



The Châteaux of the Loire

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**The ideals of the French Renaissance**

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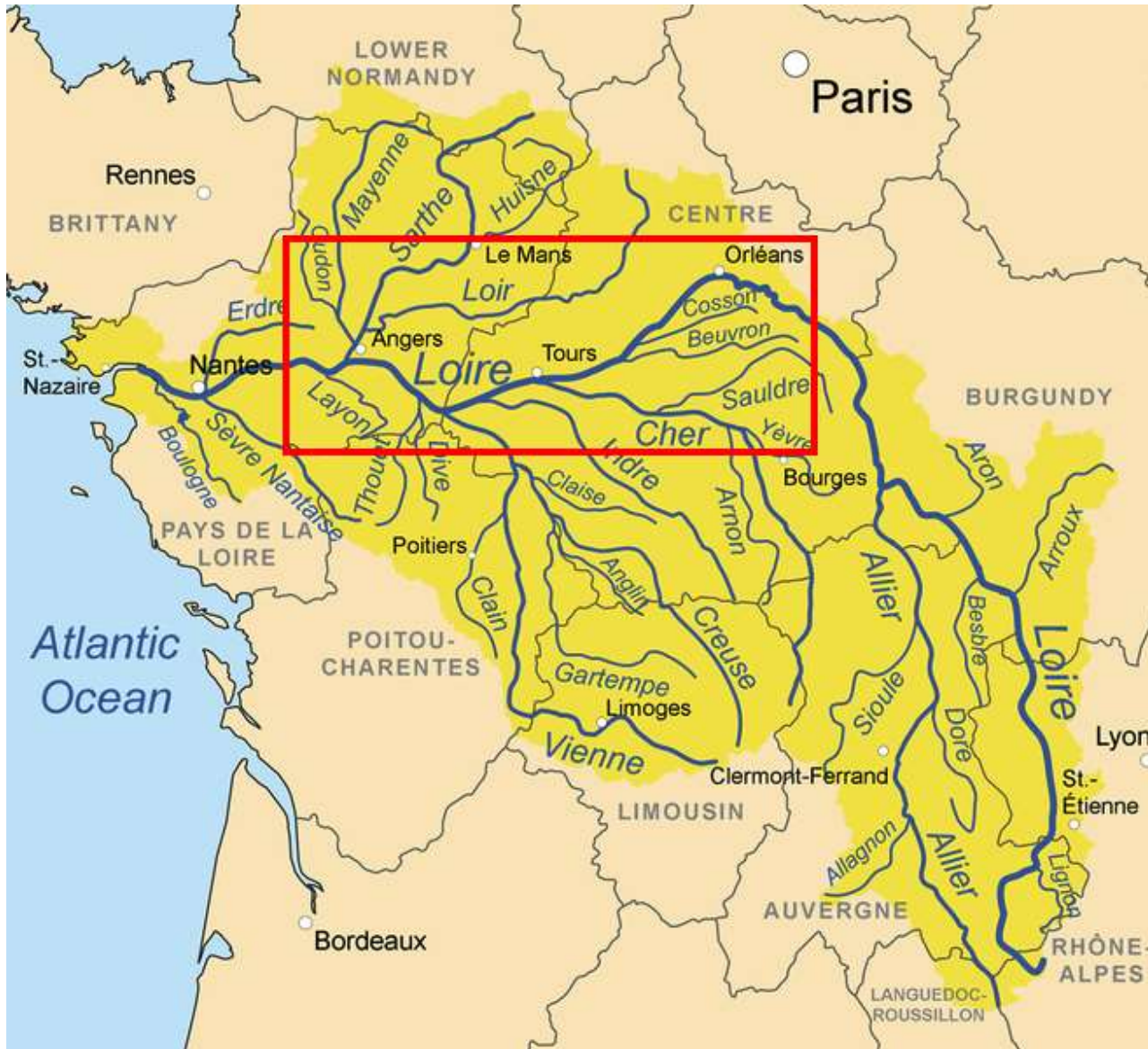
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# Course outline

- The “Valley of the Kings” – The Italian model
  - The French Renaissance gardens: masterpieces devoted to pleasure
  - Azay-le-Rideau and Chenonceau: architectural jewels
    - And the King invented Court life
- The Val de Loire: from the 17<sup>th</sup> century to the French Revolution
- Edward VIII and Wallis Simpson: the Val de Loire in the 20<sup>th</sup> century





The **Val de Loire** (the longest river in Europe): some of the most beautiful treasures of architecture in France

The French “Valley of the kings”

“The garden of France”





From **Charles VII** (1422-1461) to **Henri III** (1574-1589), the Valois kings transformed the Val de Loire



A new **model**: the Italian Renaissance

A new **way of life** (gardens, fashion & culture)



