

¹ ORCID ID: 0000-0001-5226-2350

² Faculty of Architecture
Wrocław University of Science and Technology
andrzej.legendziewicz@pwr.edu.pl
ORCID ID: 0000-0002-9228-296X

CZESŁAW LASOTA¹, **ANDRZEJ LEGENDZIEWICZ**²

Medieval Friar Minor Church in Brzeg – from the second half of the 13th to the beginning of the 16th century

Abstract. This paper presents the results of an interdisciplinary research that was carried out at the Friars Minor church in Brzeg. Firstly, the monastery and church architecture are discussed and reference sources are analysed. The authors' considerations are based on architectural and archaeological research, on the analysis of technology, construction material and architectural detail as well as on iconographic studies the authors have carried out. They form the grounds for the presentation of the medieval church that consisted of a three-span chancel and a two-aisle four-span nave, which was built at the end of the 13th century. The church was subjected to transformations in two phases. During the first phase, in the 2nd half of the 14th century, an altar bay was added and the south aisle was enlarged. During the second phase, at the turn of the 15th and 16th centuries, the church was reconstructed after a fire. In the summary, the authors set the stylistic transformations of church architecture in the context of the trends that developed in Silesia in the Middle Ages.

Keywords: Silesia, architecture, Gothic, church, Friars Minor (Franciscans), Brzeg.

Introduction

The town of Brzeg is situated in southwestern Poland, in the midway between Wrocław and Opole (Fig. 1). The former Friars Minor monastery church is located on the northern edge of the Old Town, in Młynarska Street. The tenement houses that form the eastern frontage of Młynów Square adhered to it from the north. By 2014, it was a squat building, covered with a ceramic, gable roof and a jerkin head from the west. Its south and west walls as well as the part of the north wall that extended beyond the tenement house façades were supported by one-step or two-step buttresses, which were diagonal in the western corners (Fig. 2: a, b). A rectangular entrance gate led to the inside from the west. The gate was built between two perpendicular buttresses. The aisle-and-nave, four-span interior was



Fig. 1. Poland and the location of Brzeg (developed by Cz. Lasota and A. Legendziewicz)

plastered. The aisle was lower than the nave and it was divided into two storeys with a horizontal separation structure. The aisle and the nave, whose pillars were by the north wall, were covered with vaults and lunettes, and the vaults were decorated with a network of ribs (Fig. 3). The storey above the aisle vault was demolished in 2014 (Fig. 4). There had also been storeys above the nave for some time, which two levels of window openings in its north and west walls confirmed. In the 1960s, the brick façades of the building were exposed from under the rendering except for the additional storey built on the aisle and the west gable, and new buttresses were added

to support the side walls of the chancel and the north wall of the building nave (Eysymontt 1963). The rendered chancel was divided into storeys, which were lit via rectangular window openings. It was linked with the building nave through a gate in the chancel arch wall. The rendering of the chancel façades, which were supported by two-step buttresses, had survived to varying degrees. The best survived part was near the altar bay, which was enclosed from the east with a three-sided



Fig. 2. Brzeg, Friar Minor Church. View from the west: a – state before 2014, b – present state (photo by A. Legendziewicz)

closure and had ogival, blind windows or rather bricked window openings. Sgraffito décor could be seen from under later rendering. It could also be seen on the north façade (Fig. 4). The second out of the rectangular gates that led to the former church was in the chancel's east wall. The tower, which reached up the nave roof ridge, collapsed in 1997, so did the western part of the chancel except for the north wall. Five years later, in 2002, the reconstruction of the tower and of the damaged part of the south wall of the choir started. The tower was erected up to the top of the chancel walls (Fig. 4). The chancel was covered with a completely new roof. The construction and conservation work were aimed at restoring the Gothic style to the building. The internal brick walls of the western part of the choir were subjected to preservation, so were the north façade (except for the east bay) of the choir and the north façade of the nave. The Gothic building nave that was the subject of the research was restored as the last one, in 2014. The gable roof, the west gable, the additional storey over the aisle were demolished, and either of the aisles were covered with a separate roof. The roof over the south aisle was lower than that over the north one (Fig. 2: a, Fig. 5) (Projekt 2009)¹.



Fig. 3. Brzeg, Friar Minor Church. Vault of the nave, state from 2002 (photo by A. Legendziewicz)

Analysis of reference sources

A relatively meagre resource of written information on Brzeg Friars Minor is available. The Friars Minor church was mentioned for the first time in a document issued in 1285 by Herman, the bishop of Kamień Pomorski, to grant an indulgence to those who visited certain Franciscan churches in Wrocław Guardianship on specified

¹ Based on the results of their architectural and archaeological research and on the conservation recommendations, the authors of the project suggested that not only the shape of the Gothic building but the medieval decoration and articulation of the aisle façades and window openings, as well, should be restored (Projekt 2009, Ill. 4, Ill. 5).



Fig. 4. Brzeg, Friar Minor Church. View from south-east, present state (photo by A. Legendziewicz)



Fig. 5. Brzeg, Friar Minor Church. South elevation of the southern nave, present state (photo by A. Legendziewicz)

festive days (CDS 1870, no. 29; *Urkunden* 1917, no. 69). In two other documents issued by church authorities in the same year, the Brzeg Franciscans and Silesia's several other orders were mentioned in connection with their failure to observe the excommunication imposed on Duke Henry IV the Righteous (CDS 1868, no. 1869, 1877). Another source of 1285 confirmed that the Brzeg monastery and many other Silesian monasteries had belonged to the Saxon province after they had broken away from Wrocław Guardianship (*Urkunden* 1917, no. 80). In 1315, Bolesław the Wasteful, the duke of Legnica and Brzeg issued a document concerning the Brzeg Friars Minor (*in ambitu fratrum minorum*) (*Urkunden* 1917, no. 126). A letter written by Pope John XXII in 1332 (*Urkunden* 1917, no. 146) or in 1333 (CDS 1870, no. 91) to Wrocław bishop, concerning the establishment of a Dominican monastery, stated that every Dominican or Franciscan convent should consist of at least 12 friars. The information contained in a document of 1338 about a consecration by bishop Nanker by order of Pope John XXII is uncertain (CDS 1870, no. 104). A ducal document was drawn up in the Franciscan monastery in 1361 (CDS 1870, no. 203). In his will of 1396, Duke Luis I earmarked the Friars Minor 10 units (*grzywny*) of silver for the church and 5 units of silver for a stained glass (CDS 1870, no. 254). The other medieval sources confirmed that the Brzeg order had consisted of five friars in 1470 (*Urkunden* 1917, no. 505), that the church and neighbouring buildings had burnt down in 1494 (CDS 1870, no. 1119, 1120) and that the friars had left the monastery in 1527 (CDS 1870, no. 1336).

In 1550 the church building was converted into an arsenal, which was damaged by a fire in 1579 (Fischer, Stuckart 1819, pp. 153, 156). One may conclude that the reconstruction of the arsenal involved a change in the building décor to that typical of the Renaissance, of which sgraffito decoration on the chancel façades and the stone cube portal on the west edge of the building's south façade had survived. A description drawn up in 1689 indicates that the arsenal building was divided into storeys and walled up. A grain storage was arranged on the floors (Lucae 1689, p. 1379). The year 1722 was engraved beneath the eaves, in the southeast corner of the building (Eysymontt 1963), probably to indicate when an additional storey was built and roofed over the aisle. A drawing made by Fryderyk Bernard Werner in the middle of the 18th century shows a symmetrically roofed building whose west gable is decorated with volutes (Fig. 6) (Werner without date, ref. T02–0311). In the 19th century, the west gable was simplified owing to the construction of a new roof with a jerkin head from the west. The conversion of the former church into the fire brigade headquarters in 1930 involved the construction of gateways in the east and west walls of the building and of a gateway between the chancel and the building, nave, and also of a solid staircase in the tower. A shelter was built under the aisle up to the west bay in the years 1941 and 1942 (AP Wrocław, file no. 666).

