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**Agnieszka Szóstek, Zygmunt Jacek  
Ditrych, Maciej Ditrych, Maria  
Lauks, Mariusz Lauks, *Browar  
F. Braulińskiego w Piotrkowie  
(F. Brauliński’s Brewery in  
Piotrków)*, “My Piotrkowanie,”  
Piotrków Trybunalski 2023, pp. 112**

Studies on the history of the Polish brewing craft have recently generated considerable interest, with publications encompassing both scientific monographs and works of popular science. Not only have they expanded the state of the art on topics such as beer production technology and various matters pertaining to the functioning of beer-making businesses in the pre-industrial and industrial period but they also have familiarised the readers with the history of important brewing centres, the breweries which operated in those centres, as well as the beer styles they produced.

Piotrków Trybunalski, the second largest city in the Łódź Province, where beer has been made since the Middle Ages, has, too, become the subject of several studies. However, published research has so far focused on the Old Polish period, leaving on the sidelines the industrial age of the history of the city’s beer-making business.<sup>1</sup> This approach may seem somewhat striking, considering that, in comparison to the Old Polish period, a much greater wealth of sources are available on the 19<sup>th</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Nevertheless, the only studies discussing that period include articles by Marcin Jakub Szymański and Aleksy Piasta, in a 2012 post-conference publication on the history of brewing in Piotrków.<sup>2</sup> Szymański’s book

<sup>1</sup> Majewski M.Ł. 2022; Majewski M.Ł. 2019; Kruz T. 2012; Kruz T. 2008; Kruz T. 2005; Kendra P. 2012.

<sup>2</sup> Szymański M.J. 2012, pp. 65-80; Szymański M.J. 2012b, pp. 91-96; Piasta A. 2012, pp. 81-90.

on breweries in Łódź and the Łódź Province also contains a brief history of the breweries which belonged to the Span family and Franciszek Brauliński.<sup>3</sup>

Consequently, a study of the history of the largest Piotrków brewery, the most famous owner of which was Franciszek Brauliński, has been a key research postulate for years. This endeavour was undertaken by a team of authors who, thanks to the co-funding obtained by the “My Piotrkowianie” society from the Łódź Province Citizens’ Budget, published the album covered in the present review.

From the very first encounter, the publication makes a distinctly positive impact. The artwork and layout of the album, designed by Maria and Mariusz Lauks, is definitely worthy of praise. Photographs were digitally processed in high-quality and neatly arranged on several pages. The use of Brauliński’s brewery’s pre-war header, creating an impression that the book was printed on it, was a brilliant idea.

The work consists of nine chapters and a short foreword. Regrettably, the absence of a table of contents makes the publication difficult to navigate, a shortcoming also evident in the lack of clear chapter titles. For example, the second chapter is titled: “The History of the Span Family and Brauliński’s Brewery Has Intrigued Me for Years,” the fourth one: “It’s Still Summer Outside the Window,” and the fifth: “Today It’s Much Colder and the Grey Clouds Are Gloomy with Rain.” This may add some poetic touch to the content but makes it impossible to determine the subject or the period in the history of the brewery discussed in the chapter. Also, the authors did not provide a bibliography, which may have been due to the very scant use of literature and sources. Still, the book could benefit from even a short bibliographic note. The authors used barely any sources, with the exception of three press articles of the period and a report from the private collection of one of the authors. No query has been made in the resources of the National Archive in Piotrków Trybunalski, the National Archive in Łódź or the New Records Archive in Warsaw, which contains the most important sources on the history of the brewery described in the book. Interestingly, although the content of the work implies that the authors are familiar with certain archival sources or editions, relevant references are absent. This is best exemplified by a mention of a horse mill constructed in the years of the Swedish Deluge in the courtyard of a Dominican monastery. The authors must have retrieved this information either directly from the source, i.e. the report on the inspection of the Piotrków Starosty in 1661, or from the literature of the subject. Nevertheless, the footnotes contain no reference to either any source or publication.