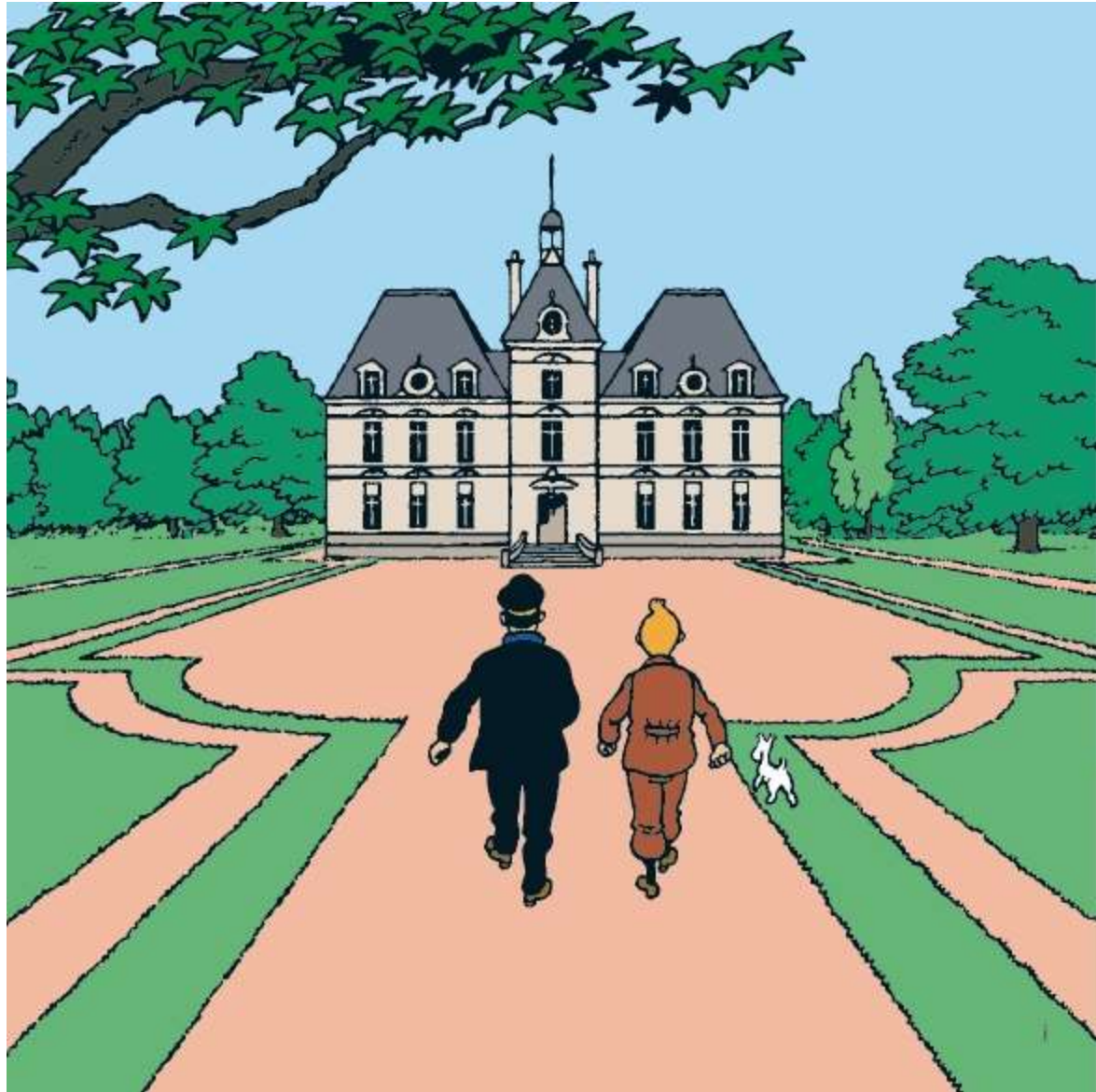
The Val de Loire in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries: a place of culture and leisure