After the monks had left, the monastery buildings were handed over to a miller and townsmen for housing purposes (Fischer, Stuckart 1819, p. 154). Another source



Fig. 6.
Brzeg, Friar Minor Church. Ducal arsenal, drawing by Friedrich B. Werner from around the mid-18th century (after Werner without date, ref. T02-0311)

says that Duke George II of Brzeg gave the monastery to the town in 1557. Part of the buildings was then demolished and a poorhouse was arranged in the remaining part. The area where the demolished buildings had been were allotted to building plots (Zimmermann 1783, p. 59). Relics of Gothic vaults, which were researched in 1963 (Eysymontt 1963), are displayed in the buildings that adhere to the church nave from the north.

State of research

The first statements about the time of construction, the form of the original structure and conversions of the church were formulated in the 1960s. Mieczysław Zlat was of the opinion that the original church, which had existed in 1285, had consisted of an elongated chancel, a clear span nave and a tower, which had been erected between the chancel and the nave. In 1338, an aisle was added to the choir. A lamella roof was built over the nave in about 1500. The pillars situated by the north wall were the buttresses that had been built concurrently with the western part of the monastery (Zlat 1960, p. 45). The first analysis of the church origin carried out by Janina Eysymontt resulted in the statement that the church had been constructed before 1285 and that it had consisted of a chancel, which was enclosed from the east with a three-sided closure, with the suggestion that the east wall of that type could have appeared later, and a slightly wider, clear span nave. The cantilever that was seen in the chancel's north wall could have been a relic of a cross vault. The buttresses that supported the church walls did not indicate

whether the original building was covered with a horizontal separation structure or vaults. While the church was being reconstructed after a 1495 fire, the south aisle was added to the nave, which was then covered with barrel vaults and lunettes, and the vaults were decorated with a network of ribs. The vault over the nave was supported in the south by the building wall, where arcades had been built, and on pillars added to the building wall and linked together with arches in the south. The tower was erected concurrently with the aisle-and-nave building (Eysymontt 1963). In her discussion on the architecture of the first Franciscan churches in Silesia, J. Eysymontt wrote that the monks had come to Brzeg in about 1280 on the initiative by Duke Henry IV the Righteous. The first of the Franciscan churches, whose construction was completed probably in about 1300, consisted of an open four-span nave that was covered with a horizontal separation structure and of a slightly narrower four-span vaulted chancel that was enclosed with three sides of a hexahedron in the east. The south aisle was constructed in the 2nd half of the 14th century and the vaults over the nave were constructed later (Eysymontt 1978, pp. 79–80). Tadeusz Chrzanowski, Marian Koniecki and Mieczysław Zlat succinctly considered the church as a Gothic structure subjected to conversions between the 17th and 19th centuries (*Katalog* 1962, pp. 9–10). The authors of the relevant entry in “Architektura gotycka w Polsce” quoted exclusively the dates of church construction phases: the 4th quarter of the 13th century – when the rectangular chancel and the nave were built; the beginning of the 14th century – when the polygonal enclosure of the chancel was built; the 2nd quarter of the 14th century – when the south aisle was built; the end of the 15th century – when the nave vaulting was constructed (*Architektura gotycka* 1995, pp. 36–37)².

The next stages of the conducted research took place after the collapse of the church in 1997. The reconnaissance of the facades of the chancel and nave, which were both devoid of plaster, was carried out by Rafał Czerner and Czesław Lasota immediately after the disaster (Czerner, Lasota 1997). A continuation of the research within the area of the destroyed interior of the chancel was carried out a year later by R. Czerner (Czerner 1998). A gradual recognition of the original form of the church, and the transformations of its architecture, were provided thanks to the multi-stage research conducted by the authors of the present text (Burnita *et al.* 2002; 2003; Lasota, Legendziewicz 2004; 2005; Legendziewicz, Lasota 2005; Grenda *et al.*, 2010). Their results form the basis for the following discussion.

² The latest publications about the development of the architecture of the Franciscan church in Brzeg follow earlier suggestions, or compilations of theses published by M. Zlat and J. Eysymontt (Adamski 2017, pp. 114–117, 610–613).

*Results of the research (Figs. 7–14)*Phase I – church in the 4th quarter of the 13th century

The original Franciscan church, which was built probably in the 4th quarter of the 13th century, consisted of a vaulted chancel closed from the east with a simple wall and a four-span hall nave (an aisle and a nave) covered with a horizontal separation structure. The eastern part of the aisle was wider than that of the nave and had an avant-corps. The chancel vault was supported by buttresses and the walls of the buildings constructed concurrently with the chancel. A monastery building adhered to the east bay of the chancel from the north and a one-storey, three-span, buttressed annexe adhered to the chancel from the south (Figs. 7, 8).

The brick walls of the church and annexe featured double stretcher bonding, low Vee joints and were erected on strip foundations that had been built of erratics bonded with lime mortar in narrow trenches. The architectural details were made of fine-grained granite and shaped elements produced in a brickhouse or, sporadically, field-cut out of bricks. Some of the details were reused in the course of subsequent construction activities.

The chancel was 18.2 m in clear height and 8.15 m in clear width. The north, south and west walls had survived to varying degrees. The structure of the simple east wall was examined by excavating a wall relic – the upper part of the foundation that turned into the basement; in excavation IX that was at the points where interpolated traces of the cut-off wall in the north and south walls had been. The excavation also revealed part of the brick altar table. Remains of all three rectangular, cross and ribbed vaults were stuck in the three above-mentioned walls. They were cut-off bowls and above-hanging supporting ribs, of which only one of the cantilevers in the north wall between the middle and east spans had survived. The supporting ribs consisted of ceramic stems, and probably of heads and stone cantilevers and cornice moulds. The trihedral, faucet cantilever that had survived was slightly damaged. Similar cantilevers were found in the chancel's west corners and side walls, between the middle and west spans. The cornices had only survived in the west corners, where they were 10 cm thick and formed the supporting rib finials. The analysis of the joints between the remains of supporting rib stems and the chancel's sidewalls confirmed that the cornices were trihedral. The vault bowls were one brick thick and were linked to the walls via stops (with toothings in their lower parts) specifically made in the walls. The bowls were supported by arches that protruded half a brick from the sidewalls. In the chancel, the strips of ceramic supporting ribs that had been cut off were 0.32–0.33 m in length. This indicated that their cornices had supported only the vault ribs, which had been pear-shaped, diagonal and transverse arches. Ceramic, pear-shaped rib elements were found in the collapsed tower and in part of the chancel's south wall (Figs. 7–11).

In the south wall of the chancel, there were three windows, two windows in the north wall and probably one window in the east wall. Out of the lancet windows that had featured embrasures, the north-facing windows had fully survived, and only the lower parts of the south-facing windows had survived. Each of the windows consisted of two sections and traceries. The excavations made in the walls that had been built to block the window openings confirmed that the bars had started from stone, slanted sills. The bars in certain windows had their lower parts made of granite, they had socket bar heads and divided the windows into two sections (Fig. 12). Two heads and fragments of the tracery were discovered in bricked up gaps in the chancel's north wall. Such gaps had been formed by removing the stone cornices of supporting ribs. There was no window in the east wall bay and the fact confirmed that a monastery building could have been built concurrently with the chancel. The chancel, and the monastery building linked with it by the east bay, was a typical solution that had been used by Friars Minor in their original monasteries in Silesia (Figs. 9, 11). The solution was found in the Franciscan structures researched in Głogów (Kozaczewski 2006, pp. 152–161), Lwówek Śląski (Czerner, Lasota 1988, pp. 79–85), Wrocław (Kozaczewski 1963, pp. 217–224) or Żagań (Legendziewicz *et al.* 2019, pp. 6–7). One of the sidewalls of the churches in the above towns contained door openings, of which one led to the monastery building, the other led to the courtyard (Figs. 7, 10).

