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Back cover: Royal palace in an Upper castle.
Corrected S. Lasavičiukas sketch project 1977–2001, 3-D views by V. Abramauskas, drawn by A. Mitgėnienė
On September 18–22, 2001 the Symposium Castella Maris Baltici VI was held in Lithuania. This is already the 6th symposium for the researchers of the medieval castles. The first symposium was held in Turku, Finland in 1991, the second – in Nyköping, Sweden in 1993, the third - in Malbork, Poland in 1995, the fourth - in Estonia in 1997, and the fifth – in Denmark in 1999.

The topic of the conference held in Lithuania was “Contacts and Genetically Dwellings in the Castle Buildings”. Over 40 scientists participated in the conference from Denmark, Belarus, Finland, Sweden, Switzerland, Germany, Russia, Great Britain, Poland, Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania. In the conference there were not only reports presented but also the most famous castles of Lithuania visited in Vilnius, Trakai, Kernavë, Kaunas and Klaipëda.

The time of this conference coincided with the European Heritage Days “Defensive Fortifications in Lithuania”.

This conference was organised by the Public Institution Academy of Cultural Heritage established by Vilnius University, Vilnius Academy of Arts, Vilnius Gediminas Technical University, Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Lithuania and Department of Cultural Heritage Protection. The Symposium Castella Maris Baltici VI was sponsored by the Department of Cultural Heritage Protection.

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Especial thanks deserve my colleagues who organised this event Rita Mosiejienë, dr. Justina Poškiene and dr. Gintautas Zabiela.

Dr. Albinas Kuncevičius
gut erkennbaren Rezeptionen, ob nun im Bereich der Anlage, oder der technischen Massnahmen, oder im Bereich des künstlerischen und architektonischen Details, im Rahmen der böhmischen Burgenaufklärung als interessante und wichtige Episode gehörten die weitere Entwicklung aber nicht prinzipiell beeinflusst. Sie wurden zu einem Bestandteil des ausserordentlich bunten Bildes besster Qualität, in dem parallel nebeneinander Objekte existierten, die verschiedenen fortgeschrittene und unterschiedliche genetische Zusammenhänge präsentierten. Daneben entwickelten sich zahlreiche eigenständige böhmische Ausdrucksmöglichkeiten der Burgenaufklärung, die dann ihrerseits in fremden Regionen exportiert wurden (u.a. das mittelteleurasisches Kastell /Durdík 1994 a; 1996 b; 1998 c; oder die Antikiebereinigungen z.B. Durdík 1996 c).

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Alekh Dzianovich

CASTELLA ALBORUTHENICA: CASTLE BUILDING IN BELARUS AT THE CROSSROADS OF CULTURAL INFLUENCES DURING THE 12TH TO 14TH CENTURIES

Der Burgenbau in Belarus (Weissrussland) im Schnittpunkt der kulturellen Einflüsse im 12. – 14. Jahrhundert


Die weitere Entwicklung des Burgenbaus in Belarus ist mit dem Aufkommen des Donjons oder der Türme von der Art des Berghofs verbunden. Hier können wir Einfluss aus Wolhynien (Ukraine) vermuten. Der einzige erhaltene Donjon, der Turm in Kamianiec (Gebiet Brest), wurde zwischen 1276 und 1288 errichtet.


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In the 12th century only wooden fortifications were known on the territory of Belarus populated with the Slavs and Balts. That was typical for Eastern Europe. Only Byzantine churches and princes' palaces were built of stone and brick. So it was completely unexpected to discover a brick wall dating to the end of the 12th century in Hrodna (Grodno, north west of Belarus). The wooden fort with wooden towers which was built on the steep bank of the Nioman river, had two walls of thin brick ("plinfa", 27–29 x 16.5–18 x 3.5–4.5 cm) the walls were not less than 5 m high). The longest one was 42–45 m long. There is an explanation of how these walls could come into existence. The second half of the 12th century was the time when a number of brick Christian churches and a prince’s palace were built in Hrodna. The chronicles mention that wooden fortifications were burnt down in the fire of 1183. It was at that time when the brick walls appeared (they were erected on the thick layer of coal left by the fire) (fig. 1). For this purpose the bricks that had been destined for the church were used (A. Trusau, V. Sobal, N. Zdanovich 1993: 19–22). This account is supposed by the fact that figured bricks were used together with rectangular ones (A. Trusau 1993: 44). That could only happen in case of an emergency.

Historians think that the walls were built by the architect Peter Milaneg who moved to Kiev together with his guild of builders in 1190s (P. Rapport 1987: 21–22). It is known that Peter Milaneg had constructed a stone wall in Vyubick monastery in 1192 on the orders of prince Mstislav. It was a breastwall on the bank of the Dnieper river and it was used simultaneously as an observation platform (P. A. Rapport 1982: 26). And that surprised contemporaries very much. Milaneg was even compared by the chronicler with the biblical architect Vesseili. The fact that the annals have kept the name of the architect is also indicative.

