
Joachim Śliwa
Kraków

THE TOMB PYRAMID
OF THE VON EBEN UND BRUNNEN FAMILY
IN ROŻNÓW/ROSEN
NEAR KLUCZBORK/KREUZBURG

Much attention has been recently paid to modern Egyptianizing buildings referring in shape to a classic pyramid¹. Some buildings of this type from Poland were also subject to initial studies². It is however essential to undertake proper conservation works to prevent their ultimate ruin. Although they are unique buildings on the European scale - two of which were created as early as the 17th century (Beresteczko and Krynica) - they are threatened with destruction.

Among early building of this type is also the tomb-pyramid in Rożnów (Ober-Rosen) near Kluczbork (Kreuzburg), raised for the von Eben und Brunnen family even at the turn of the 18th century (Fig. 1-3). The family, originating from Tirol³, was later traceable in Schwaben, where it's representatives purchased the Brunnen estate near Memmlingen. During the reign of emperor Maximilian II (1564 - 1576) representatives of the family ventured to Bohemia

¹ Cfr. C.Tietze (ed.), *Die Pyramide. Geschichte - Entdeckung - Faszination*, Weimar - Berlin 1999 (new, updated edition: Weimar - Berlin 2005); J.-M.Humbert, *The Egyptianizing Pyramid from the 18th to the 20th Century*, in: J.-M.Humbert, C.Price (eds.), *Imhotep Today: Egyptianizing Architecture* [Encounters with Ancient Egypt], London 2003, p. 25-39.

² J.Śliwa, *Two Pyramids in the 17th Century in Poland: Krynica and Beresteczko*, SAAC 10, 2007, p. 155-163; idem, *Egipskie piramidy w polskim krajobrazie. Grobowiec rodziny Kulczyckich w Międzybrodziu koło Sanoka*, Rocznik Biblioteki Naukowej PAU i PAN w Krakowie, RLII (2007), p. 499-503; B.Piątek, „Piramida z Luschnitz” czyli egiptomania jako epizod w XIX-wiecznej historii wschodniopruskiej rodziny von Fahrenheid, Światowit II (XLIII), fasc.A, Warszawa 2000, p. 166-171, pl. 34-41.

³ From Ebenstein (Eben), ital. Pietra Piana, near Trient/Trento.



Fig. 1. Rożnów/Ober-Rosen, community Wolczyn/Konstatt. Tomb-pyramid of the von Eben und Brunnen family, c. 1780. Phot. J.Śliwa, May 2007

and Silesia, where they started numerous offshoots of the family line⁴. During the 17th and 18th centuries members of the family were famous as field commanders and administrators as well as members of the Prussian military⁵.

In the second half of the 18th century Rosenow/Rosen/Rożnów was a part of numerous von Eben und Brunnen estates in Silesia⁶. At the time they belonged to Hans Adolf von Eben und Brunnen⁷, and later to his son, a general with years of military career in the Prussian army, Karl Adolf August Freiherr von Eben und Brunnen (1734-1800)⁸. The idea of building a family tomb was

⁴ Much information regarding the von Eben und Brunnen family, beginning from the 13th century, may be found in J.H.Zedler, *Grosses vollstaendiges Universal Lexicon*, Bd. 8, Halle - Leipzig 1734, col. 34-35.

⁵ A famous person in the history of German literature was Carl Siegmund von Eben und Brunnen (born 1698), who during his studies in Jena took care of the ill and poor poet J.C.Guenther and remained with him until his last moments. He also dedicated poet's goodbye to Guenther, "Auf die Poesie eines vorehmen Freundes". Cfr. W.Kraemer, *Das Leben des schlesischen Dichters Johann Christian Guenther 1695-1723*, Stuttgart 1980, p. 352-354.

⁶ For location of the village and description of sights (mainly a wooden St. Trinitatis church built in 1788), see H.Lutsch, *Verzeichnis der Kunstdenkmaeler der Provinz Schlesien. IV. Die Kunstdenkmaeler des Reg.-Bezirks Oppeln*, Breslau 1814, p. 17, and *Dehio-Handbuch der Kunstdenkmaeler in Polen. Schlesien*, Berlin 2005, p. 807-808 (it also mentions a Neo-gothic castle from the 3rd quarter of the 19th century, attributed to Karl Johann Luedecke, along with farm buildings, as well as the tomb pyramid of Karl Adolf August von Eben und Brunnen).

⁷ Born on the 8th of July, 1708, died on the 16th of May, 1789, in Ober-Rosen, a retired captain of the imperial grenadiers.

