

Architecture of Jesuit colleges designed by Giacomo Briano in Polish Province

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This article describes architectural project of Jesuit colleges by Giacomo Briano SI, a Jesuit architect from Modena, made for colleges in Polish Province of the Society of Jesus. Despite none of Briano's projects was fully accomplished we can analyse his original urban and architectural solutions basing on many of his architectural drawings which are kept in the archives in Cracow, Vienna, Paris and Los Angeles.

Keywords: architecture, Giacomo Briano SI, Society of Jesus, Jesuits, Jesuit colleges, architectural drawings

Introduction – state of research on Giacomo Briano's life and work

It was in the 30-ties of 20th century when Giacomo Briano works started to be discussed. Tadeusz Mańkowski described Jesuit church in Lviv and he was the first who mentioned Briano as an architect [1]. In the same time Stanisław Bednarski worked on Briano's biography. He was using Jesuit archives in Rome (Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu) and Briano's drawings from *Bibliothèque Nationale de France*, but he never published his work. He only wrote a short biography note for *Polski Słownik Biograficzny* [2]. Information collected by Bednarski was used by Jan Popłatek in *Słownik jezuitów artystów* [3]. Jerzy Paszenda using more archives and Brianos designs from Library of Lviv University wrote Briano's biography for *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* [4] and *Encyklopedia Katolicka* [5]. He also wrote an article about Briano's life and work [6]. Briano's designs for colleges, which are the topic of this paper, were analysed by Paszenda in his papers about Jesuit complexes in Lublin [7], Ostroh [8] and Lviv [9]. John Bury published in 1983 a catalog of 43 drawings by Briano [10], where a few of his designs for Polish Province were included. Adam Małkiewicz using drawings from that catalog wrote an article about Jesuit college in Krakow [11]. Andrzej Betlej analysed Briano's drawings kept in The *Getty Research Institute* [12] and also the architecture of church and college in Przemyśl [13, 14] and Ostroh [15].

All Briano's designs for colleges in Polish Province were described in various publications but nobody compared the solutions used in all his works from this area. The aim of this paper is to analyse Briano's original urban and architectural solutions by comparing all designs made for Polish

Province and finding similarities in shaping these college complexes.

Short Biography of Giacomo Briano

He was born in a family of architects from Modena in Italy and joined Society of Jesus in 1607. Soon he asked the General to let him work as a convent-architect. He started his professional work in 1613 on the construction site of college in Castiglione but in 1616 he was sent to Polish Province [16] to work as the province-architect. In Poland first he worked during the construction of the church in Luck then in Lviv. Years 1618 and 1619 he spent on the construction site of college in Sandomierz. Then he was sent to Cracow and Lublin. In 1621 when he was on his way home to Italy he stopped in Przemyśl and drew a design for church and college. He came back to Poland in 1630 to build the church and college in Ostroh. He made a couple of drawings but none of them was accepted by both the founder and authorities in Rome. During that time he visited Lviv and made measurements of the Jesuit lot and neighbouring town walls and designed a college complex. Finally he left Poland in 1632 [6].

Giacomo Briano's designs for colleges in Polish Province

Coming to various places he found there buildings at different stages of construction; consequently his influence on the final result was not equal. His first design drawings were made for college in Lublin (1619) where first he made measurement drawings of the existing church and the whole lot and then he designed the school and the convent

next to the church [17]. His design was only realised in the school part but the rest was built later according to a modified design. Then he drew a design for the church and the college in Przemyśl where the land lot was empty and he had unlimited freedom in placing distinctive elements of the complex [18]. During his second visit he made a couple of designs for Ostroh college, in which in the beginning he tried to use the existing foundations of the church but in the next proposals he decided to make church bigger and change its shape and place. In the meantime he made a design for the college in Lviv where the church was already accomplished and the lot was very narrow [19]. In spite of the fact that the majority of Briano's designs weren't realised we can analyse his style and characteristic spatial solutions basing on numerous drawings kept in archives.