# Cheverny







# Villandry





# Valençay





## Talleyrand and the art of conversation











The Val de Loire in the Middle-Age: austere fortresses



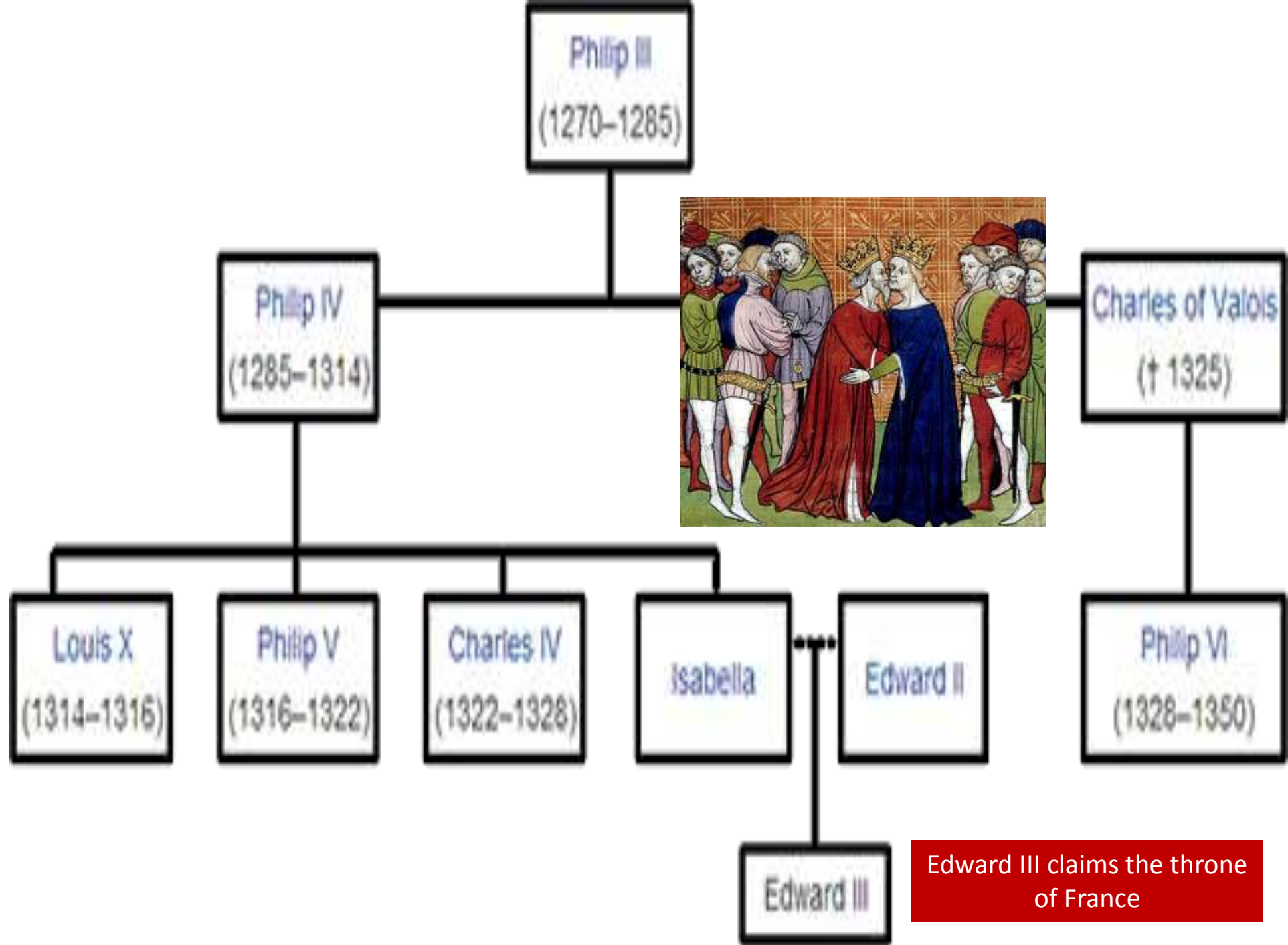




**The Hundred Years War:** the king of England's last attempt at defending their rights over France

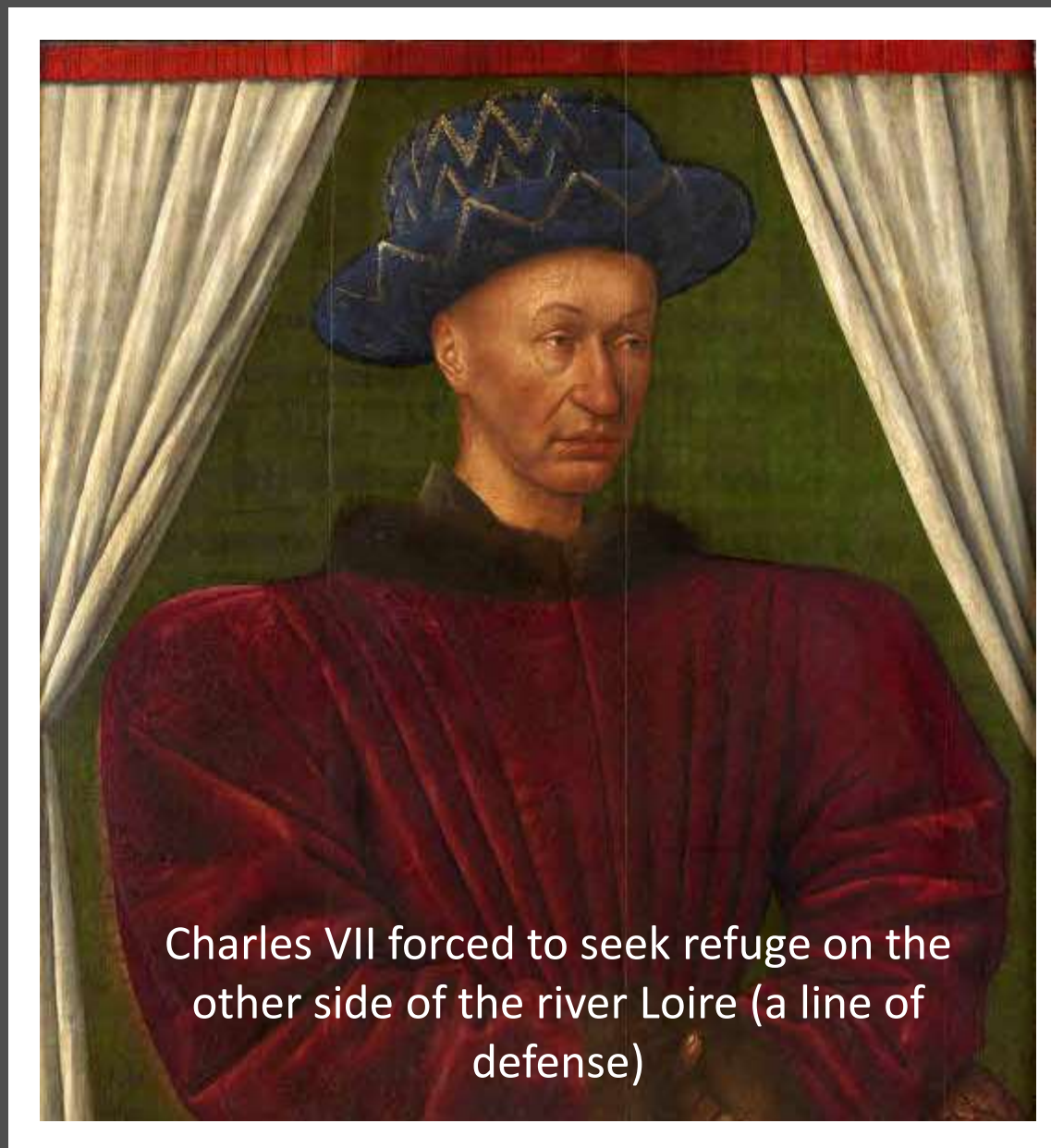
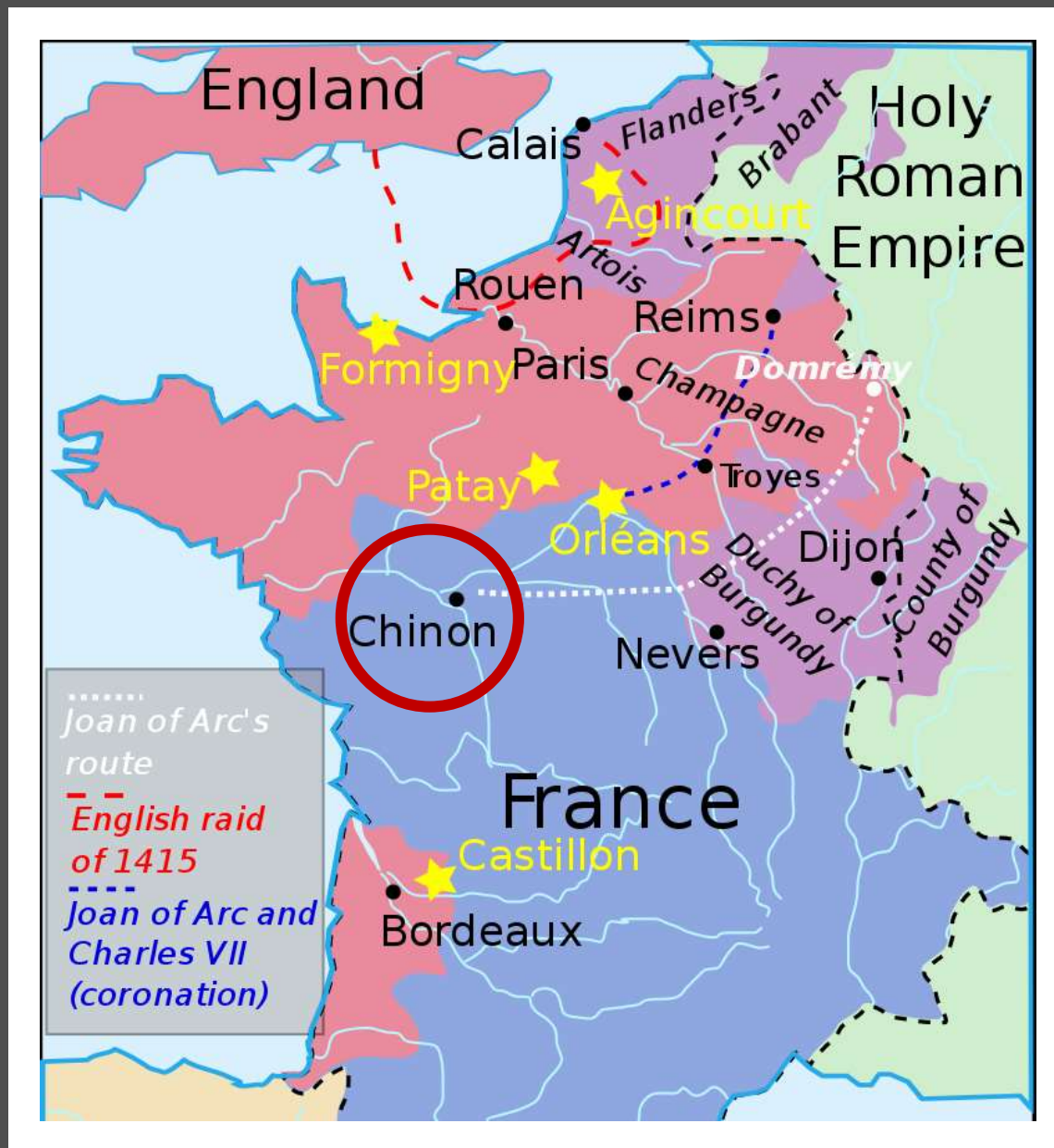