⁸ His complete biography with family relations was given by K.von Priesdorff, *Soldatisches*



Fig. 2. Rożnów/Ober-Rosen, community Wolczyn/Konstatt. Sarcophagus over the entrance to the tomb-pyramid. Phot. J.Śliwa, May 2007

undertaken by him, although it had probably been an intention of the family for some time.

The family tomb, raised near the protestant church of St. Trinitatis, on the border of the parish cemetery⁹, had a characteristic pyramid shape (Fig.1). It is a brick structure measuring 9m, with medium-sized stone blocks originally incorporated in the brickwork. The top of the pyramid does not end in acute angles, but is slightly bevelled. On the front the classic pyramid construction is broken by a rectangular portico leading to an underground crypt, crowned with a cornice, which is continued as a brick ledge encircling the remaining walls of the pyramid.

The entrance portico is topped with a symbolic sarcophagus made of a massive block of limestone (Fig.2). Two coats of arms of the founders were carved into its frontal surface, now hardly readable. A few steps lead to a vast underground crypt with a groin ribbed vault (Fig.3). Lighting and air flow was

Fuehrertum, Bd.2, Hamburg 1937, p. 229-230 (No. 732). His wife was Sophie Louise von Moehring, a daughter of general Christian von Moehring (1704-1773), whom he married in 1768. Both spouses died in 1800 in the Wallwitz/Wałowice, Kreis Neusalz/Nowa Sól estate. We may assume that except from Ober-Rosen and Wallwitz, Eisdorf/Idzikowice (Kreis Namslau/Namysłów) were also a part of the family estate, formerly belonging to the general's mother and the place of his birth.

⁹ The former protestant church is currently used by the catholic inhabitants of Rożnów. The protestant cemetery has been levelled many years ago (only the tomb pyramid remains); the cemetery is currently located in a different part of the village.



Fig. 3. Rożnów/Ober-Rosen, community Wolczyn/Konstatt. Inside of the crypt.
Phot. J.Śliwa, may 2007

provided by four round windows (two per opposite pyramid walls), located low above ground level (Fig.1). The windows are protected from above by a semicircular brick cornice.

The building is preserved quite well, yet it requires protection and constant care¹⁰. Access to the crypt is currently restricted by old iron door blocking the entrance¹¹. As indicated by information found in parish books, about 30 members of the family and their relations have been buried in the crypt until 1932¹². Unfortunately, the crypt was disturbed in 1945, after World War II had ended, with the bodies desecrated and shifted, whereas in 2005 it was “put in order”. As a result most of the human remains and rotten coffins have been removed, with only the well-preserved coffins remaining in the crypt (mostly their covers [Fig.3]). The inside of the crypt is dry, well ventilated and with no water leaking inside; it may be assumed that a particular micro-climate formed there.

¹⁰ Construction works are necessary to remove cracks and fractures between bricks. It is also crucial to constantly remove vegetation splitting the brick structure.

¹¹ Unfortunately, there is no grating in the round crypt windows (one has already been illicitly expanded) to prevent undesirable entries.

¹² It is currently unknown which of the family members or relations was the first to be buried in the crypt. It is possible that the earliest body belonged to the father-in-law of general Karl Adolf August von Eben und Brunnen, general Christian von Moehring, deceased in Ober-Rosen in 1773 (see his biographic note: K.von Priesdorff, *Soldatisches Fuehrertum*, Bd.2, Hamburg 1937, p. 35-36 [no.560]).

The authorship of the Rożnów tomb pyramid is a very interesting and not entirely explained problem. A few times before the project had been connected with the name of Carl Gotthard Langhans (1732-1808), an outstanding architect who worked in Silesia during the years 1775-1787 as “Kriegs- und Oberbau-rath an der Breslauer und Glogauer Domaenenkammer”¹³. Beginning from 1788, Langhans was in Berlin, nominated by king Frederick William II as a director of the Royal Office of buildings (“Hofbauamt”). Langhans’ works represent a transition from Rococo to Neo-classicism in German architecture. Among his most famous buildings is the Berlin Brandenburg Gate (1788-1791). He was also a creator of a number of buildings in Potsdam, among them park structures in New Garden with Egyptianizing features.



