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From Segregation to Interaction: German Colonial Urban Planning in Tsingtau (1898–1914)

Yutong Bai

Emma Willard School, Troy, USA
ybai@emmawillard.org

Abstract. From 1898 to 1914, the German Empire administered the leasehold of Kiaochow Bay in Shandong Province and constructed the port city of Tsingtau as a self-proclaimed model colony. This paper studies the master plan for the construction of that city and believes that urban planning, although presented as a neutral tool of civil engineering, was in fact a method of colonial rule. The German administration divided the urban area into a European quarter, a Chinese business and residential area, and two peripheral workers' villages, and reinforced this spatial division with a separate legal code for Chinese residents only. Both measures were based on racist ideas and sought to demonstrate the technological superiority of Europeans over the native people. The paper also shows that the desired separation was never realised. German firms depended on Chinese merchants, wealthy Chinese families acquired property in the German quarter, German residents settled in Chinese districts, and German households relied on Chinese domestic servants. Negotiation with Chinese officials, missionary conflict, a commercial boycott, a joint German-Chinese college, and a hybrid architectural idiom all followed from this daily contact. Colonial Tsingtau is therefore better understood not as a unilateral projection of metropolitan power but as a negotiated space in which segregation on paper repeatedly gave way to interaction on the ground, producing an early bridgehead of Sino-German cultural exchange.

Keywords: colonial urban planning, racial segregation, Tsingtau, German colonialism, Sino-German interaction

1. Introduction

In November 1897, two German missionaries were brutally murdered by members of an anti-colonial, anti-foreign group called the Boxers (*Yihetuan*) [1]. Infuriated by this incident, the German imperial government exploited it to pressure the Qing government into leasing territory that would provide the German navy with a coaling station in East Asia. The result was the successful negotiation of the leasehold of Kiaochow Bay in Shandong Province, China, which the German military would occupy for 99 years. With the acquisition of Kiaochow, the Germans hoped to build a *Musterkolonie*, or "model colony," investing heavily without carefully weighing potential returns on the investment [2, 3]. Therefore, although Kiaochow was one of Germany's smaller colonies, it was likely the most expensive. Administratively, Kiaochow was directly under the War Ministry and not governed by the regular colonial administration of Germany's other overseas colonies; thus, it

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held a special status as a military outpost in an important area. The German government invested heavily in building a new city with the most advanced facilities of the era [2]. As a result, Tsingtau developed into a large-scale transportation hub for Northern China and is still an important port city today; its original German-built sewage system remains in good working order.

This paper investigates how the city was constructed according to the German Master Plan for Urban Development. It believes that urban planning, although appearing to be neutral in the eyes of civil engineering, was actually far from innocuous and served the purpose of colonial rule. In the design of Tsingtau, the Germans intentionally implemented a segregation plan to separate the local Chinese from the colonial Europeans entirely. Although it was both a division of space and a system of law, its aim was simply to keep the two races separate. This division was clearly based on the concept of race and aimed to establish the idea of European superiority in the colony. As will be shown below, the colonial urban planning in Tsingtau aimed to showcase European technology to the local Chinese people by building a modern city. Forced urban segregation also advanced the idea of European superiority.

Although the Germans attempted to establish strict spatial and legal separation, full separation of the colonized and the colonizers was not realised, and contact between the Chinese and the Germans continued. As this essay will show, such interactions took place because the Germans realised that their business could not continue without the support of local Chinese enterprises, so contact between the "two worlds" was increased. Additionally, wealthy Chinese merchants started moving into the German areas of the city, and some Germans lived in the Chinese section of the city, thus gradually breaking down the strict racial divisions set out in the original plan. At the same time, German households also had Chinese domestic servants to help with the cleaning of floors, cooking, etc. Therefore, the strict segregation of races could not be implemented on the ground. As a result, in what was supposed to be a strictly segregated German colony, inter-racial contact took place almost every day. Tsingtau thus became a base for Sino-German cultural exchange in the early twentieth century.

This paper will examine the two apparently contradictory characteristics of German colonial urban planning in Tsingtau: strict racial segregation on the one hand and inter-racial contact on the other, in order to explore the complexity of German colonialism in China. Section 2 explores the conceptual problems of colonial urban planning and the difficulty of defining the concepts of colonialism and urban planning. It will also give a short history of the German colonization of Kiaochow and provide some background information for readers who are unfamiliar with the history of German colonial expansion in East Asia. Section 3 is about the problem of segregation, and Section 4 addresses the issue of interaction. The final part of the essay will assess the contradiction between the rhetoric of the civilising mission and the reality of segregation in the general historical context of imperialism and colonialism.