The chancel arch in the west wall and the reading-room partition built along the arch line, as well as the opening to the nave had been almost completely converted in the 2nd half of the 14th century. A fragment of the reused stone head that was found in the basement of the tower's east wall, which had survived, could have come from the original chancel arch. Relics of the opening between the chancel and the nave were found in excavations VII, XXI. The latter contained part of the south reveal of the opening and a segment of a heavily worn brick doorsill, the former contained the sill that had come up to a damaged reveal. The identified remains of the opening confirmed that the opening had been about 2 m wide, which indicated that it could have consisted of two sections. A south fragment of the 3 m high partition had survived. It was incorporated into a partition built in the 2nd half of the 14th century. On the west edge of the north wall of the chancel, there was a bricked-up door opening that led to the monastery courtyard. The opening was topped with a lancet arch from the inner side. The arch edge was made of shaped brick, in the form of half-round moulding. The lower part of the opening that was found in excavation VII revealed traces of a dismantled stone sill. In the middle span of the south wall, there was an opening that had linked the chancel with the annexe. The west edge of the opening was found in excavation XVIIa within the annexe area (Fig. 7).

The buttressed, single-storey annexe, whose division followed the chancel span layout, was 18.2 m in length and 4 m in width inside. The partition had survived to

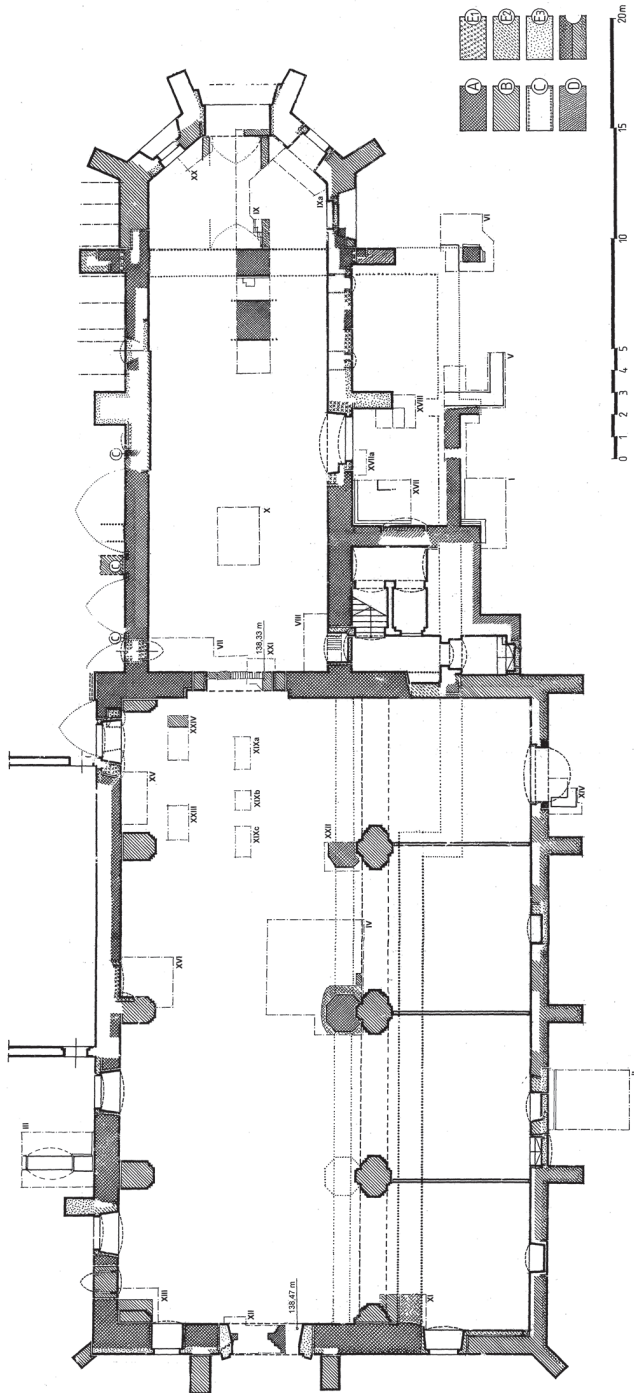


Fig. 7. Brzeg, Friar Minor Church. Ground plan with chronological stratification of walls: A – 4th quarter of the 13th century, B – 2nd half of the 14th century, C – end of the 14th century, D – after 1497, E1-E3 – 2nd half of the 16th-18th centuries (Renaissance and Baroque walls), I-XXIV – numbers of excavations (developed by Cz. Lasota and A. Legendziewicz)

a significant degree, so had a segment of the south wall of the west room within the tower plan. During the construction of the east wall of the tower, the door opening in the annexe partition had been bricked up. The 2 m-wide door recess had been covered with a segmental arch and its jambs had been from the west room side. The jamb edges had been finished with ceramic cavettos. The height of the opening recess from the sill, which was found in excavation XVII, to the arch rise had been 2.2 m. The west room had been covered with a vault, whose relic was found in the chancel wall as part of the wall stop. The concurrent construction of the annexe and chancel was proved by the toothings that the researchers found. The bricks that protruded from the chancel wall had been connected with the partition and east wall of the annexe. The only relic of the east wall that had survived was found in the chancel buttress that had been built after the demolition of the annexe to replace it with a tower. The division of the annexe into three bays explained why remains of its south wall were discovered in excavations I and VI. In excavation I, there was the foundation and the beginning of the basement of the middle bay's buttressed wall. Excavation VI confirmed that there had been only one buttress in the annexe corner on the extension of the east wall. The middle bay could have been connected with the eastern part of the annexe via a door opening in the partition or via an arcade. The 19th and 20th centuries foundations of the annexe and the chancel's new buttress were found in excavations V and XVIII, respectively. The annexe had been covered with a lean-to roof, which was as high as the chancel window sills, and on which buttresses had been built to support the upper part of the chancel wall (Fig. 7).

Remains of the monastery's east wall and a trace of the gable roof were found in the buttress that had been built after the demolition of the monastery and had adhered to the chancel's east bay from the north. The east wall of the building was linked with the toothings protruding from the chancel wall. The buttresses on the extension of the chancel's side walls and the buttress that had supported the north wall between the middle and west bays had been built together with such toothings. It was not clear whether the monastery building was connected with the chancel via an opening. The lower part of the chancel's north wall within the east bay had been subjected to numerous conversions (Fig. 11).

The inner dimensions of the two-level, four-span hall nave had been: 28.4 m in length, 12.8 m in width; the width the nave and one aisle had been 9.3 m and 1.9 m, respectively, and the width of the other aisle had been 4.8 m within the reach of the avant-corps, which in the authors' opinion had been as long as the east bay. The north and west walls without finials had survived from the original nave. The identified relics of the inner arcades and remains of the pillars found in excavations IV, XXII were used as the cantilevers in the west and east walls of the present nave. The position of the demolished south wall was determined by the cut-of walls that were found in the east and west walls of the present nave and by the fragment of a foundation discovered in excavation XI (Figs. 7, 8).

