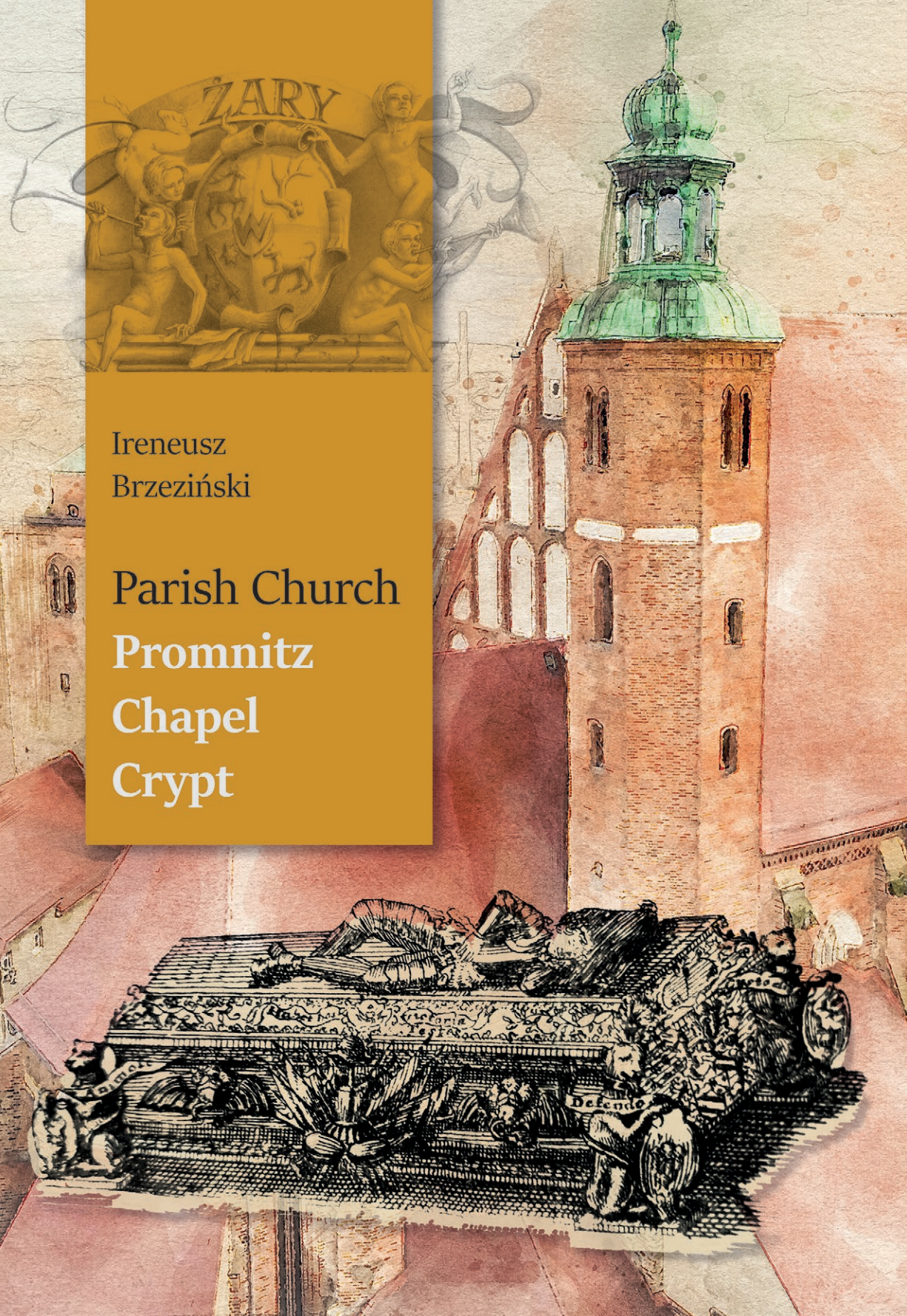




Ireneusz
Brzeziński

Parish Church
Promnitz
Chapel
Crypt

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Promnitz Chapel Crypt



Front and end page drawing of Baltazar von Promnitz's sarcophagus
(J.S. Magnus, Historische Beschreibung der Hoch- Reichs Gräfflichen Promnitzschen Reseidetz- Stadt Sorau in
Niederlausitz, Leipzig 1710), Illustration by Stanisław Antosz.

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Sorau in Niederlausitz, Leipzig 1710.