Edward III claims the throne of France

# 1422: Charles VII becomes king of France in the midst of the Hundred Years War



The North of France (including Paris) occupied by the English and their allies from Burgundy

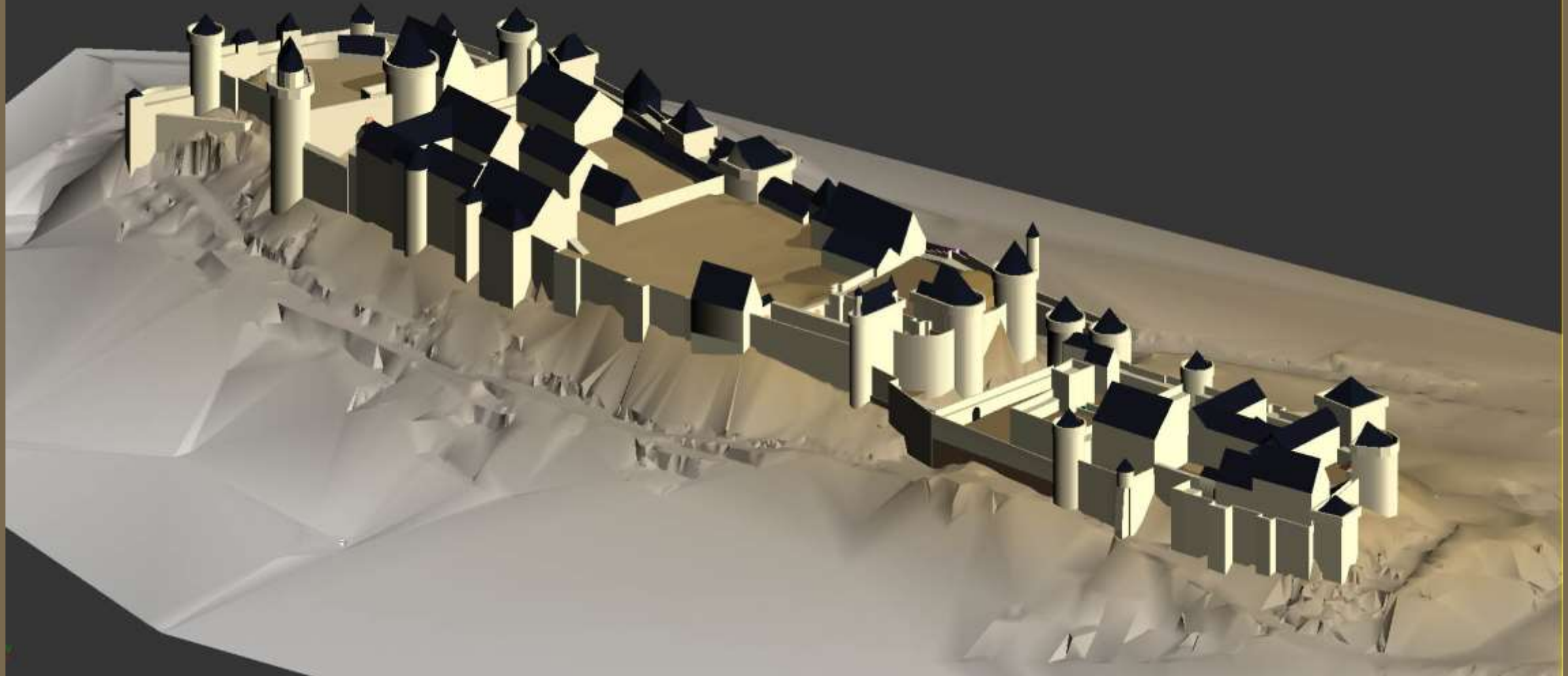






raphic

Total  
: 48 992  
28 546  
21.662





With Charles VII, the Val de Loire becomes **the heart** of the kingdom of France (the “garden” of France)