Fig. 4. Design of a pyramid-shaped mausoleum: C.G.Langhans, *Practische Beitræge...*, Blatt 1 (1784)

¹³ Regarding his works see also: W.Th.Hinrichs, *Carl Gotthard Langhans. Ein schlesischer Baumeister 1733-1808* [Studien zur deutschen Kunstgeschichte, 116. Heft], Strassburg 1909; H.Schmitz, *Berliner Baumeister vom Ausgang des achtzehnten Jahrhunderts* [Die Bauwerke und Kunstdenkmäler von Berlin, Beiheft 2], Berlin 1925, p. 32-34; P. Brieger, *Carl Gotthard Langhans*, in: *Schlesische Lebensbilder*, Bd.2, Breslau 1926, p. 94-98; A. Rottermund, *Carl Gotthard Langhans*, in: J.Turner (ed.), *The Dictionary of Art*, Vol.18, 1996, p. 741. Lately, with relation to the 200th anniversary of Langhans’ death, the Museum of Weaving of Silesia Inferior in Kamienna Góra/Landeshut (his home town) prepared an interesting exhibition on his projects built in Silesia and Greater Poland. The exhibition was presented in Kamienna Góra (2007) and later in Wrocław and Syców in 2008. Between the 16th and 30th of may, 2008, a part of the exhibition was presented in Berufsbildende Schule in Wolfenbuettel, that has for years been named after Langhans. An excellent tri-lingual catalogue was published on the occasion: J.K.Kos, *Carl Gotthard Langhans 1732-1808. Ein Architekt aus Landeshut*, Kamienna Góra/Landeshut 2007. In a list of works attributed to Langhans (as above, p.31, No.2) J.K.Kos believes that „it seems probable that the architect could have been the author of the project of the pyramid in Rożnów” („erscheint es recht wahrscheinlich, dass der Architekt die in Rosen errichteten Pyramide entworfen hat”).



Fig. 5. Carl-Gotthard-Langhans-Schule, Wolfenbuettel. Detail of exposition devoted to Langhans on the 200th anniversary of his death, 16-30 may 2008. Phot. J.Śliwa.

During his activity in Silesia in 1777-1779 Langhans was the architect and builder of a poorhouse (“Landarmen- und Arbeitshaus”) in Kluczbork/Kreuzburg commissioned by Frederick the Great¹⁴. This period is when a possible meeting may have taken place between Karl Adolf August von Eben und Brunnen and the architect (Ober-Rosen is situated 15 km to the north-west from Kreuzburg), who probably did not decline to take part in designing the monumental family mausoleum. Because the design of the mausoleum or other archival documents were not preserved, we may not connect Langhans to this project for certain. There are a few premises, however, to confirm this assumption.

Except the fact that Langhans was indeed in Kluczbork at that time, the strongest argument is a template from 1784, where Langhans published a mausoleum design (Fig.4) with characteristics similar to the Różnow funerary structure¹⁵. The mausoleum designed by Langhans is shaped as a slender pyramid with a bevelled top, it is however a ground structure (without a crypt) meant for a single body to be buried in a sarcophagus located inside the building on the section of two routes running through. Each of the pyramid walls is

¹⁴ Cf. W.Th.Hinrichs, *C.G.Langhans...*, p. 36-37 and pl.IX and J.K.Kos, *C.G.Langhans. Ein Architekt...*, p. 28 (No.14), fig.19. Construction works officially ended on the 25th of March, 1779.

¹⁵ C.G.Langhans, *Practische Beitræge fuer den Geschmack in der Baukunst. I.Theil*, Breslau 1784, Blatt 1-4. It was engraved by Carl Leyser (Leisser), who also made dimensional models of some of Langhans' projects. See also: W.Th.Hinrichs, *C.G.Langhans...*, p. 37-38 and pl.XI.

decorated with a classical portico with a triglyph frieze and a triangular pediment. A symbolic sarcophagus crowned by an urn is located on the top of each pediment (Fig.4).

The proportions of the pyramid from Różnow and its bevelled top are strikingly convergent. Since an underground crypt was meant to contain the burials here, only one portico leads into the pyramid. It lacks a tympanum, however it is crowned, just like in the 1784 project, by a symbolic sarcophagus very characteristic in shape (Fig.2)¹⁶

The characteristic shape of the sarcophagi from Langhans' designs has been pointed out before. W.Th. Hinrichs (1909) clearly states that around 1780 Langhans' works are visibly stylistically simplified, with baroque and rococo influences gradually disappearing. He also adds: «Foremost from this moment on the sarcophagus obtains a shape which Langhans will not abandon: a block widening towards the top, which according to the words of [J.G.] Schadow is "shaped as the coffins of our carpenters"»¹⁷. The massive block-sarcophagus crowning the portico leading inside the Rožnów pyramid has that shape exactly (Fig.2), which may be a sort of Langhans' hallmark¹⁸.

It is also notable that Langhans did not avoid Egyptianizing elements in other works, since the tomb designed in 1784 is not the sole such element in his career. Among the most prominent examples is the New Garden complex in Potsdam, where Langhans designed visible Egyptianizing elements during the last decade of the XVIII century¹⁹. It contains of a pyramid-shaped ice-house built in 1791-1792²⁰, an obelisk built in 1793-1794 located to the south of the

¹⁶ Perhaps it was once also topped with a stone urn, but as a less stable element it was not preserved.