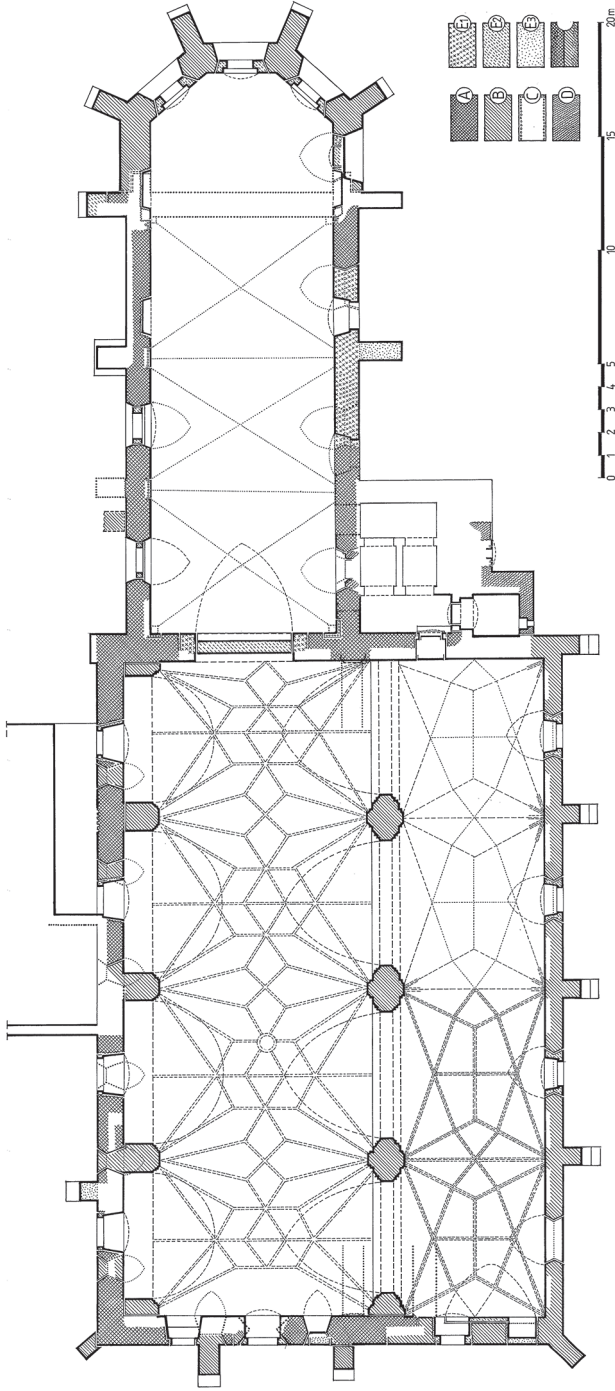


Fig. 8. Brzeg, Friar Minor Church. Projection at the height of windows with chronological stratification of walls: A – 4th quarter of the 13th century, B – 2nd half of the 14th century, C – end of the 14th century, E1–E3 – 2nd half of the 16th–18th century (Renaissance and Baroque) (developed by Cz. Lasota and A. Legendziewicz)

The authors identified the positions of all openings that had been in the north and west walls. The nave had been lit by six north-facing windows and two west-facing ones. The outline of the window embrasures had been 7 m in height and 1.2 m in width. Remains of the main entrance, which had been decorated with a portal and whose reveals had splayed outward to the inside, were found in excavation XII. From the side entrance, the authors noticed the edges of a 3.2 m-high 1.8 m-wide alcove in the middle of the north wall length. The alcove had been covered with a segmental arch. On the lower east edge of the wall, there had been a small window and a recess, of which fragments had survived. They signified that a reading room had existed in front of the chancel. The 0.4 m-wide opening with a triangular top had been made in a parted-reveals recess whose reveals had splayed and which had had a stepped sill and had been covered with a half-brick thick segmental arch. The reconstructed dimensions of the recess were 2.2 m in height and 1.4 m in width. The 0.4 m-deep arched recess next to the window had probably served as a sacramentarium. The issue of the reading room plan was not resolved as the possibilities of carrying out excavation-based research were limited due to densely spread scaffolding in the east bay of the nave. Test excavations XIX A–C, XXIII, XXV could be explored only to the Gothic floor level (which was constructed later). A relic of the altar table was found there (Figs. 7, 11).

The cantilevers in the east and west walls of the nave, pillar plinths and probably pillar heads had been made of granite. The east cantilever that had fully survived was a triangular cavetto-moulded section. Out of remains of the octagonal pillar plinths discovered in excavations IV, XXII, the plinth found in excavation IV had survived. It had part of a mould (a half-round element and the beginning of a cavetto) and was built into the base of a younger pillar dated back to the 2nd half of the 14th century. It was about 0.5 m high.

In excavation IX, on the extension of the cut-off wall that was seen in the west wall of the present nave, the authors found the 13th-century foundation of the south wall and further eastwards they found the foundation that had been demolished in 1941–1942 while a shelter had been constructed (AP Wrocław, file no. 666). A relic of the original nave's east wall, which had been longer than the west wall, consisted of two pieces of the cut-off wall, one was at the wall end and the other was along the line of the above-mentioned traces of the west closure of the 13th-century structure. The above facts made the authors conclude that the east bay of the aisle had been wider than the nave. The difference laid in the avant-corps where there had been a chapel connected with the nave via an arcaded opening. A plan similar to that of the Brzeg church had been used in Głogów. The Friars Minor church in Głogów, which had been built in the 1250s, consisted of two aisles, including the south aisle and the avant-corps (Kozaczewski 2006, pp. 152–156, 161, Figs. 148, 154). A cemetery adhered to the church from the south. Graves were found in the excavations made in 1941–1942 (AP Wrocław, file no. 666) and in excavation II. They had been

