

The antecedents of the New University Aula: “Collegium Ducale” and “Unteres Jesuiterplatzl”

The building, which has accommodated the Austrian Academy of Sciences since 1857, was built as the “New Aula” of the University of Vienna under the Empress Maria Theresa. The choice of the building site was deliberate, since it was located in the quarter that had been home to the university since the late 14th century. It is not exactly known what buildings had initially been available to the University of Vienna when it was founded in 1365. In 1384 Duke Albrecht III founded the “Collegium Ducale”, which was accommodated in a group of buildings between the “Prediger” (“Preachers”), the Dominican Monastery, and what was then Filzerstrasse (an extension of what is today Riemergasse), approximately in the place of today’s eastern wing of the Jesuit College at Postgasse 5–9 (Fig. 1).

In the 15th century the complex was extended to the south and west, in the area of the junction of Filzerstrasse with Vordere Bäckerstrasse (now Bäckerstrasse), Hintere Bäckerstrasse (now Sonnenfelsgasse) and the short Schulgasse lane, by the addition of the Faculty of Arts building called “Structura nova” or “Neue Schul” and the “Libreye” (library). These central buildings of the university were



J. HOEFNAGEL,
BIRD'S EYE VIEW
OF VIENNA, 1609
(DETAIL:
UNIVERSITY
QUARTER)
(FIG. 1)

surrounded by a number of detached buildings, the so-called “bursae” (student lodgings) such as the Sprenger, Lamm and Bruck bursae, the open and irregular structure of which remained typical of the university quarter well into the 17th century. Bonifaz Wolmuet’s Map of Vienna of 1547 (Fig. 2) designates the buildings as “Der universitet Collegium”, “Aula universitatis” and “Librey”.

Major changes were made in 1622 when the Emperor Ferdinand II entrusted the completely derelict Faculty of Arts and the Faculty of Theology to the Jesuits, who had been called to Vienna by his grandfather, King Ferdinand I, in the course of the Counter-Reformation. This meant that the Jesuits were responsible for 95 per cent of the Viennese students. Accordingly, room had to be made in the densely built-up



B. WOLMUET, MAP OF VIENNA, 1547 (DETAIL UNIVERSITY QUARTER) (FIG. 2)



W. A. STEINHAUSEN, MAP OF VIENNA, 1710 (DETAIL UNIVERSITY QUARTER) (FIG. 3)



AERIAL PHOTOGRAPH OF UNIVERSITY QUARTER (FIG. 4)

university quarter for a Jesuit college. Vienna was the centre of the vast Austrian province of the Order, which extended from Passau to Hermannstadt (now Sibiu) and from Vienna to Belgrade. A radical solution with far-reaching consequences in terms of town planning was necessary to demonstrate the predominant position of the Jesuits and to meet the triple space requirements for a church, school and lodgings, as evidenced by a comparison of Wohlmuet's Map of Vienna and the one of Werner Arnold Steinhausen from the year 1710 (Fig. 3).

The part of Riemergasse immediately after its intersection with Wollzeile was sacrificed so that the street would abut with the free-standing school wing today called the "Old Aula" (to distinguish it from Maria Theresa's "New Aula"). The

building, with its still extant huge Jesuit theatre, was connected with the massive main buildings grouped around a central courtyard by raised structures bridging the extension of Bäckerstrasse. In order to make room for the northward extension of the three-winged main building and the dominant church next to it, the neighbouring area had first to be razed. The necessary space was obtained by clearing Schulstrasse, Filzerstrasse and part of Hintere Bäckerstrasse and dismantling old structures, in particular the "Collegium Ducale" and other university buildings such as the library and the Lamm bursa (Fig. 4).

Room for a church square was made by razing the two plots in front. This square, called "Unteres Jesuiterplatzl", was to enhance the architectural effect of the church façade and at the same time

provide the university quarter with a new centre giving access to both the church and the university, the “Collegium Academicum Viennense”. Salomon Kleiner’s copper engraving of 1724 (Fig. 5) illustrates this new concept. The Early Baroque church façade with its sculptures and monumental inscription proclaims the programmatic message of the Counter-Reformation. Its urbanistic function as the central element of the ensemble is accentuated by the noble reticence of the lateral façades of the

square: on the right-hand, eastern flank the College, on the left, western side a two-storeyed building still known as “Schwaigerburse” in the 16th century. Since the building adjoining its eastern flank was razed in 1624 when the square was created, the façade of the “Schwaigerburse” was by and large designed on the model of the College on the opposite side. According to Salomon Kleiner’s engraving of 1724 it belonged at that time to Count Collalto.

S. KLEINER,
THE FORMER
UNIVERSITY
SQUARE, 1724
(FIG. 5)