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Crypts in the Parish Church of Żary

The Parish Church in Żary is a place of eternal rest of many significant residents of the town. There are at least three internment places in the church basement. The first one is under the sacristy. Due to the high level of groundwater, it was walled up. It was a place for parsons and superintendents. The second spot of internment is located under the Baptismal Chapel. It was established in 1445, during the rules of the Bibersteins in Żary. Until mid 17th century, it was filled by the families of Bibersteins and Promnitzes who ruled after the former. Most of the Bibersteins - Lords of Żary - were buried in Frydlant. Before that, their bodies were interned in the Franciscan Church under the invocation of St. Barbara (garrison church). The third place of internment in the parish church is in the underground of the Promnitz Chapel. The parish church was surrounded with a cemetery which was liquidated in 1913. The most beautiful headstones with epitaphs were built in the walls of the church, sometimes in the floor.



The oldest tomb slabs:
a relief of a clergyman (14th century), tomb slab of Thomas Alberti, altarist.

Balthasar von Promnitz, Bishop of Wrocław (the first of the Promnitz family who ruled in Żary) was buried in the Basilica of Nysa where a few other Wrocław bishops were interned. His funerary monument is impressive, which proves the great power and wealth of the initiator of the Promnitz Entail. He died on 20th January, 1564. The date was celebrated for centuries at the castle of Żary.



Tomb of Bishop Balthasar von Promnitz, Basilica, Nysa.

Following the purchase of Žary, first Promnitzes were buried under the Baptismal Chapel. It was here that Seifried von Promnitz zm. 1597 r. (the founder of the outstanding figurative clock which was kept in the parish church until the fire of 1684) was buried here, but also his successor Heinrich Anselm von Promnitz (died in 1622), Siegmund von Promnitz (died in 1654), Erdmann Leopold von Promnitz and other members of the family. As the crypt had been filled, it was necessary to find a new place. Thus, a new chapel was to be added to the north-eastern presbytery of the church. At that time, minor Erdmann Balthasar was heir of Žary Land, and his guardian was his uncle Ulrich von Promnitz, Lord of Brody.



Medal with the effigy of Seifried von Promnitz (1654).

Promnitz'es Chapel

The most important foundation of Ulrich von Promnitz, Siegmund's son, was the Baroque grave chapel of the Promnitz family, added to the parish church in the years 1670 - 1672.

The paintings of the Promnitz Chapel were made by Jan Jakub Vogel of Chemnitz. The author of the stuccos remains unknown.



Fig. Chapel.

The shape of the chapel is very simple, and does not add any charm to the church. However, the interior of the church presbytery won a lot. Spiral columns with Corinthian capitals, and molded cornices with an inscription table and the Promnitz family crest in the center all attract attention. The interior of the chapel is also an outstanding piece of Baroque art. The entrance to the crypt was from the inside of the chapel (walled up now) and from the outside (Fig. page 3).

The crypt of the Promnitz Chapel

The Promnitz Chapel with the crypt was built within the period from April 1670 to October 1672. Ulrich von Promnitz was the initiator of construction of the chapel. The count's tomb was called the Brody crypt. (The founder - Lord of Brody)

In the crypt of the Promnitz Chapel, there used to be eleven sarcophagi of which four ones were made of zinc in a nice shape. The sarcophagi presented the persons of the dead people who rested in the sarcophagi.

Unfortunately, the zinc figures have not survived. They were destroyed during World War II or shortly after the war when the hosts of the church changed quite often. There are only photographs of some of them.



Fig. 2007.



Fig. 1939.

Persons buried in the crypt of the Promnitz Chapel

Ulrich von Promnitz (born on 02.01.1636 at the castle in Żary). Another child of Siegmund and his first wife, Anna Margaret von Putbus. Uncle, guardian of Balthasar Erdmann von Promnitz within the childhood (nonage) of Balthasar Erdmann, Lord of Żary and Lord of Brody, general. He took part in numerous war campaigns. He particularly distinguished himself at the time of the battles of Pomerania and Szczecin against Swedes. He was commanding officer of many formations.

He was a good host. Although he was a vicarious Lord of Żary, he took good care of the Żary and Pszczyna land, and he passed the estate to his nephew Balthasar in a good condition. He died on 29.07.1695 in Brody. He left huge estate which was inherited by his minor sons Gustav and Anshelm. He was buried on 08.02.1696 in the chapel he himself had founded. His godliness and merits for the Evangelic Church were emphasized during the burial service.



