

HIGH NOON at WINTERSOLSTICE

at GEORGIBERG

Calendrical Orientation in Architecture and Geodetic Alignment of the Early Medieval Church „Georgiberg“ in Kindberg/Austria.

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History

The church was first documented in 1232 as s. Georgius in monte. Nearby was a castle mentioned as *Chindeberch* in 1168. The owner was a noble called *Chunrad de Chindeberch*, first mentioned in 1172, whose family was called of *Murce*, after the valley of the river Mürz and were witness to the so called *Georgenberger Handfeste*, an important medieval document. Minnesinger *Ulrich of Liechtenstein* reports in his *Frauendienst* (Service of the Lady) that in 1227 he travelled from Venice to Vienna in the guise of Venus. He competed in jousts and challenged to a duel in honour of his lady the knight of *Chindeberch*, who was dressed up like a Slavic Lady. After the extinction of the *Chindeberch* dynasty the duke of Styria inherited its domain. In 1266 or 1267, an earthquake destroyed the castle. The remaining building nearby looks like a Gothic church from the 15th century, but had an earlier version that was probably built around 1170, which indicates a Romanesque portal of the 12th century. It later became a Catholic church of pilgrimage, and in 1803 was sold to the factory owning family *Hillebrand*. In 1894 it came into the possession of the Protestant family *Humbert* that brought about the *Kindberger Kirchenstreit*, because a Lutheran Mass was celebrated there. After having various occupants, the church is now owned since 1944 by the local society *Georgibergverein* and is open for cultural activities.



Architecture

The recent building originates presumably from a 15th century Romanesque church and was restored in 17th century in Baroque style. It is orientated almost exactly with the entrance to the North and the altar to the South. All interior structures, such as the wooden altars, pews, and the procession column of St. Mary (of which only the socket in the center of the church remains) were sold during 1960–1970. Only the wooden gallery above the northern entrance still exists.

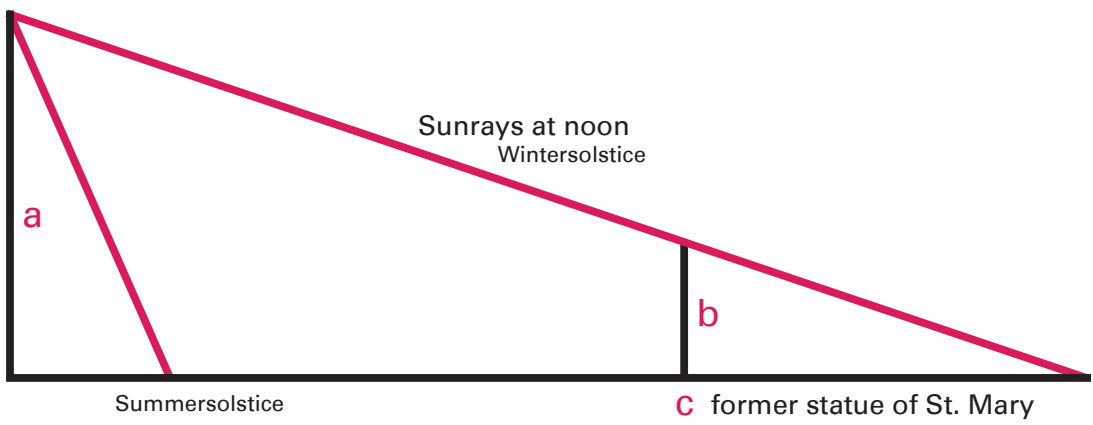
A peculiarity is the southern ogival window, which is not symmetric to the center of the apsis, but is almost 1 meter off axis. This axial displacement is concealed outside by the external abutments. *Hubert Stolla*, cofounder of *Georgibergverein*, interpreted this as a solar clock and indicator of the winter solstice. The rays of the sun shine at noon farthermost into the church and lit in former times the column of St. Mary there. This construction could have served as well as an illumination at noon for the Christian Angelus prayer, which is derived from its incipit: *Angelus Domini nuntiavit Mariæ* (The Angel of the Lord declared unto Mary).

Archeology

Excavations made from 1995 to 1998 reveal colonization already in 4th millennium BC (Lasinja culture), and funerals in 8th–10th century AD (Köttlach II). The destroyed castle had walls of 2 meters in thickness.



Sunrays at Wintersolstice



Graphic of sunrays through the southern window towards former statue of St. Mary at solstices

Comparison to the graphic to the right

Roman/Noric relief of rubblestone

The wall of the church once housed a relief that is now in the Lapidarium of Joanneum in Graz Eggenberg, with only a copy now in Kindberg. The relief (83 x 83 x 25 cm) shows a female with Noric dress holding a basket and a mirror. The motif usually is called *Spiegelhalterin* (mirror holder), *Dienerin mit Spiegel und Korb* (Servant with mirror and basket), or *Mädchenstein* (stone with a girl). Many similar representations are found in the region of former Noricum and Pannonia evidently embodying funerary symbolism. The city arms of Kindberg show a similar image, representing a child on a mountain with flowers and stars. The question remains whether the name Kindberg derives from the image of the young girl on the relief at Mt. George or from the old German word “kien” for light (engl. Kindling)

Ancient Geodesy

The amateur historian *Stolla* discovered that Georgiberg and four ancient churches and chapels of Kindberg are distant of each other in the range of 1030m +/- 10m and form a equilateral triangle with one side exactly north-south. A local legend tells of a white lady that walked between theses locations in an underground path. It is still debated whether randomness or ancient geodesy and survey of landscape were the reason of this geographical configuration. Further research might reveal if the visibility of the cone shaped *Sonnwendstein* (solstice rock) in the distance of 35 km may have played a role for choosing this location in antiquity.



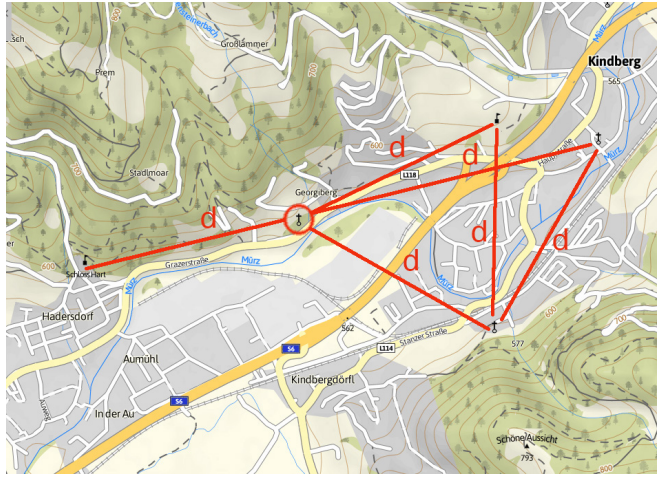
“ Spiegelhalterin” (Female Servant with mirror and basket), Roman-Noric



City arms of Kindberg



Seal of Kindberg 1478



d= 1030m +/- 10m
Equidistant triangular alignments of five ancient churches of Kindberg/Styria

Summary

The former church of St. George in Kindberg/Styria is located on an ancient place of settlement at the Roman road through the valley of Mürz, where in early medieval times stood a fortified castle nearby. The axis of the church building is orientated north-south and the southern window has the function of a sundial at noon or marker of the winter solstice. The geographical arrangement together with local legends suggests prehistoric survey of landscape.

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