that the definitions in all the relevant languages of the research share common points on what parts a castle should be formed of – and the representative and military motive of both of the lords for building such complex structures.

To reprise Johnson (2013) and Kirk, Sternberg, and Przystupa (2020), even though the concept of castles is not fixed completely – and possibly will continue to evolve further – putting the focus on the similarities of case studies from around the world and comparing them will make it easier to understand and recognize a pattern in the castle-building phenomenon that is then not limited to Europe, thus acknowledging that castles from other countries can possibly be

grouped under the same phenomenon and studied altogether if the analysis is done by selecting case studies instead of comparing macro-areas.

It is important to highlight that for research around this topic, there needs to be also an improvement in sharing the collected data about castles to be able to a way to expand the meaning behind the word to then be able to include the different typologies of castles from around the world.

To conclude it is worth saying that even though this thesis only focuses on one Italian castle and one Japanese castle, it has presented a comparative study based on the linguistic and theoretical aspects of castles too providing a possible insight into how the castle-building phenomenon is addressed in the two countries.

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(Source: photo of the CAI member Alessandro Cassarini -Claudio Conti collection from "Ancora a Canossa", Comitato Scientifico Centrale, 2022)

Figure 13. Plan of Canossa castle's excavations by Gaetano Chierici in 1880. (Source: ACS, Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione Dir. Gen. AA. BB. aa. 1860-1890, busta n. 559, fasc. 857, Reggio Emilia-Castello di Canossa; from "Ancora a Canossa", Comitato Scientifico   Centrale,   2022)

Figure 3. Plan of the hilltop with the crypt at the right upper corner, place right below it and extending to the left and the keep connecte to the natural rock of the hill. (Source: plan by N.Campanini in 1894 and elaboration by A. Capurso, 2018; from "Ancora a Canossa", Comitato Scientifico Centrale, 2022 - no high quality images were available)

Figure 15. Map of Japan; Lake Biwa is the biggest lake in Japan (red dot). It is in the southern half   of   Honshu   Island,   the   biggest   of   the   archipelago. (Source: Freeworldmaps.net; https://www.freeworldmaps.net/asia/japan/)

Figure 16. Iwasaki Ōu 岩崎鴎雨, Ōmi-kuni Gamō-gun Azuchi-jō no zu 訷近 Ụ 国蒲生郡 Painting of Azuchi Castle in Gamo District, Ōmi Province珚; 1855, preface 1896, colors on silk, 87.8 × 121.9 cm; Osaka Castle Museum 大阪天□嬕, Osaka, Japan.
(Source: Erdmann, 2016)

Figure 4. Plan of the hill with the main castle complex marked in blue while in orange is the outer wall. There the different enclosures and the *tenshu* can be recognized. Marked in pink are the estates of Oda's vassals Hideyoshi, Ieyasu and Maeda; in bright green are Oda's son's estate and the temple with the pagoda. The red-orange, green and purple lines are the roads that connected   the   base   of   the   hill   to   the   castle. (Source: Erdmann, M. K (2016) *"Azuchi Castle: Architectural Innovation and Political Legitimacy in Sixteenth-Century Japan"*, [Doctoral Dissertation, Harvard University])

Figure 18. Plan of the tenshu at Azuchi Castle as review by Takayanagi (1977) (Source: Takayanagi, S. (1977) The Glory that was Azuchi, Monumenta Nipponica Vol.32, pp. 515-524)

Figure 19. Close-up of the layout of the enclosures at Azuchi-jo. (Source: Erdmann, M. K (2016) "Azuchi Castle: Architectural Innovation and Political Legitimacy in Sixteenth-Century Japan", [Doctoral Dissertation, Harvard Universi*ty]*