Urban solutions – shaping the college complex in the town background

The analyse of Briano characteristic design solutions should begin with the topic of shaping the college complexes in the context of surrounding settlement. Briano's ideas are best visible in complexes where he had possibility to shape the whole complex. In Przemyśl (fig. 1) where there were no existing buildings and Briano could decide on his own where to place a church, a school and a convent building. He placed the church façade of the church in the most exposed to the city part of the Jesuit lot. It was closing the view of a street joining the market-square with Jesuit complex. Additionally he designed a portico with monumental stairs in front of the church façade which would dominate the side street views. To emphasize the church façade Briano put on both sides of it symmetrical wings where he places entrances enclosed in two-storey high ediculas with double pilasters to school and convent building. He also cares for braking the monotony of the long side elevation. He achieves it by placing an *avan-corps* at the end of the corridor where two parts of complex of different height meet.

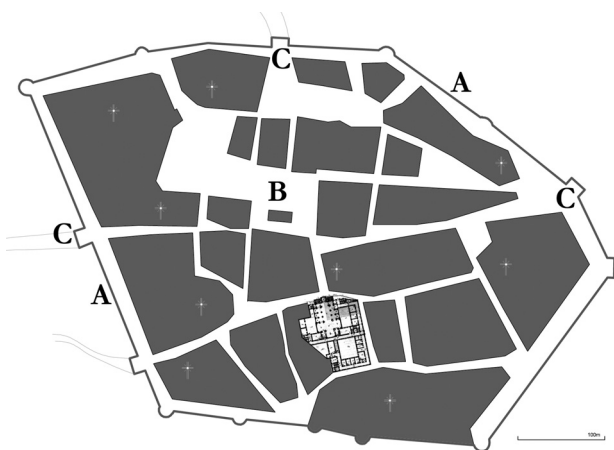


Fig. 1. Plan of Przemyśl with Briano's design for the college complex A – city walls, B – town market, C – town gates [K. Kantorowicz]

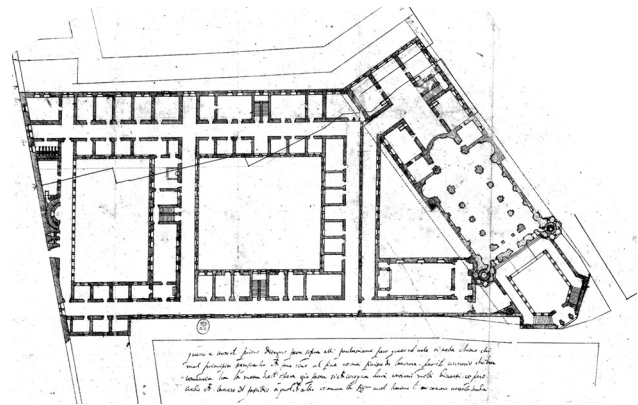


Fig. 2. First design for college in Ostroh [20]

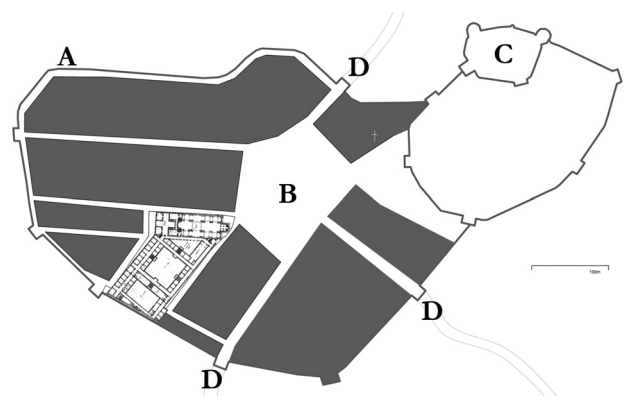


Fig. 3. Plan of Ostroh with Briano's second design for college A – city walls, B – town market, C – castle D – main town gates [K. Kantorowicz]

In Ostroh in the first design Briano draws a regular pentagonal courtyard surrounded by two-storey colonnade in front of the existing church, which was drawn back from the street line. This arcade courtyard allows to enter the college and both levels of the two-storey church (fig. 2). In his second design he decides to place the church façade along the street frontage. In the middle of the façade he places one entrance tower while in the next version instead of that one tower he adds two smaller towers on both façades ends to fill up the view from market-square corner. Consequently the view towards the square is dominated by these towers (fig. 3).

In Lublin the church placed on the part of the lot outside the town walls had been already finished. Briano uses the arc of the street to create an additional corner to dominate the street view from the market-square and also the street view from the East (fig. 4, fig. 11). It might have also been the stress of height. Similar solution Briano uses in staircase in Przemyśl. However, because of the lack of elevation or section drawings, these are merely suppositions.

