

UDC 711.4

CASTLE IN DISNA

PALINA YAUSTRATAVA, ALIAKSANDRA KULAKOVA, RAISA PLATONAVA
Polotsk State University, Belarus

This article presents an analysis of the historical, cultural, architectural and planning aspects of the creation and history of one of the most unique architectural monuments – castle in Disna. This is one of the few fully extant monuments of history and culture in the Miory district.

Introduction. Disna is a town in Miory district of Vitebsk region of Belarus. Located on the Disna river at the point where it flows into the river Zapadnaya Dvina.

The settlement has been known since the XI century as a fortress of the Polotsk principality Kopets-town. We know about the fortified settlement of Disna in the Polotsk province on the island at the confluence of two rivers according to the information of Polotsk's "scribe book" (1563). It says about the existence of the Kopets, that is, the earthen fortification (from the word "dig"). At the same time, opposite the fortified island, on the left bank of the Disna River there already existed the "village of Disna". Thus, the rapid development and strengthening of the town in the XVI century is explained not only by the favorable strategic and topographical position, but also by the "obzhitost" of this land in the preceding centuries.

The research part. In the XIV century the castle served as an outpost on the outskirts of Polotsk, controlled all traffic on the river. However, at that time the town did not exist here. Most likely, Kopets-town represented the usual earthworks with insignificant use of wooden structures. And after the victory over the Crusaders in the Battle of Grunwald (1410), even these minor structures were abandoned by the army because of the lack of threat in this direction.

However, everything changed after 100 years. During the Livonian War, the Grand Duke of Lithuania and the Polish king Zhigimont August ordered to construct fortifications on the island and to establish a town near the castle. All residents of the town were given various tax benefits for 8 years. It is noteworthy that the king gave the order for the foundation of Disna in 1566, and in 1567 he gave the coat of arms (three stone towers) to the town. And after 2 years (in 1569) – Magdeburg law and a new coat of arms (a boat on a blue field) (Fig. 1).



a



b

Fig. 1. the portrait of Zhigimont August (a) and the coat of arms of Disna (b)

The location of the island was really successful – at the confluence of the Disna and the Western Dvina rivers. Surrounded from all sides by a water barrier, it was reliably protected from enemy forces.

The new castle, built on the site of the old fortifications in 1563, was built by the Italian architect S. Geng. All military-fortification works were led by B. Korsak and pan R. Khodkevich. Henceforth Kopets began to be

Architecture and Civil Engineering

called the Old Castle. In essence, it was a single military fortress, well known in the wars of the XVI-XVIII centuries (Fig. 2).

The castle occupied an area of 5 hectares. The height of earthen shafts reached 5 meters. First they had a wooden palisade, which was later replaced by more modern walls. The water barrier should also be noted. At that time, the width of the Western Dvina River reached 100 meters, and the Dysna - 90 meters.

According to the inventory of 1654, the castle had 9 towers, 3 of which were gates – 2 Dvina (located on the side of the Western Dvina) and 1 Disna (from the side of the Disna River). By this time the castle shafts which were permanently fortified reached a height of 10 meters, and their width at the base was 19 meters.

The towers were rectangular, measuring 8.5 by 8.5 meters. They had 2 tiers, and their height reached 9 meters. They were covered with wooden shingles. The armament of the castle consisted of more than 40 guns.

There is a legend that earlier Disna castle was not an island but a common ledge at the confluence of the Disna and Western Dvina rivers. But Stefan Batory, wanting to strengthen the castle's defense, ordered to dig a ditch to connect the riverbeds. So the castle became an island. And this passage between the island and the land is still called by local residents "Batoryev Perekop".

In 1654, because of the war with the Russian kingdom, the inhabitants of the captured town also migrate to the island, where wooden fortifications were built next to the castle. Those fortifications were called the Lower Disna Castle. While the castle itself was called the Upper Disna Castle. But for the sake of justice, we note that this is not entirely true. The wooden fortifications built by the townspeople were the so-called "podzamok". And both buildings were a single defensive structure. Together, the two buildings had already 14 towers.