**High ranking officials** recruited in the region = many châteaux



# Fertile land

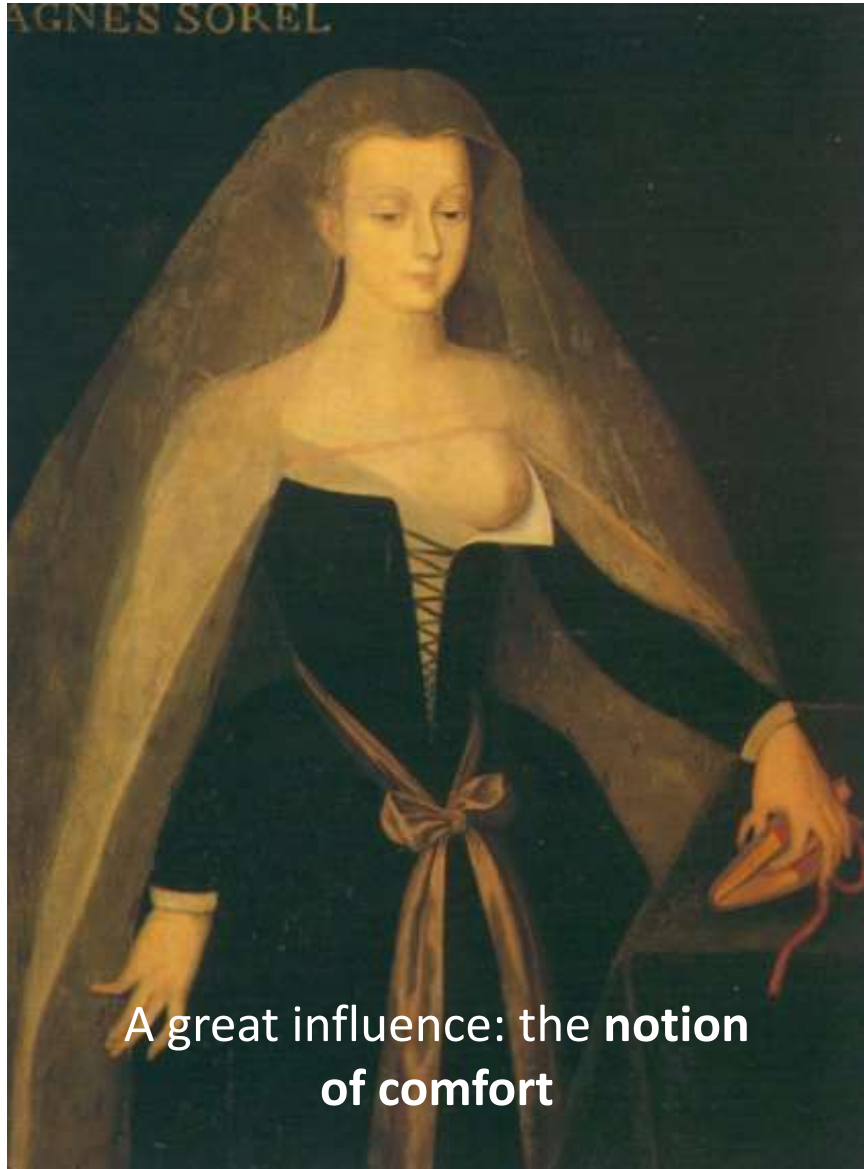




# The end of the Hundred Years War and the unification of France: greater sense of security



The Val de Loire: a symbol of love and women – Agnes Sorel: the first official « favorite »



A great influence: the notion  
of comfort



Château of Loches (1444): pre-Renaissance style

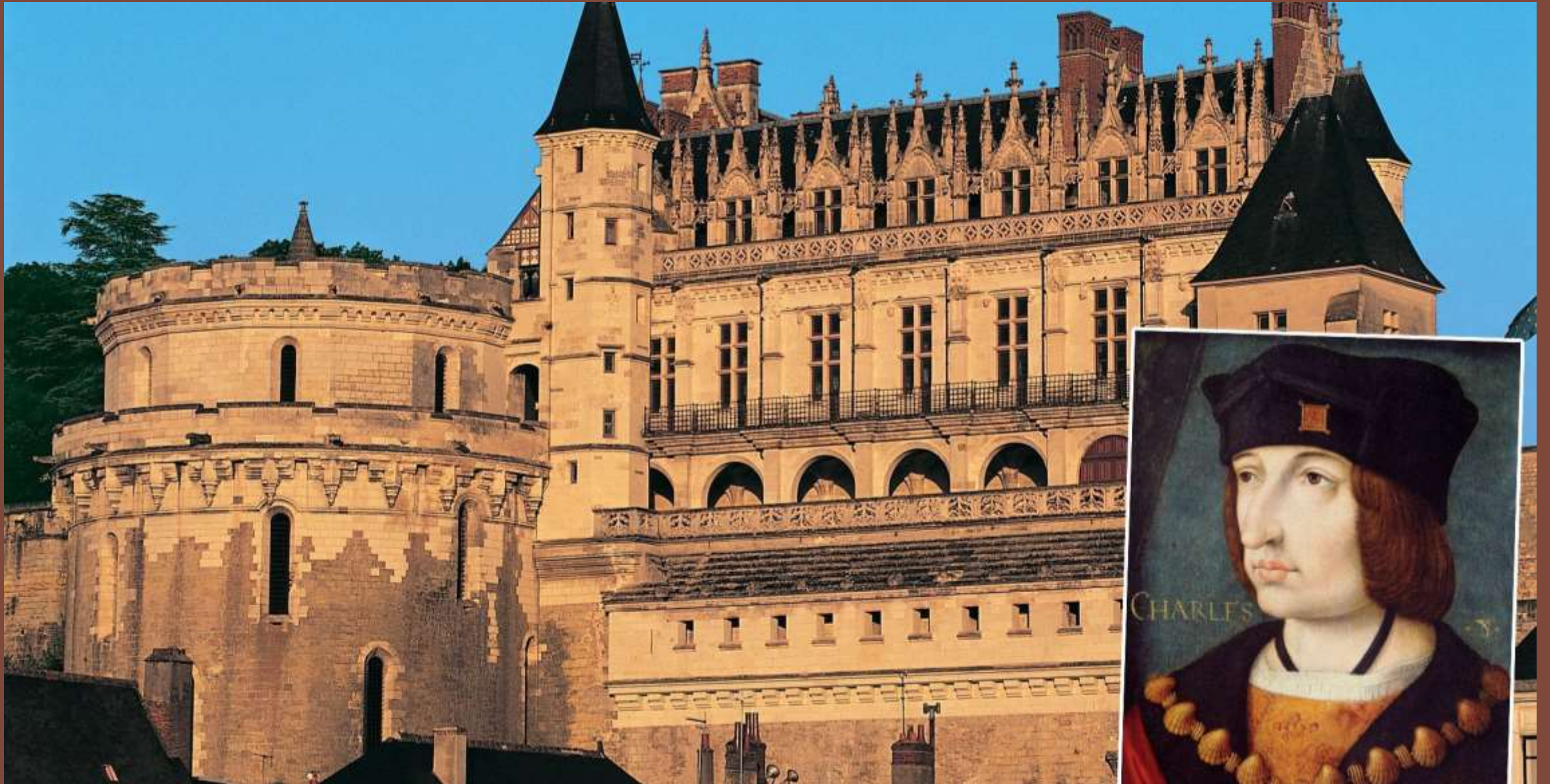


No longer a fortress – Open to the outside world





## Charles VIII (1483 – 1498) at Amboise: the birth of the French Renaissance



To transform the old medieval fortress into a prestigious and comfortable royal residence