Architectural solutions in Briano's designs

Jesuit complexes designed by Briano are logically and clearly divided into separate parts serving different func-

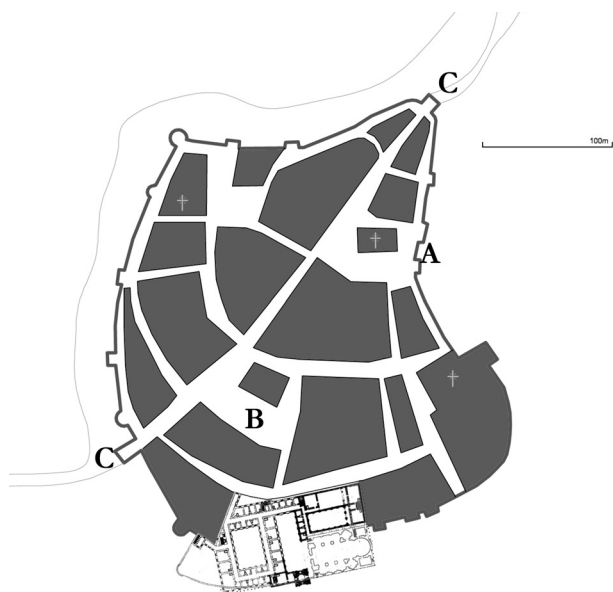


Fig. 4. Plan of Lublin with existing church and Briano's design for college A – city walls, B – town market, C – main town gates [K. Kantorowicz]

tions. Each element clearly excluded, is organised around the courtyard. These courtyards are rather small and that's why (in Polish climate conditions) also dark and cold. The longest courtyard elevations, which were planned to be erected in Ostroh, have from 6 to 10 window axis. In the smallest courtyard (in Przemyśl) one elevation has 3 window axis while the other has 6. This size combined with impressive four-storey plus attic height create well-like proportions (fig. 5).

The courtyards elevations are rhythmically divided by the regularly placed window axes but because of different spatial arrangement inside the building the opposite eleva-

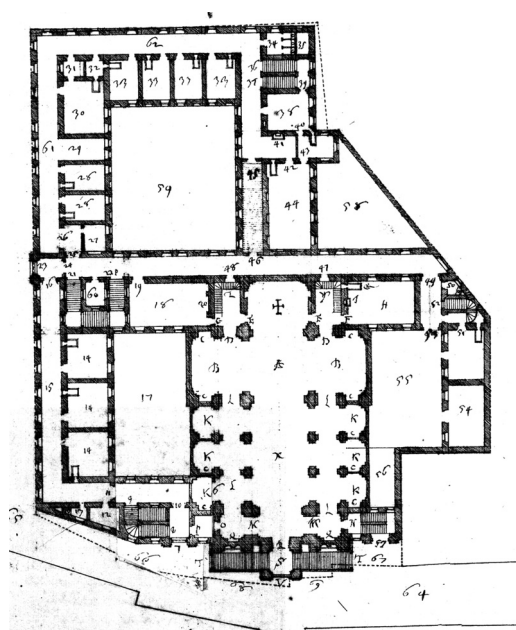


Fig. 5. Design of ground floor of college in Przemyśl [21]

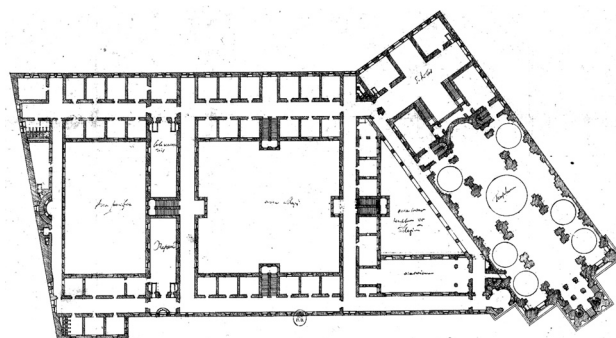


Fig. 6. Second design for college in Ostroh [22]

tions are not always clearly symmetrical. To always keep the rhythm of window axis Briano sometimes puts a blend instead of the window non matching from the interior perspective. One of important tasks for the architects is leading the user of the building by the mean of light. It is achieved by ending the corridors with windows (fig. 2). Consequently, it is reflected on the elevations. The longer courtyard elevations, such as in college in Ostroh, are broken up by staircases placed in *avan-corps* (fig. 6). The courtyard elevations are usually flat, without architectural order, only decorated with cornices below the windows of every storey and entablature with attic (fig. 7). Only in complex in Lublin Briano decorates all courtyard elevations with double pilasters.