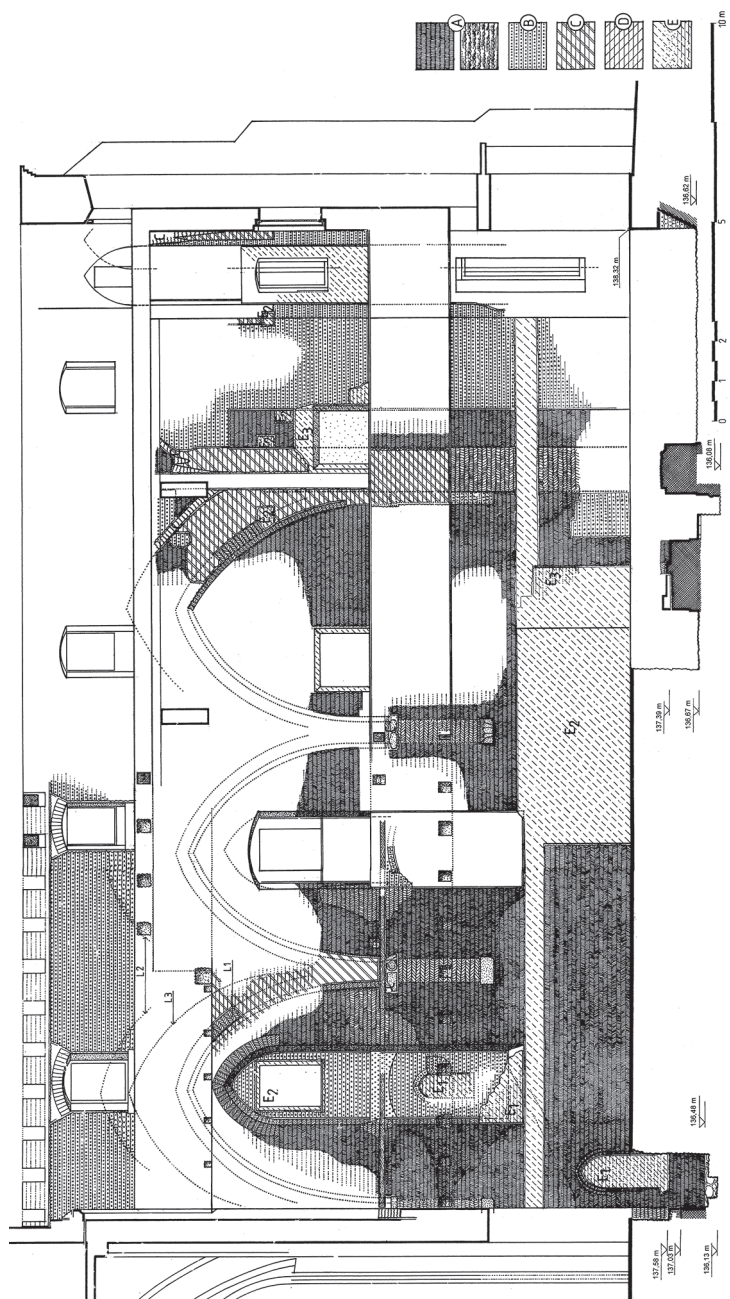


Fig. 9. Brzeg Friar Minor Church. Cross-section through the chancel with a view of the north wall with chronological stratification of the walls: A – 4th quarter of the 13th century (face/walled), B – 2nd half of the 14th century, C – after 1497 (chancel and aisles), D – after 1497 (tower), E1–E3 – 2nd half of the 16th–18th centuries (Renaissance and Baroque), L1–L3 – lines of the vaults (phases A, B, C), 136.08 m – height above sea level (developed by Cz. Lasota and A. Legendziewicz)



Fig. 10. Brzeg, Friar Minor Church. Cross-section through the chancel with a view of the wall of the rainbow arcade with chronological stratification of the walls: A – 4th quarter of the 13th century (face/masonry cut), B – 2nd half of the 14th century, C – after 1497 (chancel and aisles), D – after 1497 (tower), E1–E3 – 2nd half of the 16th–18th centuries (Renaissance and Baroque), L1–L3 – lines of vaults (phases A, B, C) (developed by Cz. Lasota and A. Legendziewicz)

damaged to varying degrees while the foundation of the south wall of the younger church had been built in the 2nd half of the 14th century (Fig. 7).

On the west façade of the nave, there was a portal situated along the axis and a pair of window openings situated above the portal, on its sides. A 0.5 m high relic of the stepped ceramic portal was found in excavation XII. The portal sides had been built of bricks and quarter round mouldings. The bricks had been used for making bases and steps between vertical lines of mouldings. The outer width of the portal had been 2.7 m and the width of the nave door opening had been 1.35 m. The narrow lancet windows had been decorated with tracery. The three-leaf tracery found in the north façade of the church had been made of brick-cut shapes which had then been rendered and whitewashed, together with the wall under window opening arches. The nave façades had been surrounded by a ceramic plinth. The fragment of the plinth found in excavation III was 0.8 m high and its edges had been made of cavetto mouldings.

Before the church was converted in the 2nd half of the 14th century, the inner walls, opening reveals, ceramic details had been painted iron red and the network of joints had been emphasised with milk of lime. Stone details had been painted iron red, as well. The authors found that the wall under the chancel window arches, except the edges, had been rendered and whitewashed. One might guess that the chancel vault, excluding the ribs, had been plastered.

The floor in the nave, the chancel's west and middle bays and also in the annexe had been at level 137.35 m above sea level. The first floor found in excavations IV, VII, X had been of wooden structure. At a later time, a ceramic tile floor had been laid on a sand bed and lime screed. The area where the church had been built had sloped in a north-easterly direction. During construction, the interior had been levelled by adding made ground, among which amounts of construction material, lime screed and fine brick debris had gathered. Excavations VII and X revealed traces of burning beneath remains of wooden flooring, between two layers of made ground and construction material; in the latter, the burnt layer by the walls was of significant thickness. The stratigraphic position of wood coal and ash reflected a fire of the chancel while it had been under construction.

At the beginning of their activity in Silesia, the Franciscans were associated with the ruling families, who financially supported the construction of their monasteries (Wąs 2000, pp. 19, 20–22, 27, 28, 52, 53, 61, 71, 75–78). Friars Minor came to Brzeg undoubtedly on the initiative of Duke Henry IV the Righteous (1272–1290). The precise date of the settlement remains unknown. Documents dated 1285 confirmed that the friars had supported the duke in his long-lasting dispute with Wrocław bishop Tomas II (CDS 1868, no. 1869, 1877) and that they had had a church (CDS 1870, no. 29, 20, 69). Only the chancel and the monastery building could have existed in 1285. The research into the Friars Minor's original churches in Głogów (Kozaczewski 2006, pp. 152–161), Lwówek Śląski (Czerner, Lasota 1988, pp. 79–85),

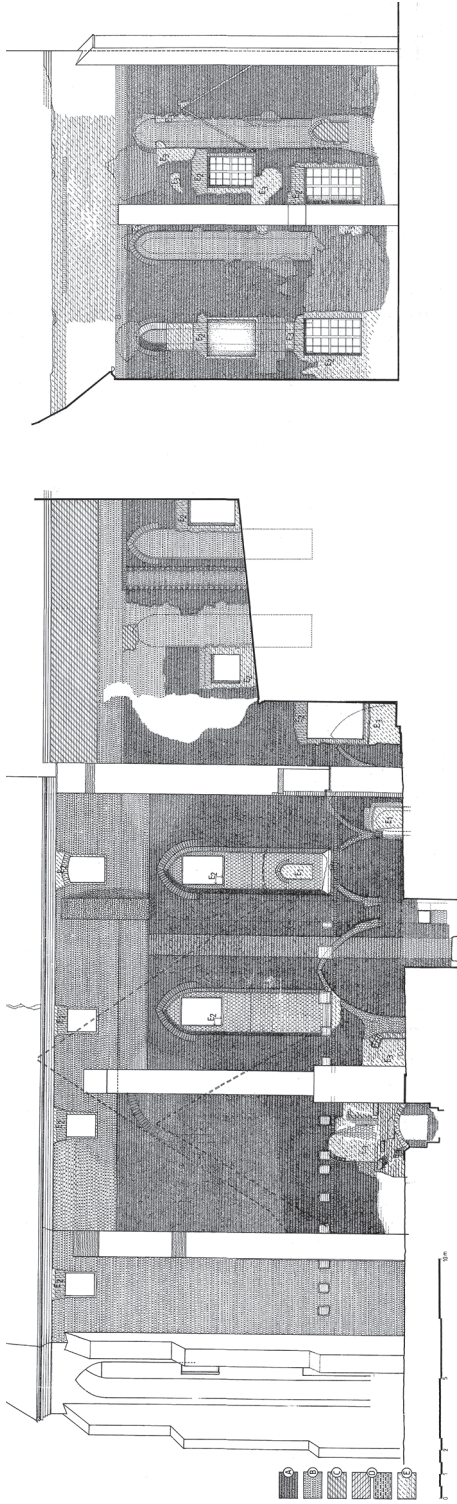


Fig. 11. Brzeg, Friar Minor Church. North elevation of the chancel and aisles with chronological stratification of the walls; A – 4th quarter of the 13th century (face/walled), B – 2nd half of the 14th century, C – after 1497 (chancel and aisles), D – after 1497 (tower), E1–E3 – 2nd half of the 16th–18th centuries (Renaissance and Baroque), I1–L3 – lines of vaults (phases A, B, C), I–XXIV – numbers of excavations (developed by Cz. Lasota and A. Legendziewicz)

Wrocław (Kozaczewski 1963, pp. 217–224) and Żagań (Legendziewicz *et al.* 2019, p. 7) confirmed that the construction of church aisles was the second stage of the investments.

