

**CHURCA OF SAINT JOHN THE BAPTIST IN KAMALA**

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

*This article presents an analysis of the historical and cultural aspects of the origin and development of one of the monuments of the church of St. John the Baptist - Roman Catholic church in the agro Kamai Postavy district, Vitebsk region, one of the oldest Catholic churches in Belarus. The temple is unique in its architecture as well as the style and performance combines elements of Gothic, Renaissance and baroque. Name the creator of the temple is still unknown. This church served not only the house of God, but also a military fortress. Until now, the main decoration of the walls are thick core Swedish Northern War. The Swedes, who precipitated the temple, this small fortress and did not give up. Over the lifetime of the temple (about 400 years), it has never been closed.*

**Introduction.** The small village of Camay in Postavy district, Vitebsk region has preserved a unique temple of defensive type, was founded in 1603-1606 gg. Church of St. John the Baptist. This church - one of the few in the territory of Belarus, which has never been closed. This architectural structure was built on the site, which was originally for local residents prevail. This place was the center of the village, and then converged to form an intersection of five roads. In the old days, to the intersection has always been a special relationship. Even if one road flowed into another, at a location or set a stone, or put the cross - chapel. We know from history that initially at the crossroads was a huge boulder. From it not later than the XV century hewed cross, which stands in front of the church today. This cross is also a symbol of Kamaev.

**Researching part.** Catholic church of St. John the Baptist - Catholic church in agro Kamai (fig. 1), Belarus. It refers to the Postavy district, Vitebsk region. This monument of architecture, built in 1603-1606, respectively. It is one of the oldest Catholic churches in Belarus. The temple is included in the Cultural Properties of Belarus.



Fig. 1. St. John the Baptist Catholic church

The initiator of the construction of the Catholic church in the Kamai was the owner of the village Yang-Rudomino Dusyatsky, name of the architect is unknown.

Originally the temple had a longitudinally axial composition was nave, overlap naves with cross vaults and stellate. In 1643 the hospital was founded at the church. During the Russian-Polish war of 1654–1657 years the temple was burnt by Russian troops and vaults collapsed. When restoring the tower were dismantled, the temple became one nave, the main space was blocked with wooden mirrored vault. After the restoration of the church was re-consecrated in 1673.

During the Great Northern War (1700–1721) the temple was fired from the guns and the Swedes suffered serious damage. When restoring the church Swedish nuclei were imbedded in its wall. In the years 1726–1736,

and in the middle of the XIX century it was executed murals on the vaults in the form of bunches of plants and flowers.

In 1778, a temple on the south side was added in terms of a large rectangular chapel with a crypt, ceilings barrel vault. In 1861 the church was renovated and rebuilt slightly.

In 1915, a priest of the Church of St. John the Baptist in Kamai served Belarusian poet The priest Casimir Svoyak.

John the Baptist Catholic church - one of the few Catholic churches in Belarus, which is not closed since the founding (excluding periods of recovery and restoration).

In 2007, a hurricane one of the towers was damaged. In 2010–2011 he held the entire capital restoration of the temple.

The architecture of the Church of St. John the Baptist implemented methods and forms of defensive architecture, Gothic and Renaissance. Nave in terms close to the square, to adjoin the vast semi-circular apse and a small sacristy.

The main facade is flanked by two cylindrical towers with round portholes. Tower (height of 16 m, a diameter of more than 5 m), wall thickness (until 2 meters), as well as the overall monumental character of the entire structure, suggest that the temple served and defense purposes.

The appearance of the church is almost completely devoid of decorative elements. Decoration is only four arched niches, located at the top of the main facade.

The interior of the temple stands the main altar (2nd half of the XVIII century). Altar of the two-tier, it is based on four Corinthian columns, between them in the niches of the first tier are wooden statues of Saints Peter and Paul (the beginning of the XVIII century). In the center of the altar is an icon of the Mother of God the beginning of the XVII century (founded in 1610 in Krakow). The icon is venerated by believers miraculous. Previously, it was decorated with silver frame, but in 1995 it was stolen. On the second floor of the altar - the picturesque Epiphany image crowned altar carved image of the Lord of hosts.

When entering into the state list of historical and cultural values of the Republic of Belarus in the temple counted 118 objects of historical value. Among them are the icon of the Mother of God, the wooden altars statues of saints Peter and Paul, the end of the XVIII century organ, the painting "Jesus and the orphan» (XIX century) authorship Alfred Romer and many others. In the church are kept the relics of St. Casimir and St. Stanislaus. In the crypt are buried Oshmianny Marshal.

Next to the church is an ancient stone cross XV–XVI centuries, hewn from granite boulder. The height of the cross – 2.5 m, the beam width – 1.88 m. Middle cross – triangular niche for crucifixion.

**Conclusion.** Based on the study it can be noted that the historical, cultural and educational role of the church of St. John the Baptist is quite large. The history of the development of this architectural monument shows his durability and strength to the defensive side. He also is an example of a combination of various architectural styles.

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