But it is necessary to note that the wall in Hrodna practically had no basement and was erected on a thin layer of building refuse. Consequently it was not of great defensive significance. Yet since it stood out among the city’s wooden buildings it had rather decorative function. The brick wall was also to raise the Hrodna prince’s prestige. Thus the traditions of stone and brick fortifications in Belarus were only developed at the end of the 12th century.

The following stage of stone castle building in Belarus is connected with the donjon - type towers. In this case we should recognize the influence of the territory of Ukraine. The tower of Kaminiec (Brest region) (fig. 2) is the only preserved tower of this type in Belarus. It was built by the architect Alekseia between 1276 and 1288 by the order of the Volyn prince Vladimir who was in the possession of this territory at that time (Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisey 1986: 876, 924). The tower was situated inside of the ring of the ramparts with wooden walls on them. There were significant changes in building materials and engineering of the construction. In the 13th century "plinfa" were not used any more; large-sized bricks were used (26.5 x 13.5 x 8 cm), which have traces along the wide sides left by the craftsmen’s fingers (so called "pačtrikas"). The masonry is characterized by: two long sides and one short side. Such a masonry system was widespread throughout the Baltic region and is called “Baltic”. The Kaminieck tower was 30m high, the thickness of the walls 2.5 m, the external diameter 13.5 m. Besides some Gothic elements can be observed in the decoration of the arches. This defensive work had mighty basement made of large boulders, interspersed with fine sand.

This type of towers received the name of “Volyn towers”. This term was used by Rapporport for the first time while studying such towers on the territory of Volyn (P. A. Rapport 1952). There was a rectangular donjon in Brest; a round brick tower stood in the wooden castle of Turau (not very far from the Ukrainian border).

But not all the donjons on the territory of Belarus can be captured by the term “Volyn towers”. In the end of the 13th century the wooden and brick fortifications of the Hrodna castle were strengthened by a brick tower which projected out of the wall line (fig. 3). This tower is mentioned for the first time in 1277 in the connection with the princes of Halachi - Volyn campaign against Hrodna (Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisey 1986: 579). In 1398–1402 the Duke Vitaut (Vytautas) built a new Gothic stone castle so that the 13th century donjon was incorporated into the new defensive system (N. N. Voronin 1954: 189–191, M. A. Tkachev 1978: 53–54). The tower kept on to protect the approach to the gate of the castle. In the second half of the 13th century the gate of the Navahrudak (Navahrudak) castle was protected by the

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Fig. 1. The brick wall in the Hrodna wooden fort. 12 c. (Reconstruction by Fiodar Siatlaniou)

Fig. 2. Kaminieck tower (it was built between 1276 and 1288). Cross-section

Fig. 3. Hrodna castle (Engraving by M. Zuerd, 1588). The 13th century Donjon
quadrangular stone tower. In the 14th century the ba-
sement and the walls rests of this tower were used
for the construction of the new central (or Shield) to-
wer built of brick. The same can be said for the Small
castle tower of Navahrudak.

The building tradition characterized by separate
towers had been retained in Belarus for quite a long
period. Towers of this type were built during the 15th
century (e.g. the Miadziol castle). And even later in
the 16th century this old tradition did not disappear
entirely and the towers of this type were sometimes
built of wood. Such towers are known in the castles
of Polack (Polotsk) and Radlatavciky, the remnants
of the octagonal wooden "donjon" were excavated by
the archaeologists in Macialaus (M. A. Tkachev
1987: 11–12). No wonder that a donjon is depicted
by the arms of Kaminiec town (A. Citou 1989: 114–

It is considered, that donjons appeared in central
and eastern Europe in connection with the changes
in the siege tactics. Taking the castles by storm with
catapults replaced passive sieging. The donjons ap-
ppeared as the response to these changes. Powerful
defensive towers were intended to strengthen strat-
egic qualities of the castles. They could not be so
easily destroyed by catapults, provided the castles
with more intensive shooting defense, so-called "de-
ad zones" of bombardment were reduced. It was
possible to carry out circular firing and in some ca-
es to flank fire in the most dangerous areas of the

Such towers, the "main element" in the de-
sensive system of the Livonian castles in 13th century
(Turaid / Treiden, Viljandi / Fellin, Tallinn / Reval)
and in the 14th century (Paide / Weissenstein, Vent-
spils / Windau etc.) (V. I. Neiman 1893: 36–37, Janis
"main towers" were known in the region of
Basel since the middle of the 12th
century (Werner Meyer 1982: 287–
293). This list can be continued.

The towers of this type most likely only had insignificant regional fea-
tures and were widespread all
through Europe.