Phase II – conversion of the church in the 2nd half
of the 14th century

The church conversion carried out in the 2nd part of the 14th century had resulted in a four-span chancel, which had been higher than the original one, enclosed from the east with a three-sided closure, covered with a cross and ribbed vault, and a similarly vaulted, aisle-and-nave, four-span, basilica-like naves with a separate roof over either of the aisles. After the east bay had been added, the chancel had been 25.8 m long. The inner dimensions of the nave had been: 28.4 m in length, 18,6 m in width, the nave and the aisle had been 10.8 m and 6.2 m in width, respectively. The annexe had remained at the chancel from the south. The walls of the three-winged monastery, with cloisters around the garth, had adhered to the chancel and the nave from the north (Figs. 7–11).

Single stretcher bonding, horizontal Vee joints and vertical flat, grooved joints had been applied to the walls in the 2nd half of the 14th century. The nave walls and new pillars had been built on erratic and lime mortar foundations. The architectural detail had been made of ceramic mouldings, produced in a brickhouse or cut out of sandstone. The research into the conversion of the chancel helped clarify that the upper parts of the 13th-century side walls, which had been left, had been connected via east bay toothings with thicker walls that had been built from the church side. The nave wall toothings had been used for joining the upper part of the chancel's west wall, where a new chancel arch had been built (Figs. 7, 8, 10).

The vault ribs over the chancel's east bay had had stone fillets, whose traces were found in the walls. The tops of the vault over the 13th-century part of the chancel had been based on offsets running in the side walls at the level where the additional parts had been built. Subsequent construction work had erased the traces of the vault below the offset

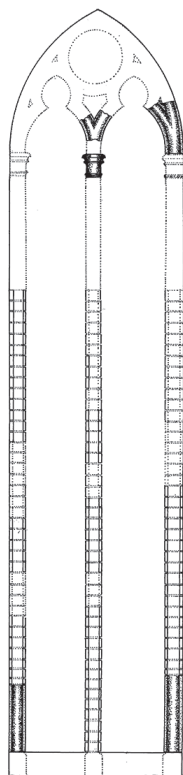


Fig. 12.
Brzeg, Friar Minor Church. Northern elevation of the presbytery, reconstruction of the window-mask (developed by Cz. Lasota and A. Legendziewicz)

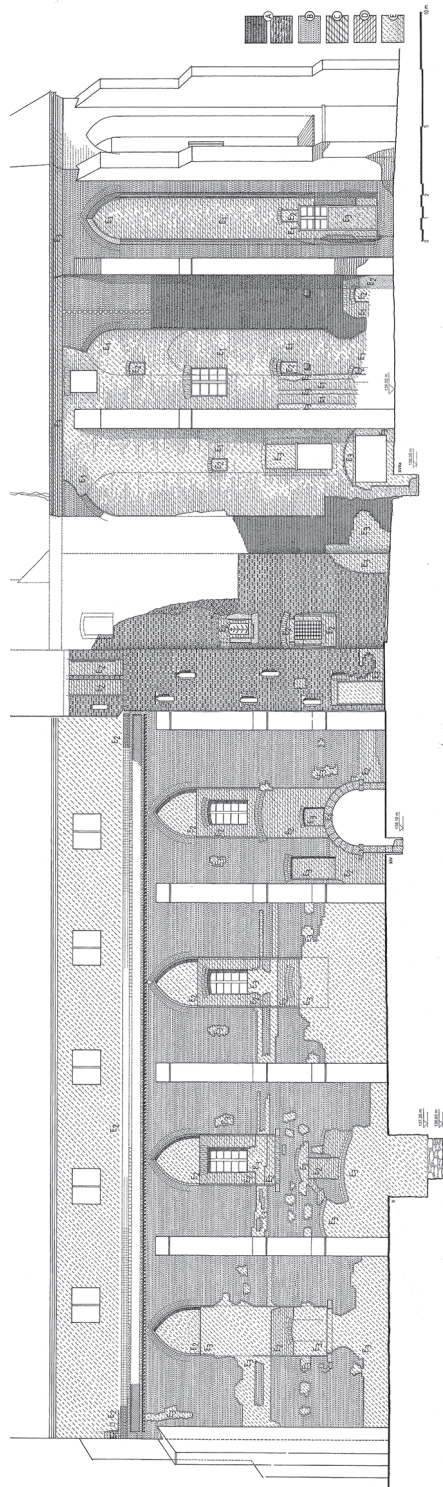


Fig. 13. Brzeg, Friar Minor Church. Southern elevation of the chancel, aisles and tower with chronological stratification of the walls: A – 4th quarter of the 13th century (face/wall cut), B – 2nd half of the 14th century, C – after 1497 (chancel and aisles), D – after 1497 (tower), E – 2nd half of the 16th–18th century (Renaissance and Baroque), 136.08 m – height above sea level, I–XXIV – numbers of excavations (developed by Cz. Lasota and A. Legendziewicz)



Fig. 14. Brzeg, Friar Minor Church. South aisle vault, state from 2002 (photo by A. Legendziewicz)

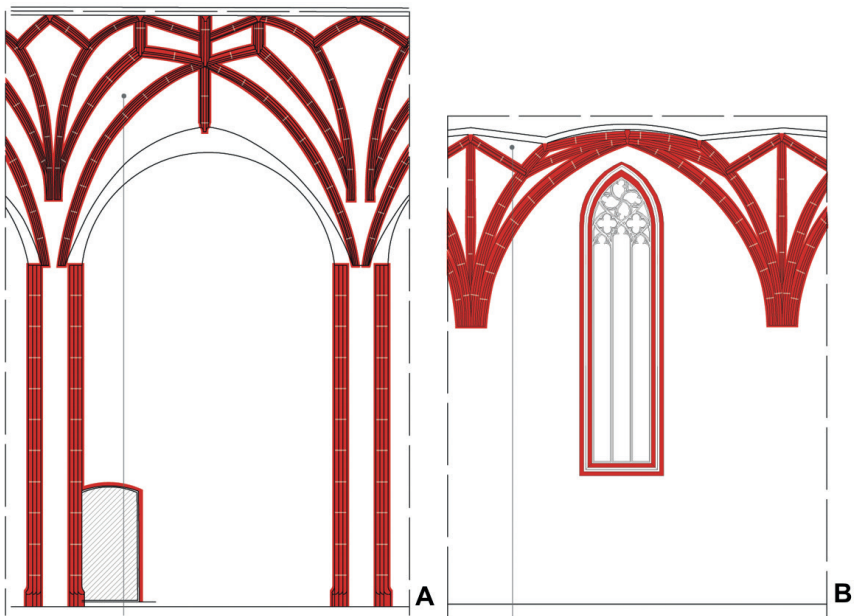


Fig. 15. Brzeg, Friar Minor Church. Interior: a – main nave, b – south nave, colour reconstruction from around 1497 (developed by Cz. Lasota and A. Legendziewicz)

level. Ceramic mouldings of the ribs were found in the ruins of the collapsed tower and the chancel's south wall. They were trapezoidal in shape, had two cavettos and traces of a red paint (Fig. 9).