Fig. Crypts photo from 1939 The Promnitzes, Lords of Žary.

Baltazar von Promnitz, Lord of Żary, born on 09.01.1659 at the castle in Żary; died on 3.05.1703. He established a library called Balthasar Erdmann's Library. He began his independent rule in 1678. During the time of his rule, in 1684, a huge fire destroyed almost the entire town. The castle and the main nave of the parish church survived. However, the church itself was severely damaged, and the repairs were necessary. Among other things, the fire destroyed the clock which used to be compared to the clock of the cathedral of Strasburg. In 1684, above the entrance to the church, the following inscription appeared: „God, who burnt the place with ire, let your boon help us revive it from fire”. After the repairs, the interior of the church was designed in opulent Baroque style.

Balthasar had managed to rebuild most of the town before he died. He took care of craftsmen, clothiers and linen-drapers in particular. During the time of his rule, Żary became an important textile industry center in Central Europe. He issued many regulations. He purchased Kunice, Iłowa, Czerna, Żaganiec, Wilkowiska, Borowe, Klików, Kliczków, Drehna, and included them in his estate. He was a patron of culture. The castle orchestra conducted by Wolfgang Caspar Printz was famous all over Saxony.

Balthasar established a printing house where he printed court documents and compositions of Printz. Theater troupes and comedians from all over Europe performed at the magnate's court.

In 1700, he had August II staying at his castle. He was a good host; he enlarged the fortune of the Promnitzes. He was profoundly educated and had a sophisticated sense of culture. He was the first of Promnitzes who dreamed of dukedom. However, there is no image of Balthasar except a drawing of the sarcophagus of 1710. He died of typhus at the age of 44.

Count Balthasar was the father of Edmannna II von Promnitz, the greatest architect of Żary. He was buried in the crypt of the Promnitz Chapel on 18.12.1703 as chronicles have it „with great fanfare, e.g. his six favorite horses followed the coffin”.



Fig. Crypts before the war.

Weitere in der Krypta bestatteten Personen

Anna Maria von Weissenfels, Saxon archduchess (Sachsen-Weissenfels), collateral of the Wettins, (1680-1731) – Erdmann II von Promnitz's wife.

Hrabia Seifried von Promnitz, (1734 – 1760), son of Erdmann II from his second marriage.

Joanna Zofia von Promnitz, (15.03.1713 – 22.06.1743), daughter of Erdmann II.

Baltazar Erdmann von Promnitz, born on 12.07.1715 - died on 15.07.1715., son of Erdmann II.

Henryk von Promnitz, (14.01.1686. – 23.05.1700.) – Balthasar's son.

Estera Maksymiliana, (20.02.1687. – 28.09.1701.) – Balthasar's daughter.

Filipina Henrieta, (25-30.09.1689.) – Balthasar's daughter.

Some sources mention eleven sarcophagi, other mention only nine. Today, only one stone sarcophagus has survived, and it is broken, with no embellishments at all. All the figures and zinc decorations are lost.

The zinc figures of the counts sleep. That way the notion of death was expressed: as sleep, expectancy of awakening to eternal life. Bishop Balthasar was the first there to be presented this way on his tomb in Nysa.

Mausoleum under the castle tower

The most outstanding member of von Promnitz family, Count Erdmann II (1683- 1745), Lord of Żary in the years 1703- 1745 was buried in a specially prepared mausoleum located under the castle tower. The old fortified tower was re-designed, and the spire was topped with a cross.

The description of the merits of Count Erdmann II for Żary is so extensive that it requires a separate elaboration. Following revitalization of the mausoleum under the castle tower, a special exposition should be arranged there.



Cross from the burnt spire of the castle tower



Erdmann II Promnitz (1683-1745).

The tower is furnished with two bells and a clock - symbols of passing time.



Fig. castle tower 1939.



Fig. castle tower 2021.

The last of the Promnitzes, Lord of Žary: Count Johann Erdmann von Promnitz, son of Erdmann II, born in 1719 at the Castle of Žary, in 1765 passed Žary to the Archduke of Saxony for life annuity. He died in Kehl, Germany, and he was buried there. The exact place of his burial is not known.



Crypt photo of 2021.



Fig. Funeral inscription for Count Balthasar of Promnitz (J. S. Magnus, 1710.).

