

STYLISTIC FEATURES AND TRENDS IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF CATHOLIC CHURCHES IN THE NORTH OF GRODNO REGION

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Unique monuments of archeology, architecture and culture has been preserved in the North of Grodno region of Belarus. They represent the history of the formation of the Belarusian state. In the article the author has considered stylistic features and tendency in the construction of Catholic churches with their characteristic shape due to the rich cultural tradition of the region, based on mutual influence of Byzantine and Roman culture, local climate and level of construction equipment.

Grodno region is located in the North-Western part of the country, it borders on Poland and Lithuania. The river Neman flows through the region, it stretches almost for one thousand kilometers across Belarus and Lithuania (Fig. 1).

The architectural and town-planning heritage of Grodno region is widely known. Here, on the banks of the Neman river as in no other region of Belarus, a great number of objects of monumental architecture has survived. Strengthenings of Grodno, Lida, Novogrudok and Krevo, together with other Belarusian, Lithuanian and Ukrainian castles formed a defensive system of national importance in the times of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Also it played a great role in fight against attacks of crusaders. Before the victory over the Teutonic order in the battle of Grunwald in 1410, fortresses and castles of the Grodno region were strongholds of defense.

Many cities, towns and villages of Grodno region in its Central parts have preserved the architectural features of past centuries, as well as dozens of works of architecture and culture. Many of them, fortunately, have not been touched by the urban transformations of recent centuries. Slonim and Novogrudok, Krevo and Golschany, Zhirovichi and Dyatlov are unique in its shape, and attractive for historical and architectural ensembles, noteworthy landscapes. But there are towns, which stand out by complex, multi-faceted beauty, that were born from the layers left by different eras and artistic styles. Grodno is a beautiful city [1]. Buildings of different ages coexist in the streets and squares, and it does not seem incompatible, and, on the contrary, makes surprising unity and appeal.



Fig. 1. – Map of the Grodno region

Many Catholic churches have been preserved in Belarus. Most of them belong to the historical and cultural heritage protected by the state [2]. Thanks to the support of government for the last few decades, many

Roman Catholic churches of Belarus recently have been restored or reconstructed, most of the churches are used by Roman Catholics nowadays.

Belarus has an exclusively rich natural, historical and cultural potential favourable for tourism. The relatively mild climate combined with landscapes: forested and open space, abundance of rivers and lakes, there are no extensive industrial areas. The Republic has the compact territory, a dense network of rural and urban (especially small and average) settlements, the developed infrastructure of road communications of various level. In urban and rural areas there are 1 834 archaeological monuments, 1597 – architectural, 1131 – historical, 122 – monuments of art, about 100 centers of folk arts and crafts, dozens of local areas of traditional weaving and embroidery, pottery, weaving, etc. In addition to natural reserves and sanctuaries, there are towns that represent complex reserves where historic environment coexists with the traditional and everyday way of life.

Tourism is one of the largest sectors of the world economy, which is developing dynamically, trying to take its proper place in the economy of our state. Numerous tourist routes of various subject and directions are currently developing.

Unique monuments of archeology, architecture and culture has been preserved in the North of Grodno region of Belarus. They represent the history of the formation of the Belarusian state. Monuments of architecture and history of Grodnenshchina occupy an important place in cultural heritage of Belarus. The most famous of them are the churches in the villages Mihalishki, Gervyaty, Doylidki, Kemelishki, Gudogay.

There is an old architectural ensemble of the 18th century in the village Vorniany. It consists of St. George Church, vicarage, apothecary's house, rustic residential architecture. Baruny village stands out in Oshmyany district, where preserved a magnificent church; and Catholic church and the ruins of the castle genus Sapieha have preserved in the town Golshany[3]. There are ruins of one of the oldest medieval castles on the territory of the Smorgon district in the Krevo village. The most important state events held in the castle in ancient times, and now Krevo castle is one of the most important architectural monuments of Belarus. And there is a beautiful Palace of Oginski in Zalesie (Smorgon district).

The cathedrals of the North of Grodno region are interesting for tourists, their rich internal and external decoration, the variety of forms, and, at the moment, good condition, serve as a good motivation to take a trip and visit the cathedrals of Belarus. Cultural and historical heritage and Roman Catholic churches of Grodno region attract many tourists.

Exactly cult constructions are the material certificate of rich history of the region. Churches and monasteries decorate historic centers of the cities and the rural settlements of Grodnenshchina. The formation of distinctive architecture took a long time, but if talking about the Northern patterns of the Grodno region, it is necessary to mention the usage of the types of monastic construction and organization of the space of the Church that was formed in the West. However, in Belarus there were churches and monasteries with their characteristic image due to the rich cultural tradition of the region, based on mutual influence of Byzantine and Roman culture, local climate, and level of construction equipment.

Short distance of the northern region of Grodno region from Vilnius (about 30 km) made the region surroundings of the capital and it had always been considered as Vilenshchina in the regional literature.

Regional and historical dependence on Vilnius affected the specificity of the architectural heritage of the region. At the end of the XIV century, this region, together with Vilnius, was baptized in the Catholic rite (1387), so all the surviving monuments of sacred Christian architecture are of Catholic origin.