The chancel had been lit by seven south and east-facing windows. The height of three 13th-century window openings in the south wall had been increased but the original sills and division bars had remained. There were fragments of side sandstone bars made in the east bay window openings. The 13th-century window openings in the north wall had been bricked up but small, monastery-facing windows had been built in their lower parts. These small windows had been covered with segmental arches (Figs. 8, 9).

In the west, the chancel was connected with the nave via an opening in the reading room partition, over which there had been the chancel arch covered with a high pointed vault (recognised in the research in the east part). The vault edges had been made of ceramic cavettos. The vault had flown down to sandstone cornices which had been decorated with cavettos at the bottom and chamfered at the top. Below the cornices, the arcade edges had been undecorated. A fragment in the south part of the gate had survived from the reading room partition. Its height from the gate sill that was found in excavation XXI had been 4.3 m. The altered, 13th-century openings had led to the monastery and to the annexe (Figs. 7, 10).

The church aisle walls and pillars had been built anew from foundations. They had been thinner than the north and west walls that had been the remnants of an older and narrower building. All high windows in the adapted, built-up walls had been bricked up. The pillars in the arcades between the aisle and the nave had been different from those that had remained near the north wall. The new pillars had been built on an elongated octagonal plan, had had pilaster strips from the aisle sides and the edges decorated with cavettos, which pointed to the time of conversion. Their sandstone plinths had had shaped edges. The pillars near the north wall had had no plinths and their edges had been decorated with pairs of cavettos. They had been built at various stages of construction of the new church. Their lower parts had featured dual-colour bonding with dark brick heads, and cut-out cavettos. Their upper parts had featured single-colour bonding and cavettos that had been made in a brickhouse. The original half-round edges with curtain-like endings had been damaged while the cavettos had been cut out. The original edges were found in excavation XIII, near the west pillar (Figs. 7, 8, 13).

The cantilevers hacked off and the ribs discovered under the fillets of the subsequent lamella vault were the remains of the cross and ribbed vault found by the authors. The sandstone cantilevers with the rib segments they had supported had been planted in pilaster strips in the aisle wall. Ceramic ribs had also been fastened to the stone cantilevers of the aisle's external wall. A trace of the nave's cut-off vault could be seen in the east and west walls above the later lamella vault. In the east wall, the trace was found above the edge of the chancel arch.

The light had fallen into the pseudo-basilica through wall openings of various sizes and forms. The largest window, with the reveals splayed inward, had been in the west wall, along the nave axis, above the door opening. There had been four windows in the south wall of the aisle. Their openings had also had splayed reveals and lancet arches. The window situated in the second westernmost bay, above the entrance to the nave had been lower than the others. There had been a circular window near the vault, in the east wall of the aisle. The opening in the west wall had had straight reveals and had been covered with a lancet arch. In the north wall basement of the pseudo-basilica, there had been two small windows, of which the westernmost had had straight reveals, had been narrowed with jambs from the outside, and covered with a segmental arch. It had been built in a breach of the 13th-century wall. The authors think that it lit the space above the organ gallery. The 13th-century window near the east edge of the north wall provided a light from the monastery cloister to the reading room. The recess situated next to it, the sacramentarium, had remained in its position (Figs. 10, 11, 13).

The colour scheme of the church interior as of the 2nd half of the 14th century had consisted of plastered, whitewashed walls, pillars, vault bowls and ceramic edges of the arcades as well as red-painted ribs and white joints. The church pillars had had their edges emphasised, and those between the nave and the aisle also had their plinths emphasised. The red painting was also found on the edges of arcade arches in the wall between the nave and the aisle and of the window openings in the south aisle. In the chancel, a red paint was noticed on the edges of window openings, the east bay and the chancel arcade arch. Double cavetto ribs in the church vaults had been emphasised (Gryczewski 2014, pp. 2–3, Photos 15–17). A new colour scheme had been applied probably in the 15th century. It was found on the pillar stems. The edges of arcades and pilaster strips had been painted black and yellow with ashlar motives and a white joint. The imitation ashlars had been covered with “V”-like geometrical ornaments that contrasted with the background, and were black and yellow, respectively (Gryczewski 2014, pp. 2–3, Photos 24–26).

Two entrances had led to the church from the monastery side, of which the 13th century opening along the nave axis had been the main one. In the south wall, the east reveal of the side entrance had survived. A significant fragment of an arch in the façade was seen by the authors. The nave had been connected with the monastery via an opening in the 13th-century north wall. The opening sill had been lowered and covered with a segmental arch. The western edge of the opening had been in the recess that had been formed in the pillar.

Relics of two gables that had been finished with so called cat steps, which were found in the existing east and west gables, confirmed that the church nave and aisle had been covered with separate roofs. The condition of the east gables that had survived was good enough to get them fully restored. The top façade of the south aisle was enhanced by buttresses and decorated with a cube-like frieze and

above, with a panel running under the crown cornice. When rendered, the panel was painted red with black strips along the edges. The façade was also enlivened by the stone caps on two-step buttresses and by window sills. The east façade of the south aisle started on the chancel annexe roof and was decorated with a vast blind window, in which there was a circular window along the axis and two segmental arches above the window. The three buttresses that dismembered the west façade, the two perpendicular ones and the north-west corners had been added to the walls that had been the remnants of the original church. The two-step perpendicular buttresses, which did not correspond to the nave vault, with the northern one having been a big mismatch, and the vertical line of holes between them, the window and the portal had been the main features of the west façade. Within the aisle, the tops of the façades were finished with a rendered belt. The belt was at the height of the south façade's crown cornice. Having examined the relic of the 13th-century stepped portal in excavation XII, the authors found that the portal had survived till the conversion of the church to an arsenal in 1582. A 13th-century plinth found in excavation III had also survived till that time. It was the plinth of the north façade, which had extended beyond the monastery's west wing. The lancet arches over the jambs of the window in the west wall end had been made of half round and cavetto mouldings (Figs. 7, 10).

The chancel's east bay, which had not been obscured by annexes, was supported by two-step buttresses. The three buttresses that had strengthened the chancel's south wall had gone up from above the annexe roof. The remains of the monastery buildings, which were found in the present north façade of the chancel, consisted of four spans of the cloister vault that had been demolished and of traces of two roofs, a gable roof and a lean-to roof. A 13th-century buttress and the wall that had been built on a pillar-and-arch foundation had been removed owing to the construction of the cloister. Their foundations were excavated in 2005. Belts of the two demolished walls could be seen in the chancel wall. The younger one had formed the upper part of the wall. Out of four identified spans of the cloister vault, which rested in the grooves in the original church's walls, the east span was the largest. The location of a trace of that span, in relation to the demolished wall that had been supported by a pillar and arch foundation, and a contour of the gable roof between the walls and the chancel's existing east buttress led the authors to the conclusion that the span had belonged to the cloister near the monastery's east wing. The cloister wing that had adhered to the church was covered with a lean-to roof. The relic that had survived most fully showed a bundle of three ribs, a yoke and two diagonal ribs. The ribs had been made of trapezoidal, double-cavetto moulds. The small windows in the lower parts of the bricked up lancet window opening in the chancel wall faced the cloister attic (Figs. 4, 11, 13).

Relics of the monastery's west wing, which occurred in the houses that adhered to the church from the north, were found during the 1963 house alterations

(Eysymontt 1963). On plot numbered 8, there were two houses whose cross and ribbed vaults were highlighted in their front longitudinal sections. There was a piece of the wall that adhered to building numbered 9. The north span was supported by a buttress. Another buttress separated the north span from the eastward span. The vault ribs were made of trapezoidal, double-cavetto ceramic mouldings. In the east walls of both of the south bays, there were widely splayed window openings. The boundary, south wall of the house numbered 7 contained a stone bracket whose low relief showed vine leaves and bunches of grapes, mostly near the west edge of the wall.