Resting place
of the highborn Count
Balthasar Erdmann of Promnitz,
Esq., Imperial Count of the Holy Roman Empire,
Lord of the Free State of Pszczyna, Żary, Trzebiel and Nowogród (Bobrzański),
Heir of Itowa, Konin Żagański and Borowe,
and Lord of the State of Drehna, Kliczków, etc.,
born A.D. 1659 on the 9 th of January, departed on the 3 rd May, 1703 at the age of 44 years,
16 weeks, 2 days and 5.5 hours.
He ruled for 38.5 years.

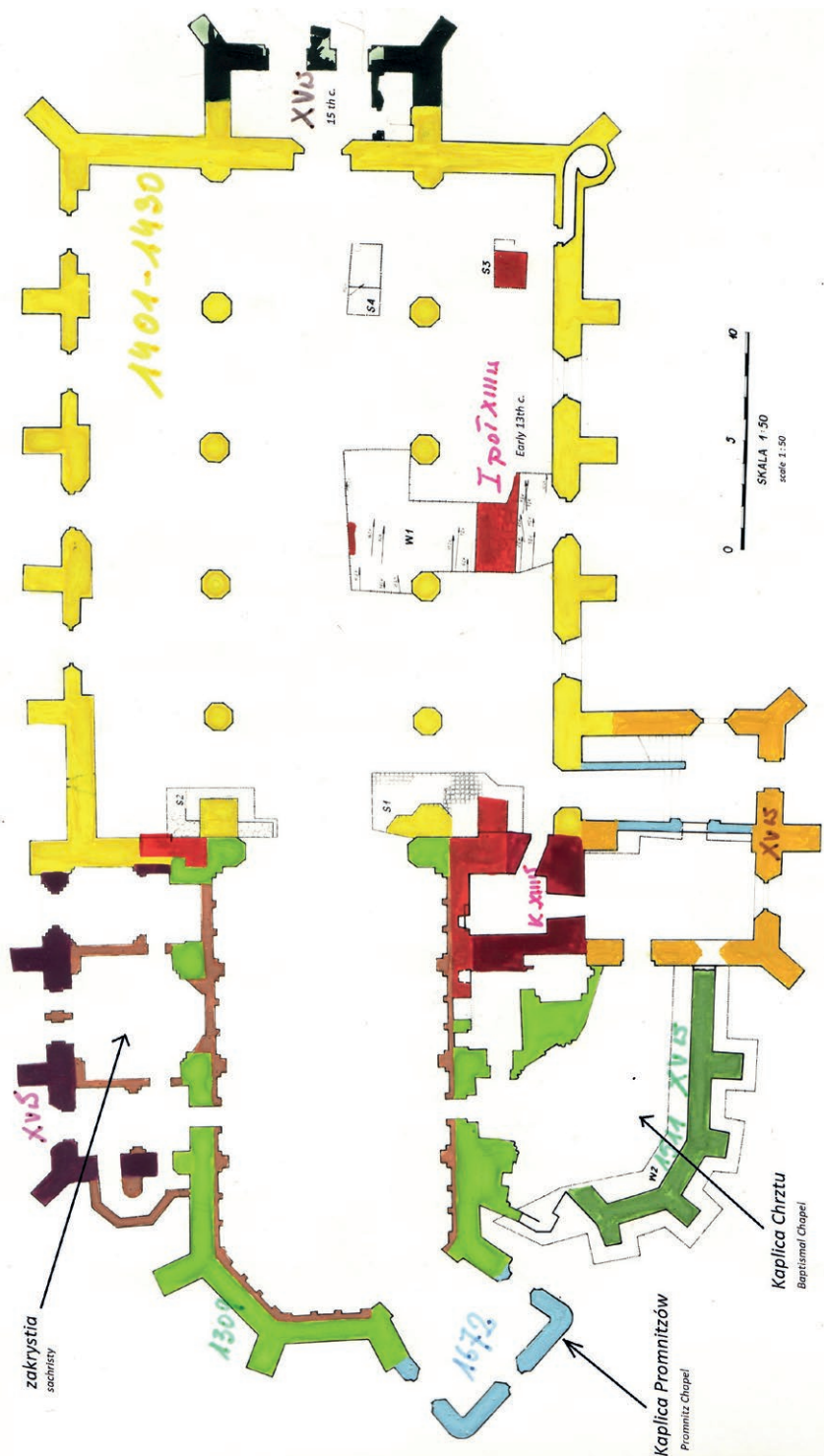


Fig. Cross-section of the parish church, years of construction, acc. to Dr. Stanisław Kowalski.



Promnitz Chapel vault, photo 1939.



ŽÁRY 2021