External elevations of college complexes are similarly flat with cornices and entablature. Where it was possible Briano tried to match the level of cornices on college elevations with cornices on church façade (not only on the front side) (fig. 8). To hide the roof Briano designs it very flat, butterfly-shaped and covered with flat or decorative attic (fig. 9). Window axis are placed regularly but to emphasize something or to brake the monotony he sometimes doubles them. For example Briano doubles windows where the corridor reaches the external wall (fig. 6). Windows without framing are embrasured from the inside. They create simple and strict rhythm, same on all storeys. The entrances are very carefully designed. Being situated nearby the church façade as the central element of the whole complex they are shaped in the form of aedicula or topped by tympanum (fig. 10).

It should be noticed that Briano distinguished the importance of elevations – those situated behind or more distant from the church façade are shaped in the less orderly way. It is clearly visible while comparing two parts of the side elevation of college in Przemyśl. The part from the front to the *avan-corps* of the corridor has much stiffer structure than the one which is behind the corridor (fig. 5). Comparing so called less important in the architect's opinion elevations with the courtyard elevations it must be emphasised that the latter ones however not being in the public view keep the regular rhythm of axes much more precisely.

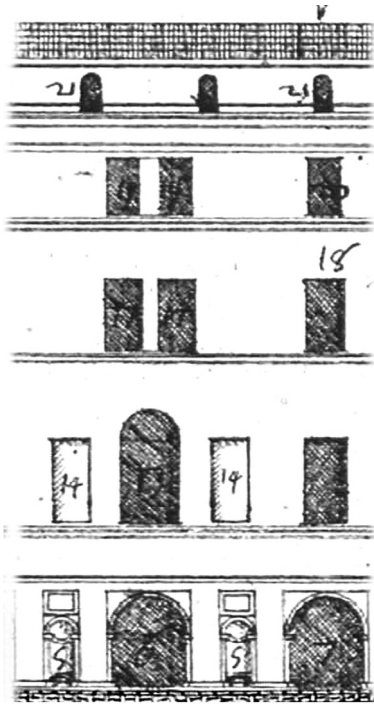


Fig. 7. Courtyard elevation in college in Lviv [12]

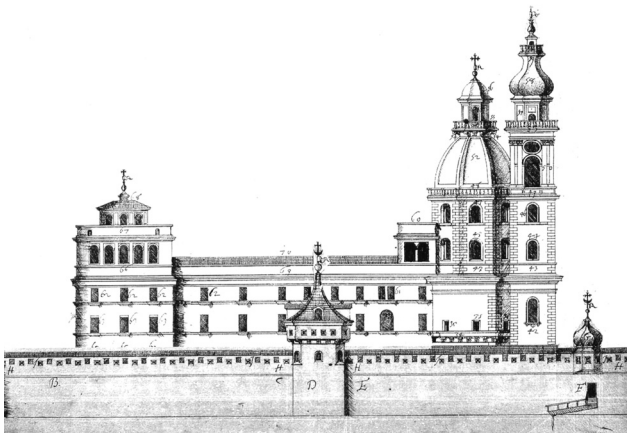


Fig. 8. Back elevation of college in Lviv [12]

Typically a massive and peculiarly designed structure of the church always is the dominant of the whole complex, Briano however introduced the additional vertical accents. In Lviv he introduces an extra storey over the refectory and the library (fig. 8). It is distinguished by semi-circular arched windows and roof lantern. In Lublin Briano introduces immense tower next to the church façade. The tower is also a new city gate.

Basically Briano tries to fulfil the land lot with a coherent building having the limited number of entrances. The partition of the building is much more visible inside specially by perforation its mass by variously shaped courtyards.