# Charles VIII in Italy (1494-1495): enthusiasm and passion for the Italian Renaissance



The châteaux of the Loire valley: the Italian influence (architecture & gardens)

Italian-style architecture **incorporated** to existing medieval structures





The illusion of a defensive tower: an entrance to allow people and carriage to get to the château from below





Louis XII in Italy: the best artists recruited





The “Louis XII wing” at Blois: red brick and grey stone





The main entrance: the statue of Louis XII – The king master in his château and kingdom





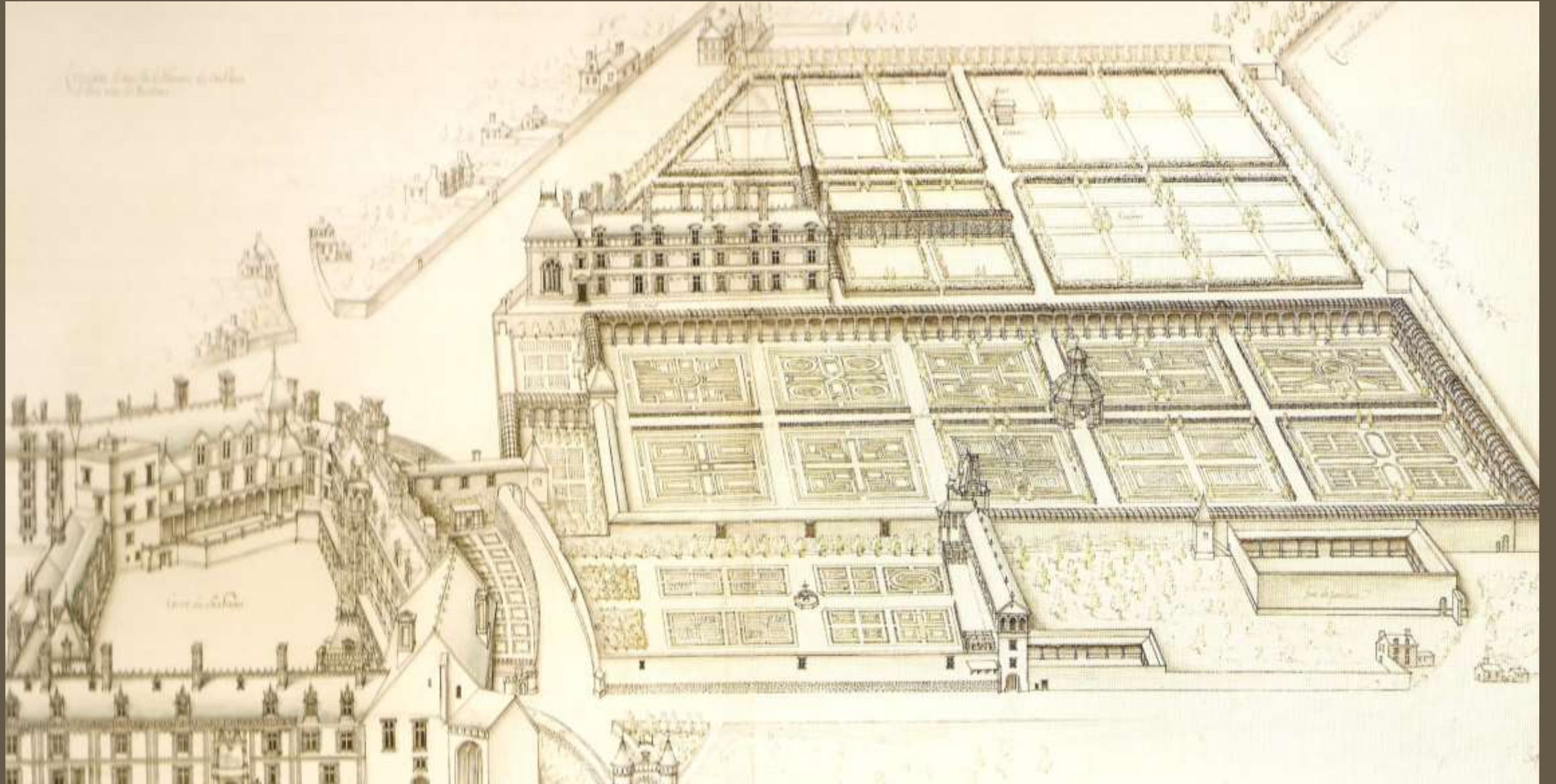








# The gardens: a revolution





# Charles VIII, Louis XII and the Italian Renaissance gardens: a discovery







*"It seems only Adam and Eve are missing to make it a paradise on earth" (Charles VIII)*



The medieval garden: an enclosed space devoted to growing vegetables, fruits and medicinal herbs





The château and the gardens as a whole – The gardens: an outdoors apartment intended for the pleasure of the view