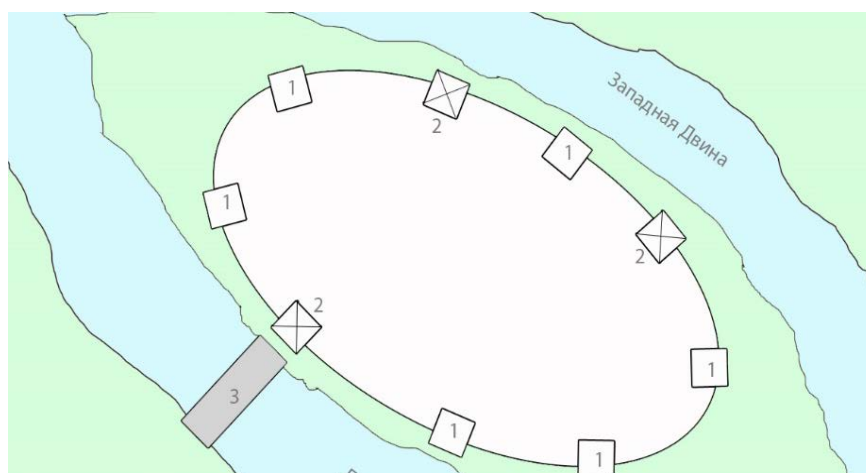


Fig. 2. Castle in Disna: 1 – castle towers; 2 – tower towers; 3 – the bridge

Disna Castle has repeatedly served as a meeting place for statesmen of different countries, as well as a place for gathering militia for hikes. More than once the kings of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth stayed here.

During the Livonian War in 1579 the Disna Castle became the site of the troops for the liberation campaign of Stephen Batory on Polotsk.

During the "bloody flood" in 1654 the castellan of Disna surrendered the city without a fight to the Moscow army led by V. Sheremetov and S. Streshnev. However, the castle which was an independent structure, did not surrender to the enemy. Part of the townspeople also crossed to the island by boats, not wishing to obey the Russian army. And after 7 years, in 1661, the garrison of the castle secretly crossed to the shore and captured all the enemy troops. And the burmist, who handed over the town, was hanged on a castle gate.

The castle was destroyed during the Northern War. During these years, it was twice attacked by the enemy and experienced two violent fires – in the 1700s and 1720s. The destruction was so strong that the authorities decided not to restore the fortifications.

After the Northern War, only the castle shafts remained on the island, which eventually, under the influence of the river current, floods, rains and snows collapsed into the river. Although earlier the island was the highest place in Disna.

Until now, only the castle shafts have been partially preserved (Fig. 3). From time to time, archaeological excavations are carried out on the island.



Fig. 3. The island, where the Disna Castle was located

Conclusion. Disna is the smallest town in Belarus. And even in spite of the fact that there is an ancient center of the Belarusian land near – Polotsk, it is hardly worthwhile to restore the ancient castle. It is possible that someday a memorial sign will appear on the island, in honor of the building, which once protected the northern borders.

REFERENCES

1. Городище в Дисне (Замчище в Дисне) [Электронный ресурс] // Дисна. – Режим доступа: <http://dostoyanieplaneti.ru/4763-orodishche-v-isne-opets-gorodok>. – Дата доступа: 17.04.2017.
2. Дисненский замок [Электронный ресурс] // Дисна. – Режим доступа: <http://delaemvmeste.by/zamki-belarusi-disnenskiy-zamok/>. – Дата доступа: 10.11.2017.
3. Дыбовский, А. История Дисны [Электронный ресурс] / А. Дыбовский // Дисна. – Режим доступа: <http://globus.tut.by/disna/index.htm>. – Дата доступа: 22.01.2017.
4. Матвеева, Т. Дисна историческая [Электронный ресурс] / Т. Матвеева // Дисна – туризм. – Режим доступа: <http://www.disna.by/ru/history>. – Дата доступа: 21.01.2017.