The next important element of shaping a college is the way how an architect solves problems connected with com-

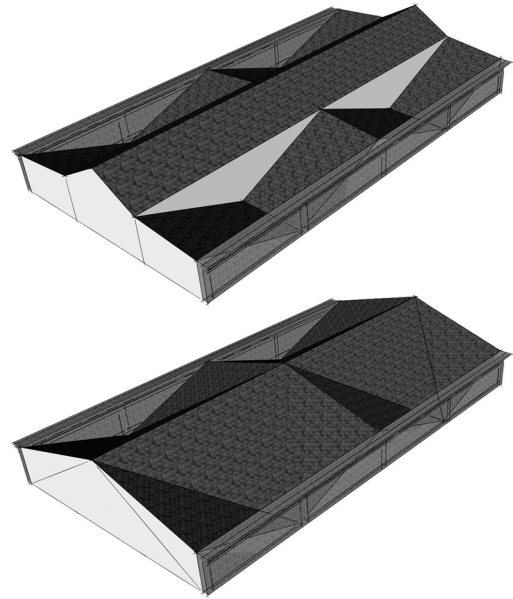


Fig. 9. Butterfly-shaped roofs covered behind the attic [K. Kantorowicz]

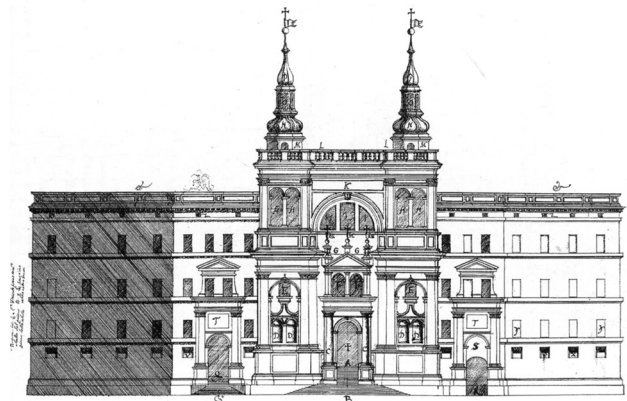


Fig. 10. Façade of college in Przemyśl [14]

munication between the elements of the complex and inside each of them. In Briano's designs the meticulous separation between the communication order of the school and the convent is visible. In Ostroh in the first design Briano introduces even a doubled corridor to prevent students from entering the enclosed parts of the convent. Another characteristic feature of Briano's corridors is their direct illumination. Only inhabited storey has darker corridors however, even those are lengthened so that they finish with windows at the external wall of the building. This solution guarantees direct sunlight.

The staircases are placed regularly however having in mind the functional needs on the first place. The staircases are varied in the aspect of their interior and decoration. Architect plans the more representative staircases as being three- or four-quarter turn with spacious well hole and sculpture decorations. Specially designed interior are met in entrance halls which are vaulted and specifically shaped.

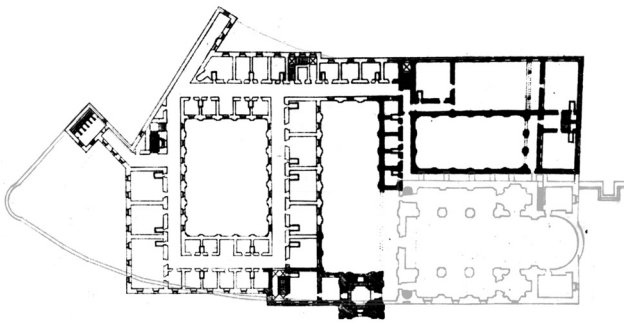


Fig. 11. Design for college in Lublin [17]

The attention must be paid to the solution of the school building having their own courtyard but not embracing it from all sides. One side of the school courtyard is always the church building. Another typical solution is placing the theatre hall in the part of the building alongside the street often occupying the whole width of the building.

Another characteristic is the specific placement of the refectory and subsequently library above it in the convent building. Briano designs refectories all the time far from the noise of the street. The refectories have the view of the garden inside the courtyard or outside the college walls. Briano also always guarantees the proper illumination of refectories by either situating it on the corner of the building or introduction indirect illumination through the corridor (fig. 11).

Conclusions

Summing up what strikes in Giacomo Briano's designs is their clearly distinguished and logical functional division preventing undesirable mixing of users of different parts of the complex. His designs also guarantee effective functioning of particular parts of the complex. Providing the proper amount of light is also vital for the architect. However, relatively small courtyards (typical for Italian climate) considerably limit the access of sunrise to the rooms on lower levels. Another important feature of Briano's designs is that the regularity of his designs gets broken by the landscape accents and elements adjusting them to functional needs. Briano can be even called a functionalist because for this architect the functioning of the users of the building seems to be the crucial factor shaping his designs. Last but not least the care for urban views so that the complex will be seen both from the busiest places in town as well as the towns gates is another characteristic of Briano's work.

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