

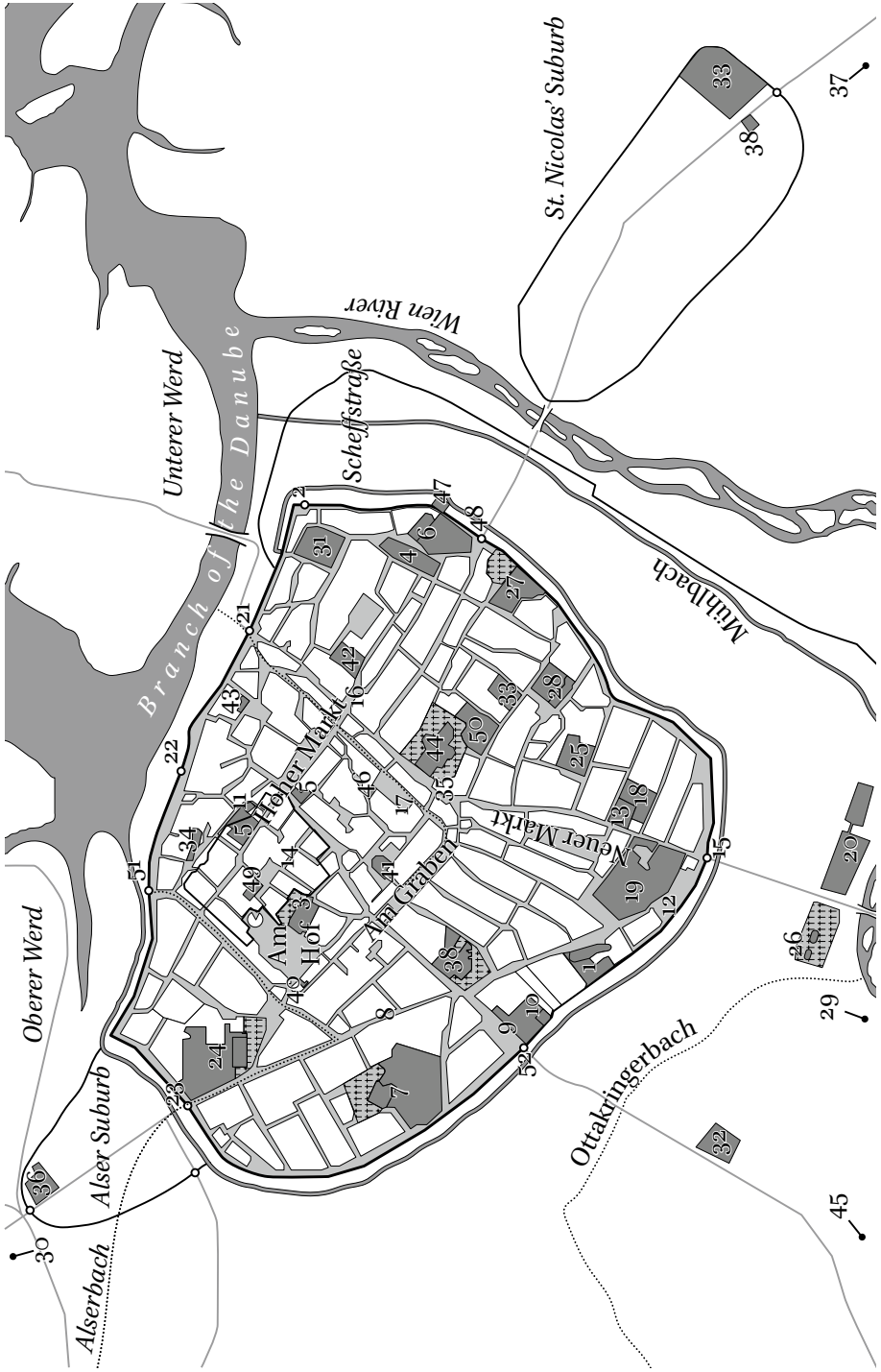
# A Companion to Medieval Vienna

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# A Companion to Medieval Vienna

*Edited by*

Susana Zapke  
Elisabeth Gruber



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Cover illustration: Vienna, View from the North. Detail from the genealogical tree of the Babenberg family, triptych, Stiftsmuseum Klosterneuburg. Photo: IMAREAL/P. Böttcher.