¹⁷ W.Th.Hinrichs, *C.G.Langhans...*, p.37.

¹⁸ The sarcophagus inside the pyramid on the 1784 design has the same shape (additionally a lying female figure was depicted on the cover). Langhans designed a number of tombstones (for F.W.Brecher in St. Elisabeth's Church in Wrocław, 1778-1781; for F.L.Gessler in St. Nicolai's Church in Brzeg, 1789-1790; the tombstone of general von Tauentzien in Wrocław, 1791) where he used the same sarcophagus shape. Cf. J.K.Kos, *C.G.Langhans. Ein Architekt...*, p.28 (no. 16) and p. 30 (nos. 28 and 29).

¹⁹ Cf. K.Parlasca, *Die Pyramide und andere aegyptisierende Elemente im Neuen Garten zu Potsdam*, Pueckler-Pyramiden-Panorama 4, 1999, p. 75-86; C.Tietze, *Pyramiden in Brandenburg*, in: P.János (ed.), *Structure and Significance. Thoughts on Ancient Egyptian Architecture*, Wien 2005, p. 515.

²⁰ K.Parlasca (*Die Pyramide...*, p.75-79) stated, that it was patterned after the pyramid from Désert de Retz (also serving as an ice-house), based on a sketch by Georges Louis de Rouge, 1785. J.-M.Humbert (*The Egyptianizing Pyramid...*, p.28) clearly declares that it was „built in 1791-1792 according to Carl Gotthard Langhans' plans”, while C.Tietze (*Die Pyramide...*, p.123) writes: „Der Entwurf stammt von 1791 und wurde durch Carl Gotthard Langhans

Marble Palace²¹, as well as some elements of decoration of the Orangery (a sphinx²² and two statues of Antinous as Osiris²³). Furthermore we need to mention Egyptianizing canopic jars from the Potsdam park²⁴ and a statue of Dea Natura, once identified with Isis, and in fact a copy of Artemis Ephesia²⁵.

Except from the ice-house pyramid in Potsdam and possibly the pyramid in Rożnow, two other pyramids are attributed to Langhans: in Machern near Leipzig²⁶ and a currently non-existent pyramid in Wrocław in the Szczytnicki Park („Scheitniger Park”), raised in the last years of the 18th century²⁷.

Summing up, we may quite clearly state that a connection between C.G.Langhans and the design of the tomb-pyramid in Rożnów/Ober-Rosen, built around 1780, could be confirmed by both his longer stay in the nearby Kluczbork in 1777-1779 and the characteristic features of the mausoleum design published in 1784. It is also notable that Langhans used significant Egyptianizing elements in his other designs mentioned above. The tomb-pyramid from Rożnów/Ober-Rosen would be one of the earliest examples of Egyptianizing buildings among the works of Carl Gotthard Langhans and a particularly important example of modern sepulchral art.

Joachim Śliwa
j.sliwa@uj.edu.pl

(1732-1808) und Andreas Ludwig Krueger (1743-1805) gestaltet“.

²¹ Cf. K.Parlasca, *Die Pyramide...*, p. 80 and note 19. The surface is decorated with marble medallions depicting the four seasons by the brothers Johann Christoph (1748-1799) and Michael Christoph (1754-1802) Wohler.

²² Cf. K.Parlasca, *Die Pyramide...*, p. 82. The sphinx was created by Michael Christoph, the younger of the Wohler brothers (see previous footnote).

²³ Figures of Antinous created by J.G.Schadow (1764-1850), patterned on a statue from the Vatican collection. Cf. K.Parlasca, *Die Pyramide...*, p. 82 and note 35 with further literature.

²⁴ Cf. K.Parlasca, *Die Pyramide...*, p. 80-81.

²⁵ Cf. K.Parlasca, *Die Pyramide...*, p. 80 and E.Staehelin, *Alma Mater Isis*, [in:] *Aegypten-Bilder* (OBO 150), Freiburg-Goettingen 1997, p. 103-141, pl.33.1.

²⁶ Built for Earl von Lindenau in 1792, with identical features as in the 1784 design. Cf. K.Parlasca, *Die Pyramide...*, p. 124.

²⁷ Built in a park complex for Fuerst Friedrich Ludwig von Hohenlohe-Ingelfingen (1745-1848), destroyed during World War II. Pavilions from the Szczytnicki Park in Wrocław and in the palace park in Sławięcice were attributed to Langhans by J.K.Kos, *C.G.Langhans, Ein Architekt...*, p.31 (No.4).