The enjoyment of the sights, sounds and smells – To enjoy nature

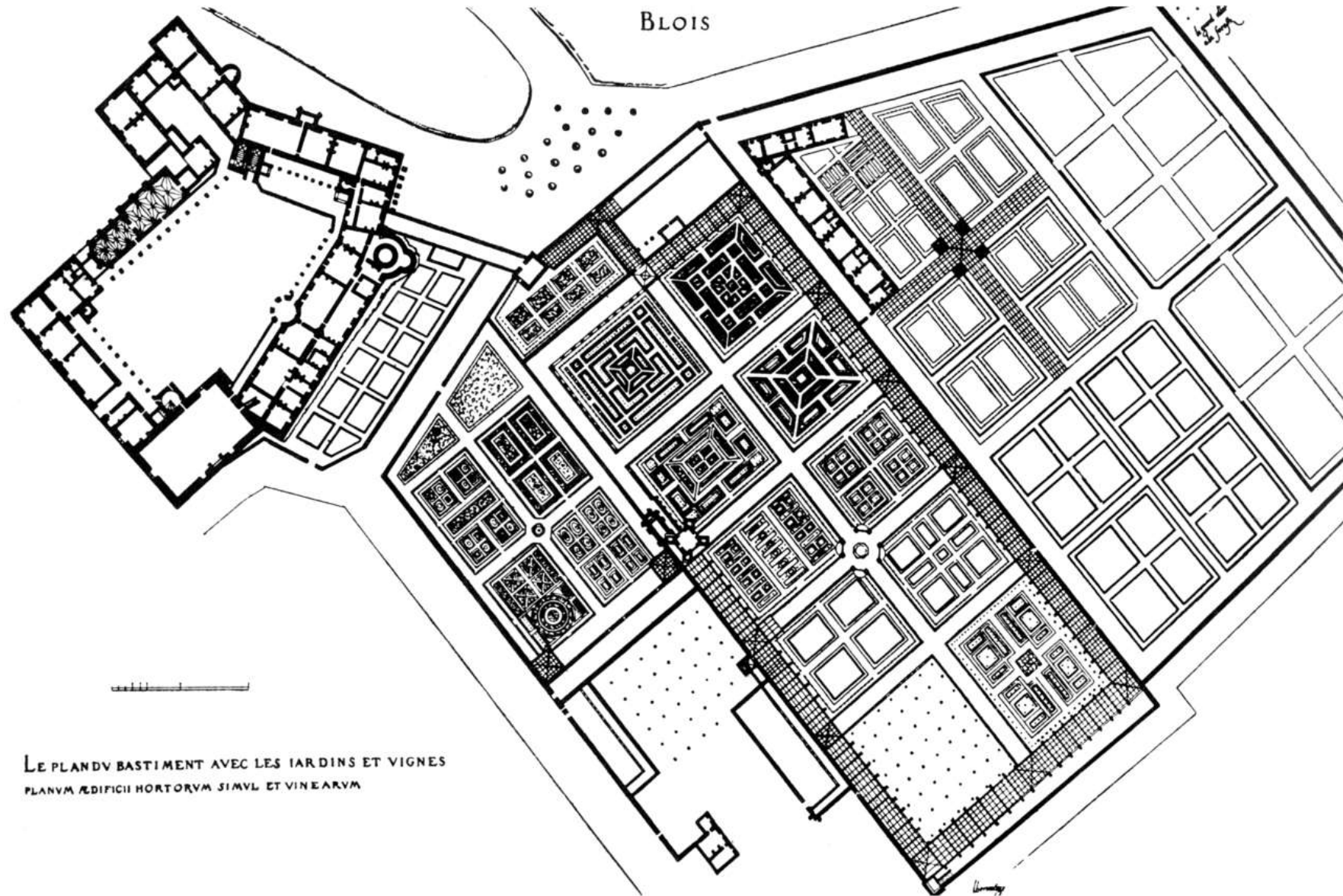








Pacello da Mercogliano (landscape architect and hydraulic engineer )





1515: Francis I, King of France – A fascination for the Italian Renaissance





# Leonardo da Vinci – Le Clos Lucé





The Renaissance wing: the influence of Italian architecture (loggias) – A revolution in French architecture





Local white limestone used for the first time: a more luxurious appearance

The open circular  
staircase: a  
masterpiece of  
architecture









The circular (octagonal) staircase features sculptures and royal symbols – The “flowery style”



The notion of spectacle



A brilliant Court life – Lavish entertainment





The *studiolo* (the office) – Italian-style decoration









Chambord: the most mysterious (a dream château) – A display of power





Chambord is surrounded by forests (hunting grounds) and built on swamps – Water: a constant threat