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# Preface and Acknowledgements

Ich lob disen ort für alle land / hie seind viel singer, saytenspiel /  
allerlay gsellschaftt frewden vil / mehr musicos und instrument /  
findt man gwisslich an khainem end.<sup>1</sup>



A city is the result of the interplay of many power relationships that define a particular urban tissue. The medieval chronicler Wolfgang Schmeltzl described Vienna as exceedingly dynamic and complex, a veritable “*paradiso*” of the multicultural and the multilingual, of successful trade, of powerful lords and rich merchants, of pleasant bell-ringing and the sound of trumpets, and an immaculately maintained urbanistic presentation. Most of those attributes endure to this day. Of the city’s multicultural and polyglottal nature, Schmeltzl says:

Ich dacht ich wer gen Babl khumen, wo alle sprach ein anfang gnomen,  
und hoert ein selczams draesch und gschray / von schoenen sprachen  
mancherlay, hebreisch, griechisch und lateinisch, teutsch, francoesisch,  
türckisch, spanisch, behaimisch, windisch, italianisch, hungerisch, guet  
niderlendisch, natürlich syrisc, crabatisch, raeczisch, polnisch und  
chaldeisch.<sup>2</sup>

Similarly, Schmeltzl praises the city’s appearance, carefully maintained then as it is now. His account is a confirmation of the phenomenon of the “continuing city”:

- 
- 1 Wolfgang Schmeltzl, *Ein Lobspruch der Hochlöblichen weitberühmbten Khünigklichen Stat Wien in Osterreich, wölche wider den Tyrannen vnd Erbfeindt Christi nit die wenigist, sonder die höchst Hauptbefestigung der Christenhait ist: Rö. Khü. May. [et]c. vnserm aller genedigisten Herrn zu Ehren beschriben, durch Wolffgang Schmeltzl Schulmaister zun Schotten, vnd Burger daselbst im 1548. Jar. Zu dem andern mal vbersehen vnd gebessert*, Vienna 1548, p. 70. “I praise this place above all other countries / so many singers here and players of stringed instruments, there is companionship and joy / nowhere in the world are there more musicians and instruments.”
  - 2 *Ibid.*, p. 19. “I thought I had come to Babylon / origin of all confusion of language / And heard a strange babble, crying / And many a beautiful language / Hebrew, Greek, and Latin / German, French, Turkish, Spanish / Bohemian, Slovenian, Italian / Hungarian, good Dutch / Syrian of course, Croatian / Serbian, Polish, and Chaldean.”

Als dann ich bsicht die stat mit fleiss / und maint ich wer im paradeiss  
[...].

Die gassen hubsch und wol visiert / geradt auch weit und schoen  
purgiert / gepflastert darzu hoff und hauss / mit herten grossen stain  
durchauss.<sup>3</sup>

Historical chronicles in the tradition of a highly subjective encomium are, of course, only partially accurate descriptions of urban realities. Nevertheless, they give us an impression of the multi-faceted perceptions that characterize the image of a city.

The editors of this volume had the goal of mapping the four fundamental aspects of the definition of a city onto medieval Vienna. This resulted in the four main parts of the book: Part 1. *Vienna: the City and Urban Design*, i.e. the original urban planning of the city according to the principle of “form follows function”, which in turn leads into Part 2. *Politics, Economy, and Sovereignty*. The diversity of the various social groups and their cultural-sociological *habitus* are examined in Part 3. *Social Groups and Communities*; and lastly, the city as a space of knowledge and performance, ritual, and community building is the subject of Part 4. *Spaces of Knowledge, Arts, and Performance*. The 19 essays contained in this volume are meticulously crafted micro-analyses of the diverse realities of Vienna, and will lead the reader to a truly multiperspective view of the city.

This volume was guided by the principle *ad fontes*. Renowned experts in the areas of history, art history, history of science, and music studies present us both with their most recent discoveries and with the state of the scholarship on the history of the city. Their methodologies include many of the new approaches, orientations, and discourses that have been most recently formulated in the fields of cultural studies, social studies, and urban studies. Of course, no single book could possibly encompass every single aspect of the morphogenesis and the political, economic, and cultural foundations of medieval Vienna. A selection had to be made; and selection necessarily also means omission. We hope that future studies on the city of Vienna will take up these perspectives and continue from there.

This book owes its existence to the generous support, the great enthusiasm, and of course the limitless patience, of our authors. We would like to thank each and every one of them, and also the editors and translators, whose

3 Ibid., pp. 14–15. “When I beheld the industrious city / I thought myself in paradise / [...] / The alleys pretty with straight views, / and never does cleanliness fail. / Paved are the courtyards, the houses, / with hard, big stone throughout.”

incessant work was crucial to the completion of the book: Julian Deahl, Michael Mulryan, Fiona Salter-Townsend, Ingrid Sonnleitner, Vaso Ivanovic and Grant Chorley. We would also like to thank our publisher Brill for including this book in their renowned series “Companions to European History”, and for all their diligent support during the publication process. In times of scarce funding for scholarly publications, we would furthermore especially like to thank the culture department of the city of Vienna (Kulturabteilung der Stadt Wien, MA 7), the Vienna History Association (Verein für Geschichte der Stadt Wien), and the Austrian Working Group for Urban History Research (Österreichischer Arbeitskreis für Stadtgeschichtsforschung). Without their generous financial and intellectual support, the publication of this book would not have been possible.

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is a historian and an archivist with a focus on the history of the Middle Ages, archival studies and the history of Vienna. During his professional career he was Director of the Institute of Biographical Lexicon and Biographical Documentation of the Austrian Academy of Sciences (1994–2001). Together with Ferdinand Opll, he published a profound compendium on the history of Vienna (*Wien. Geschichte einer Stadt*, 3 volumes).

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