Large parcels of land and many villages of the Northern region belonged to the Vilnius biskupstwo since ancient times. The first written information about most ancient cities and settlements of the region about the foundation in their Catholic parishes is connected with Historical events since the formation of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the expansion of Catholicism. The first churches, obviously, were constructed from traditional local construction material — wood, but, in view of its fragility, several times rebuilt, changed their shape and did not reach our time. More durable stone temples appeared only in the XVII century, its architecture clearly reflected the influence of the architecture and art of the Baroque style that prevailed at that time in the temple construction in Western and Central Europe, but the Belarusian architecture acquired its original features due to the strong local building traditions.

The middle of XVII century was noted by long-term war between the Commonwealth, on the one hand, and Russia and Sweden - on the other. The arena of this war, which received in history the name "blood flood", was the territory of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Almost all cities and towns were looted and burned, mostly wooden buildings and a few stone structures, especially Catholic churches. For example, the village Mikhlishki in Ostrovets region, located on important waterways, had strategic importance and also suffered during this war. Probably, the first stone church in honor of St. John Baptist was built at that time [4]. The Fund for the construction of a new Church was made after the armistice of the Commonwealth with Sweden, by the son of the first founder, - Ian Brzustowski in 1662. The author of the construction is considered the architect of Belgian origin Christoph Pence, which founded a whole dynasty of architects and decorators in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.

During "the flood," in 1659, the first local treatise on architecture and construction in Commonwealth came in Krakow, which began with the preface "to have the opportunity" and urged them to build accordingly, "its sky and custom", it means according to their traditions, climate and lifestyle. Local traditionalism, patriotism, chivalry, reinforced by military events, are characteristics of the ideology of that time, which is called in science "Sarmatism". This phenomenon is genetically derived from the name of ancient free tribe of the Sarmatians, representatives of the local nobility were their descendants. The combination of ideology Sarmatism with the art of the European Baroque style, which was gradually extended in the Belarusian sacral architecture during XVII century, led to the formation of a distinctive movement of "Sarmatian" Baroque. The Church of Archangel Michael in the village Mikhalishki of Ostrovets district became the first work of this style in the history of Belarusian architecture.

The following architectural and artistic direction of the late Belarusian Baroque, called the "Vilensky baroque", is an original and significant phenomenon in the history of European art.

Many of the ancient shrines of the capital of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania suffered greatly during the fire of the city in 1737 and 1747. Their recovery required a lot of effort and money. At that time in Vilnius foreign and local architects, decorators, craftsmen of various building trades worked together, they rebuilt the city, gave to his shrines more modern European look. As a result of that activity in the middle of the 18th century distinctive architectural and artistic style developed, it was called in the history of art "Vilensky baroque". Two high tiered openwork towers on the main facade, which have a telescopic structure characterize the churches of the Vilensky baroque. The tiers of the tower gradually are decreasing upwards in size, which gives them a strong stereoscopic perspective and makes the visual more high and exalted. The openings of the towers had a complicated curved outline, were cross-cutting, it created a beautiful lace pattern on a background of the sky, made architectural structure easy and supposedly intangible. This illusion was strengthened by wavy outlines of the plans and facades of buildings, order decor, gorgeous altars, which created unclear boundaries between space and weight of building material, it was significantly different from the extent of the Sarmatian Baroque of early age.

The new direction of the late Belarusian baroque, called vilensky, soon spread throughout the country and, of course, did not pass the region closest to the capital. Stone Church of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross in the village Bystritsa was built in vilensky baroque style in 1760-1761. with help of donations of parishioners, at the same time the construction of a stone church in the village Vorniany was begun. The Church of St. George in Vorniany was built in the vilensky baroque style in 1760-1769 and was consecrated by Bishop of Vilna, Ziankovich [5]. The emphasis, according to its dominant role in the ensemble, is made on the main facade of the Church, which extends beyond the main volume and is defined by elegance and delicacy of the silhouette. The main attraction of the village Boruny of Oshmiany district is the Church of Saints Peter and Paul, which was built in 1757. This Church is striking embodiment of the architecture of the vilensky baroque style. This unique temple is located in the heart of the village.

In addition to stone religious buildings in the North of Grodno region several valuable monuments of wooden sacral architecture survived. It is obvious that all extant monuments of wooden religious architecture of Belarus have common features in the spatial composition and modest decorative decision. They were originally built in the Baroque style, then were rebuilt or restored on the old foundation and acquired new architectural and artistic styles, but firmly maintained local tradition of carpentry of the North-West of Belarus.

Residents of Grodno region since ancient times have treated God with great respect. Majestic artistic temples, numerous chapels are the evidence of that. They convey to us the long history of the folk, suffering fate of the nation, its commitment to the welfare, peace, religious respect and human ideals. The temples are shrines, which are carefully passed down from generation to generation. People guarded them from historical disasters to pass in the future in valuable spiritual treasure, unchangeable value, embodied in churches, - the soul of the nation.

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