Phase III – reconstruction after the fire in 1494

Changes made to church architecture at the end of the 15th century and at the beginning of the 16th century were connected with reconstruction after a 1494 fire. Having studied late Gothic vaults in Silesia, Danuta Hanulanka stated that the system of ribs that entwined around the barrel vaults and lunettes over the nave and aisles of the ex-Franciscan building in Brzeg had been modelled after the covering of Saints Peter and Paul's church in Görlitz, which had been completed in 1497. The vault of the Brzeg church must have been completed after the above-quoted date, at the beginning of the 16th century at the latest. The reconstruction after the fire must have been supported by the provincial branch of the Order, to which the adoption of Saxon and Lusatian techniques pointed (Hanulanka 1971, pp. 97–103). The scope of work on the church could prove that the work had been completed at the beginning of the 16th century: the nave and chancel had been lowered, new vaults had been built, the nave had been covered with a high, probably asymmetric roof, the annexe had been demolished, and a tower with a staircase had been built in single stretcher brick bonding in its western part (Figs. 4, 8).

Relics of the high barrel vault and lunettes that had covered the chancel were found in the chancel walls. The vault was half-brick thick and was seated in wall grooves. The demolished annexe walls that had supported the chancel were replaced with buttresses, of which one built in line with its east wall had survived. The construction of the tower involved the bricking up of the west-facing window in the south wall and the cutting out of a door opening beneath the widow. A recess that had been formed in the blocking wall was narrower than the window and its lower part had survived. Out of the entrance to tower rooms, a ceramic threshold and remains of the reveal were found in excavation IX. A 5.1 m-long and 2.4 m-wide crypt had been formed along the axis of the chancel's east bay. The upper walls of the crypt were identified in excavations IX, IXA, XX. They proved that the crypt had been covered with a high barrel vault, plastered, and lit through an east-facing window in the chancel wall (Figs. 8, 9).

The high barrel vaults with lunettes had been decorated with a network of ribs, of which those above the aisles and the nave, which had been higher than the aisles, had been half-brick thick. The aisle vaults had been built at the level of the upper part of the previous cross and ribbed vault by cutting out cantilevers and rib fillets. The vault over the east bay of the nave collapsed in 1997, braking off the accompanied ribs. The tops of pillars by the north wall had been demolished to lower the nave. The pillars had been fastened together with semi-circular arches. A small recess had been formed above the arched window. The nave vault had been about 1.5 m lower than the chancel vault. Out of the church gables, the east gable over the chancel arch had survived to a significant degree (Figs. 3, 8, 10, 14).

After reconstruction in the Gothic time, the church interiors must have been painted twice. The first colour scheme had been designed as red and white. The walls had been covered with white rusticated rectangles with a red joint. The pillar edges and vault ribs had been decorated with imitation ashlar, red in colour and emphasised with white joints. The second colour scheme consisted of whitewashed walls and illusive yellow ashlar with black joints (Fig. 15) (Gryczewski 2014, pp. 2–3, Photos 24–26).

The tower with the outside dimensions of 3.15 × 2.90 m had been 26.50 m high and had been higher than the nave and choir before it collapsed in 1997. It had been covered with a gable roof and its diversified articulation and offset with a ceramic top divided the façade into two segments. In the rendered upper part of the south façade, there had been two lancet blind windows with rows of small windows. In the ceramic façade of the lower segment, there had been a vertical row of stone-framed window openings, which had been near the staircase close to the tower. The tower's rendered east façade had contained a vertical row of window openings, which had been rectangular in the lower segment, and covered with segmental arches in the upper segment. Out of the walls of the tower which had been added to the church and which then had collapsed, the east wall had survived to a height of 2.5 m, and the south one had survived to the height of the church top edge, though deprived of its east corner (Figs. 7, 8).

The tower's south wall, which had adhered to the annexe wall in its lower part, had been built on an erratic and lime mortar foundation, which was identified in excavation I. The tower's first floor had consisted of the annexe's west room, which had been adapted to purpose, connected with the chancel and covered with a cross and ribbed vault. The second floor, which might have been accessible from the first floor, had been covered with a one-brick thick barrel vault along the east-west line. The following two floors of the tower were covered with horizontal separation structures. Out of the original sandstone window frame in the south façade of that segment, remains of chamfered posts and a sill had survived in a second-floor window. The upper part of the tower had been erected concurrently with a new church gable, where both of the late 14th-century gables finished with

cat steps had been used. At the first stage, a new gable wall had been built in the saddle between the previous gable and above. A vertical groove had been hewn out in the wall to mark the line of the external face of the tower's north wall, thereby creating a gap with a significantly protruded, two bricks-high cornice running on the slant. The tower walls and the upper part of the gable had been built at the second stage. The north wall had been built in the chancel wall, and the west wall had been a brick shield that had adhered to the existing gable walls and as high as the above-mentioned cornice. The shell had been supported by the pointed arch that had started at the level of the aisle crown cornice. The west wall above the slanted cornice and the upper part of the church gable had been built at the same time (Figs. 9, 10).

The upper floors of the tower had been accessible via a staircase, which had been built on a 1.7 by 1.3 m plan. The staircase was divided into storeys in the 20th century. It had been lit through south-facing slot windows. It had consisted of the main, lower segment, which had been as high as the edge of the aisle crown cornice. The slot windows in the south wall of the staircase had had chamfered edges and sandstone heads, with three-leaf decoration. Out of the offset upper segment, the part that contained two south-facing blind windows, later bricked up, and surrounding slot windows has survived.

The Franciscans left the reconstructed church and monastery buildings in 1527 (CDS 1870, no. 1336).

Summary

The results of the authors' research work confirmed the thesis that the Friar Minor church in Brzeg, referred to in the 1285 source, must have been built in the 4th quarter of the 13th century. It followed the planning solution that is known from other Franciscan churches in Silesia. As it was the case with Głogów (Kozaczewski 2006, pp. 152–161), Lwówek Śląski (Czerner, Lasota 1988, pp. 79–85), Wrocław (Kozaczewski 1963, pp. 217–224), or Żagań (Legendziewicz *et al.* 2019, pp. 6–7), originally, the church consisted of a rectangular chancel and an adjacent east wing of the monastery. The nave and aisle choir were constructed as the second stage of the project. The applied forms of architectural details are analogous to those employed at other churches of the time, e.g., the church in Grodków (Legendziewicz 2011, pp. 410–415) or Małujowice (*Architektura gotycka* 1995, p. 157). The extension to the church built in the 2nd half of the 14th century was a sign of a changing taste. The high artistic standard of the interior design resembled Wrocław's known brick basilicas of St. Elisabeth or Mary Magdalene (*Architektura gotycka* 1995, pp. 266–267), or St. Nicolaus's parish church in Brzeg (Kutzner 1980, pp. 84–105).

The most recent reconstruction after the 1494 fire and the introduction of a network décor inside the church are an interesting example of the Saxon and Lusatian technique that must have come from Konrad Pflüger, the designer of St. Peter and St. Paul's hall church in Görlitz (Hanulanka 1971, pp. 100–103). Apart from the reconstruction of the mendicant church in Żagań in the period from 1486 to 1495, where net vaults and net and diamond vaults were applied, the construction of the Brzeg church is one of the few examples of a swift adoption of the developments of Saxony's leading builders in Silesia (Hanulanka 1971, pp. 140–141)³.

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³ The net vaults in Albrecht's castle in Meissen were built by Arnold of Westphalia between 1471 and 1481 (Riestra 1999, p. 228).

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