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**„PETROARCHITECTURE” – PAST AND RECENT USAGE OF  
BUILDING STONE IN THE UNIVERSITY OF WROCLAW  
ARCHITECTONIC ASSEMBLAGE**

INTRODUCTION

The Department of Mineralogy and Petrology, Institute of Geological Sciences, University of Wrocław, has a long tradition of interdisciplinary research and collaboration with scientists of such disciplines as archeology, history of art and architecture. This field of activities covers not only strictly scientific studies, often carried in co-operation with specialists from various institutions in Poland and other countries, but also expert opinions and technical reports for building renovation and conservation purposes. Recently, our research team have studied the usage of building stones during the 300 year history of Wrocław University.

THE HISTORY OF *COLLEGIUM MAXIMUM*

The very beginning of the university-type school in Wrocław is a matter of controversy but the 21 November 1702 is officially considered as the date of foundation of the University (Leopoldina Academy) when “*Aurea Bulla Foundationis Universitatis Leopoldinae Wratislaviensis*” was issued by Emperor Leopold I Habsburg. Also, the authorship of the architectonic project of the building assemblage is disputable and the following names are on the list of potentially involved masters: Johann Lucas von Hildebrandt, Christopher Tausch, Christopher Hackner, Domenico Martinelli and J.B. Fischer von Erlach. The construction works were technically supervised by J. Blasius Peintner and, after his death in 1732, by Joseph Frisch (Grodzicki *et al.* 2002, Harasimowicz 2000).

The main part of *Collegium Maximum*, the so called “north wing”, was constructed in 1728–1738. In the meantime, the “east wing” (1734) and the attached short “south wing” (1736) were built, the latter connected by the “gate building” (1741) with the considerably earlier (late 17<sup>th</sup> century) Holy Name of Jesus Church (the University Church).

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## EXTERIOR ARCHITECTURE

The Main Building of the University, located along the south bank of the Odra river, comprises the regular, aligned-rectangular “north wing”, connected with the obliquely oriented architectonic body of the University Church. The regular form of the Main Building is relieved with the Mathematics Tower, protruding from its western part, and by the Emperor Gate, in the line of the University Bridge. Decorative pilasters are found only to divide the tower and the gate sectors, and both the endings of the Main Building. A strong visual architectonic accent of the façade are decorative windowframes made of the Upper Cretaceous sandstones.

## INTERIOR ARCHITECTURE

Tourist visiting of *Collegium Maximum* usually starts at the main western entrance, through the vestibule and architectonically very interesting staircase, to the main representative University halls: the Concert Hall (*Oratorium Marianum*) and *Aula Leopoldina*, up to the top of the Mathematics Tower. On the way, one can see great varieties of stone that was used to cover the floor and fragments of walls, doorframes and other decorative motives. Recently, parts of the building interiors were renovated and many original stony elements replaced by new materials (Kryza *et al.* 2002).

Stone materials used in the University Building before 1945

### (a) Sandstones

The most common stones used both inside and outside the University Main Building are cream-coloured, graish sandstones of the Upper Cretaceous age. They have been a very popular natural building material in Silesia, intensely exploited in the North-Sudetic Basin (Bolesławiec, Lwówek Śląski and Złotoryja), and in the western and southern vicinities of Kłodzko (Radków, Szczytna Śląska). We can easily see these sandstones in the windowframes, in beautiful carvings of the foots and tops of pilasters, in cornices and covering plates of the socle. The same type of sandstone was used for the enormously rich main portal of *Collegium Maximum*, for the nicely decorated columns supporting the balcony, the balustrade, and for the four sculptures along the balcony.

### (b) Granites and syenites

Beside the sandstones, granites are also found, although not so commonly, in the exterior architectonic details in the University. This rock was used to make the well known Romanesque column which is exposed today in the east-end façade of the Main Building, as well as the “stony buffers” (gate stones) to protect the portal frames. The stony stairs in the Mathematics Tower and in the “south wing” are also made of granite. The lower part of the stairs, up to 1/2 of the first floor, has steps of gray granite, with characteristic reddish shade, and containing small grains of

garnet. These features suggest that the stone represents the two-mica granite from the old quarry of “Blücher” near Sobótka. The upper part of the main stairs is made of a different type of rock – gray, medium-grained Strzegom granite. The steps of the staircase to the balcony of *Aula Leopoldina* are built of dark-gray porphyritic Kośmin syenite.

(c) Limestones, marbles and slates

The greatest variation of stone materials is found in the floor coverings. Originally, in the main rooms and corridors, they had checkers pattern composed of grayish-green and reddish-brown Ordovician limestone from the isle of Öland in the Baltic Sea. The best preserved fragments of such floor covering we can see in *Aula Leopoldina*. In several other rooms, the damaged original Öland limestone plates were replaced by checkers of grayish Sławniowice marble combined with black slate.

Stone materials used after 1945

The floor coverings largely damaged at the end of the 2nd world war (in 1945) were replaced with various cheap and easily available materials, e.g. concrete or “lastrico”. More recently, many varieties of natural substitutes were used in successive renovation works and replacement of the floors, such as dark marbles of Lipova type (from the Jeseník Mts in Moravia) and “Biała Marianna” marble from Stronie Śląskie (ground floor of the “east wing”). In other places, e.g. in the corridor at the *Oratorium Marianum*, one can see a checkers pattern of the Sławniowice marble with blackish crystalline limestone “Nero Marquina” from Spain. The floor of the 5th floor of the Mathematics Tower is covered with beige coloured fossil-rich Morawica limestones from the Kielce region. In the main vestibule (ground floor of the tower), at the cloakroom, the floor is made of reddish-brown granite “Balmoral” of Finland, combined with light-coloured granite-gneiss “White Haloyeb” from Egypt. Still different composition is found on the 4th floor of the tower: black microgabbro combined with the Sławniowice marble. The top terrace of the tower is covered, in turn, by plates of the Strzegom granite (Kryza *et al.* 2002). In our opinion, it is a positive phenomenon that in the latest renovation works in the historical architectonic complex of the University, they did not forget the traditional and well known local stones, such as the Strzegom granite and colourful marbles of Sławniowice, Stronie Śląskie, and the limestones of Morawica; This is particularly important today, in the time of expanding globalization, also in the stone masonry market.

## REFERENCES

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