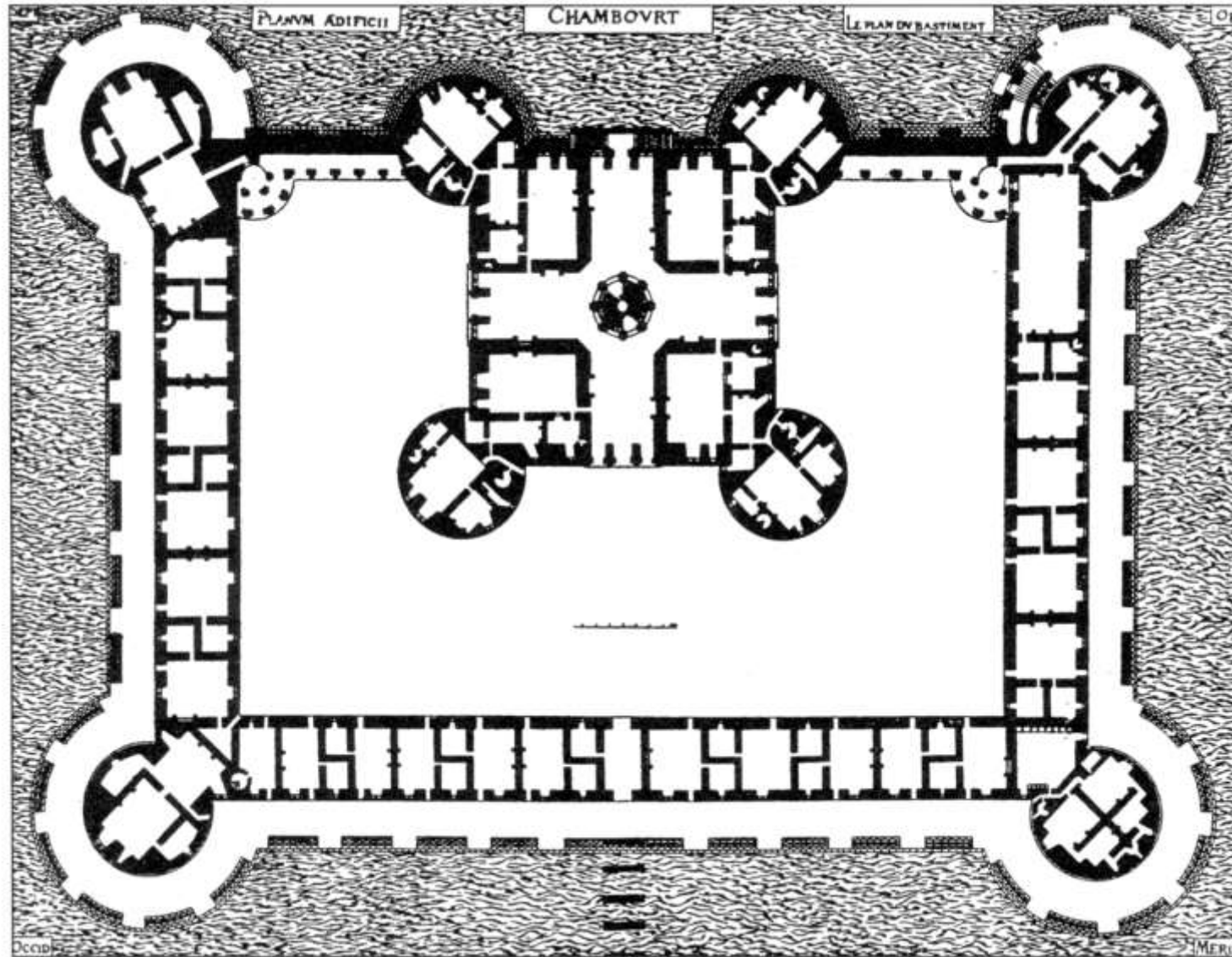


The message: the French monarchy is sacred: the king is everything – All power comes from him

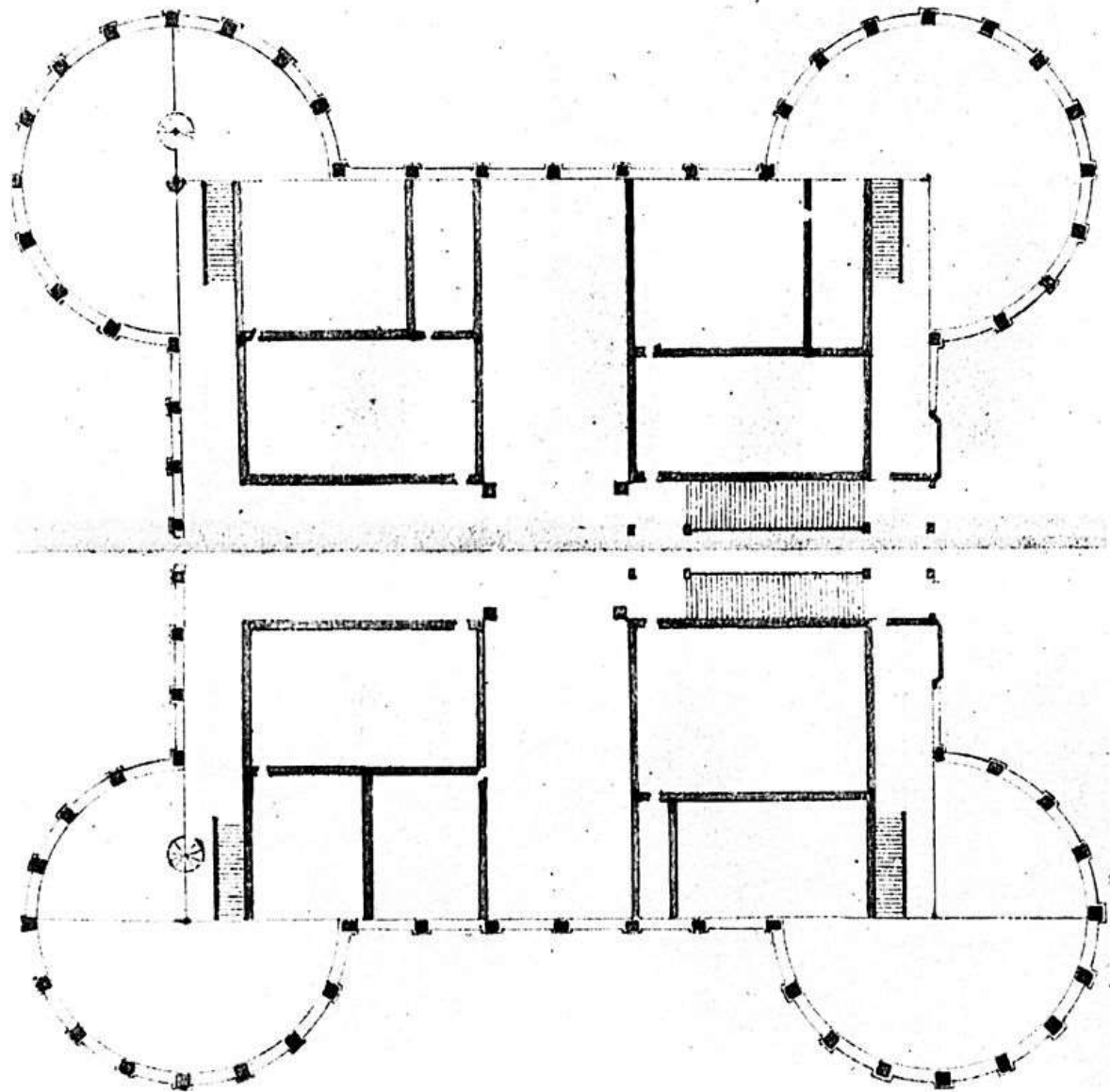




The design: a cross – The keep in the middle: four galleries ending with a corner tower









The ascending double spiral central grand staircase









# The King of France as the equal of God on Earth





## A double helix staircase (designed by Leonardo da Vinci)



Two intertwining spiral staircases that go all the way up to the castle's terrace

Design to allow visitors to the castle to ascend and descend without obstruction

And watch the festivities



The visit of Emperor Charles V in 1539 (*"This is the epitome of what human genius can achieve"*)





François I's goal: **to impress** his visitor and archenemy





François I after 1525: the growing importance of Paris – Only short visits to the Val de Loire