Literature is also used very sparingly, with results published in the aforementioned articles by Szymański and Piasta being the main sources of information for

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<sup>3</sup> Szymański M.J. 2011, pp. 98-99.

the authors. This could be to some extent justified by the scarcity of studies on the brewing industry in 19<sup>th</sup>- and 20<sup>th</sup>-century Piotrków. Nonetheless, being acquainted with literature on other breweries or general studies would greatly help explanations of certain phenomena in beer-making and its legal status.

The absence of a source query or adequate literature review have contributed to several inaccuracies. Without doubt, the beginnings of Brauliński's brewery should not be traced back to 1569 or linked in any way to the Dominican brewery, which allegedly existed as early as the 14<sup>th</sup> century, as the reference to the beer plant's very early origins is merely a marketing ploy and a key component of brand development. In this respect, Brauliński's brewery did not differ from not only its historical but also modern counterparts. Dates on bottle labels rarely correspond to the actual establishment of the company. For this reason, the connection implied between Brauliński's brewery with the 14<sup>th</sup> century Dominican brewery is a quite implausible. First, at that time there were no Dominicans in Piotrków, as they did not settle in the city until the 15<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>4</sup> Also, in the first decades of their presence, they did not run their own brewery, since it became their property as late as 1514.<sup>5</sup> Until then, the monks obtained beer from donations. The authors link Brauliński's brewery to the Dominican one, as the brewery purchased by the founders of the business in 1866 initially belonged to the monastery. However, the brewery was not housed in the building acquired in 1514; it had been built in a completely different place, and the brewery purchased by the Span family was constructed as late as the 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>6</sup>

The title supplied by the authors is misleading, since it implies that the monograph is a history of the brewing establishment at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In fact, in the book we do not learn about the organisation of production, legal conditions of the company's operation, its development or challenges, production volume growth and decline factors over the years or the role it had in the economy of the city of Piotrków and the Piotrków Governorate. The brewery itself is presented as an almost autonomous entity abstracted out of changing economic and legal conditions over the decades. The historical context is the only aspect that the authors tried to pay attention to, albeit it lacks in-depth insight on the effect of political and systemic changes on the functioning of the company.

As the authors themselves point out, the book should be seen as a tale of a family, with the brewery and its history, along with changing times, only providing

<sup>4</sup> Kłoczowski J. 1975, pp. 19-40.

<sup>5</sup> Majewski M.Ł. 2022, p. 185.

<sup>6</sup> The location of the brewery is not exactly known. What we do know is that it was situated within the city walls, on what then was Dominikańska street, presumably on its southern side.

the backdrop. The fact that the story focuses on the family is underscored by the narration employed by the authors, since the publication is actually an interview by Agnieszka Szostek with members of the Ditrych family (mainly with Zygmunt Ditrych), i.e. the descendants of the brewery's owners. The conversations are highly valuable in that they convey stories and anecdotes told only in the family circle. At times, they are so interesting that we cannot help but regret that Franciszek Brauliński did not leave any journal or a personal diary. Representatives of the Ditrych family also rectify certain genealogical discrepancies which appear in some publications.

The book is, first and foremost, a remarkable illustration of how the family sees its own past and the way it affects their identity. The publication's undeniable value lies in numerous photographs from family collections, showing day-to-day work at the brewery. Thanks to a large number of archival photographs, coupled with the narration, the publication can be likened to a scenario for a documentary. This concept has a substantial potential and, considering that the album was supported by public co-funding, one wishes that the authors had created a documentary film rather than a book. Undoubtedly, the spoken word, accompanied by contemporary pictures of the brewery and archival photographs, as well as a thoroughly prepared historical commentary could definitely tell the history of the brewery better than the publication covered in the present review. The story of the family should also have become the basis for a novel or a graphic novel in the vein of *Les Maîtres de l'orge* by Jean Van Hamme.

Overall, the book *Browar F. Braulińskiego w Piotrkowie* only partly closes the gap in the historiography of Piotrków and the region. Although the history of the company is yet to be fully explored by a researcher, the album merits reading due to numerous previously unpublished photographs, and stories and anecdotes told by Franciszek Brauliński's descendants. Both the photographs and family stories are valuable sources which will certainly be used in future studies on the history of Piotrków's brewing industry in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century.

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