But if we want to understand
the further evolution of castle buil-
ding in Belarus we should return
to the end of the 14th century.
Bel-
arusian archaeologists have
some problems in dating the ci-
ties' material culture of the end of
the 13th–14th century. Some arche-
ologists characterize this period
in terms of "some regress" in the
material and spiritual culture of
Hrodna in the second half of the
13th-14th century (J. G. Zverko
1989: 66) or write about insignifi-
cant stratification of the 14th–15th c. in Polack (S. V.

The material culture of the previous (the 12th–13th
centuries) and the following (the 15th–16th centuries)
periods have more definite characteristics. We can
assume that this was connected with the cultural
transformations which took place in our region. Until
the 13th century, Belarus was within the Byzantine cul-
tural sphere of influence. But with the formation of
the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (GDL) Belarus waste
be enclosed into the Baltic cultural area.

One of the distinctive features in the castle build-
ing in the new state were regular castles. The most
possible that German specialists took part in the build-
ing of the regular castles. Here it is necessary to
mention the fact of invitation of the craftsmen from
the cities of the Hanseatic League by Grand Duke
Gedymyn / Gediminas in 1323. Belarusian historians
consider that they took part in building of the Lida
castle (fig.4) either in the 1320 to 1328 (M. A. Tkac-
chev 1987: 30, A. A. Trusau 1990: 8) or during first
half of the 14th century (A. Kraucevich, A. Trusau

But Lida castle is first mentioned in 1384, when it
was captured by the Teutonic Knights. As a rule the
narrative sources of that time may not mark the year
of construction, yet they mention the dates of destruc-
tions and attacks.

This castle (83.5 x 83.5 x 80 x 84 m) was built in a
marshy district on a "pillow" of stones and sand. Or-
iginally the castle had only one tower (11.3 x
11.3 m). The second tower was built at the end of
the 14th – beginning of the 15th century (12 x 12.5 x 12.3
x 12.15 m). The walls of the castle and its towers
were made in the following technique – at first two
external parts of the wall were built of stone, and then
the space between them was filled with fine stones
and lime. Bricks were used only for basic elements
of design and architectural details (the walls' corners,
decorative belts on the walls' facades, arches, vaults,
loopholes).

The latest archaeological researches proved that
the Kreva castle (85 x 108.5 x 71.5 x 97.2 m) was
built at the end of the13th to early 14th centuries
(A. Dziamioch, A. Trusau, I. Charniaski 1993: 5, M.
Tkachev, I. Charniaski 1997: 287). The Duke To-
tower (fig. 5) (18.65 x 17 m) of the castle was built later
than the walls. The builders, being in a hurry, first
built only the walls and then erected the tower. The
Duke Tower can be called a donjon itself since it had
not only military functions but also residential. The
fragments of frescoes (including those with the im-
ages of people) were found. They covered internal
walls and the windows' jamb. This remarkable fact
testifies to the status of the Kreva castle (fig. 6).

Kreva castle is mentioned for the first time in an
account of Kiejat / Kestuta' assassination at the
castle in 1382; it was there where the conditions of
the Kreva union between the Grand Duchy of Lithua-
nia and the Polish Kingdom in 1385 were worked
out. The castle of Medininkai (Lithuanian Republic)
is another regular castle of the GDL.

The first regular castles in the neighbouring Livo-
nia were built already in the end of the 12th – beginning
of the 13th century. The Heinrich Chronicle informs
that the construction of Ikšķile / Uexküll and Holme
castles on the Dvina / Daugava river took place in
1185 –1186. The chronicle mentions also that the craf-
tmen from Gotland had been invited to build them.
According to leva Ose, Livonian castles were built by
the craftsmen from Lower Saxony and Middle Ger-
many (leva Ose 2003).

The regular castles in the GDL had some specific
features of their own. The area of the castle's ground
was increased in size in comparison with the castles
of the Teutonic Knights' Orders in Livonia and Prus-
sia. In case of threat, not only military groups, but
also the civil inhabitants could hide behind the walls.
Since the castles were usually built in marshy low-
lands they needed an artificial mounds to be thrown
up. The internal space between the walls was filled
with stones.

It is necessary to say something about the dis-
cussions concerning the time when the first regular
 castles in the GDL came into existence. Belarusian
researchers are inclined "to make them more an-
cient"; on the contrary Lithuanian historians give very
late dates. Algirdas Žaliuners considers Medininkai,
Lida and Kreva castles to be built after 1380. (Algir-
das Žaliuners 2003). It is possible to agree with the
statement that the first Kaukasia castle was being built
in 1361, but until the spring of 1362 it had not been
finished. There are also some indirect written data
which lets us assume that the castle of Lida was built
in the first half of the 14th century.

It may seem strange to admit but neither Belaru-
sian nor Lithuanian historians while studying the castles
of GDL do not take into account the castles of Volyn
Fig. 6. Excursion party near walls of the Kreva castle. Photo of the beginning of the 20th c.

Oystein Ekroll

NORWEGIAN CASTLES NORTH OF THE ARCTIC CIRCLE

Burgen in Norwegen nördlich des Polarkreises


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