2. Conceptual problems of "colonial," "urban planning," and historical background of German colonial expansion in China

The ideas of colonial cities and urban planning are not clear. If a colonial city is to be defined as a city established by colonizers in the colonies, then Tsingtau is a representative case [4]. At a time when most of the world was under colonial rule, a colonial city was the general case, not the exception [5]. Generally speaking, colonial cities have some typical attributes. First and foremost, colonial cities are characterised by a concentration of power in the hands of European colonizers, who have taken control of urban affairs and excluded the local indigenous people from decision-making. Secondly, the buildings in the colonial city are clearly influenced by Western architectural

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styles. Most significantly, colonial cities had strict racial segregation; Europeans were employed in higher-ranking positions in the administration, and local people were restricted to low-skilled jobs such as domestic service, construction work, mining, etc. At times, this segregation resulted in what can be called a "dual city"; the local people lived in the poor, crowded and underdeveloped areas of the old city, and the Europeans resided in the spacious and well-organised sections of the new city. Finally, colonial cities were generally the places where the Europeans exploited the mineral and economic resources in the interior. Tsingtau clearly meets all the conditions for being a "colonial city."

On closer inspection, however, many "classical" features of colonial cities may not actually be described as colonial. It is true that many colonial cities were segregated along spatial and legal lines, as pointed out above in the creation of a "dual city" [6]. Yet, the local residents were also required to abide by the new legal codes imposed by the colonizers, while being relegated almost exclusively to labor-intensive occupations. However, all cities around the world have historically segregated people along different social strata and ethnic lines. For example, through gentrification —the process by which poor urban areas are transformed into middle-class neighborhoods—the urban poor are often forced, by economic pressures, to relocate to the periphery of the city. In practice, this creates a segregated zone based on the income level of the urban residents. In some cases, such economic disparity can easily translate into racial disparity [7]. In New York, for instance, ethnic neighborhoods in boroughs such as Brooklyn and Manhattan are shaped by market-driven economic forces rather than by the force of law.

Another limitation of the term "colonial" in characterizing nineteenth-century urban dynamics is that many cities commonly viewed as "non-colonial" likewise undertook modernization projects as part of deliberate efforts at self-modernization. All cities constructed sewage systems, paved roads, instituted sanitary regulations, etc., in attempts at self-modernization. A case in point is Cairo, Egypt. Under Khedival rule, Cairo embarked on similar modernization projects in an effort to catch up with Europe by adopting European models [8]. The city was renovated through the introduction of European-style urban planning and architecture, despite not being under formal colonial rule. This case clearly demonstrates the ambiguity of terms such as "colonial" when used to describe cities in the age of colonialism.

If the term "colonial city" is also vague, then "urban planning" will not be clear either. The 19th century is often called the "era of urban planning". Many rapidly expanding "shock cities" during this time were intentionally redesigned, such as New Delhi, Vienna, and Paris, all of which received significant planning efforts [9]. For example, most of the uniform city landscape in Paris today was created by Haussmann's large-scale planning project under Napoleon III.

Traditionally, urban planning has been considered the organised formation of cities to promote their all-round development and benefit the lives of the people living there. It involves deciding on the use of the land and where to build residential areas, business districts, parks, schools, transportation facilities, etc. Based on the above definition, the nineteenth century was indeed a period of urban planning. It saw remarkable planning projects in cities such as Paris, New Delhi and Washington D.C., which were all built from the ground up according to their own ideas of a good modern city. Haussmann's large-scale construction projects to improve the appearance of the city in Paris are admired by many visitors [9]. Thus, the nineteenth century was a time of urban planning for all intents and purposes, including Tsingtau.

However, all the cities in the world were planned in one way or another. Ancient Chinese cities were organised according to the cosmological ideas in traditional Chinese philosophy, especially feng shui, which means "wind and water." Similarly, cities in other ancient civilizations, such as the

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Babylonian, Indian and Mayan, had their own rules and systems for urban design; they did not need to wait until the nineteenth century to be called "planned." Large-scale urban planning projects were striking because they were unusual [10]. Most cities in the nineteenth century, such as London, Hong Kong and New York, did not undergo Haussmannisation. After all, the cost was too high and such planning was often inefficient.

Another problem with the term "urban planning" is that it is vague. Urban planning can be carried out in various ways by different planning departments. Generally speaking, the two main types of urban planning are regulatory planning and developmental planning. In regulatory planning, the government will issue regulations and policies for managing city life in order to keep the peace and order of the city. For example, due to the risk of fire and noise, the German government in Kiaochow banned fireworks [2]. Regulatory planning has the advantage of lower costs than developmental planning because it does not need to seize land for public interest purposes. Developmental planning is the long-term plan for the use of land, which includes construction projects for buildings and roads in cities, etc. In Kiaochow, the Germans built wide roads and introduced a new sewer system. These projects also aimed to improve the lives of the people living there. At the same time, these efforts also showed the other countries the power and prestige of Germany [2]. The scale of these building projects shows that they had the funds for it and hoped to maintain long-term control over Tsingtau.

The above is the result of urbanisation in the modern period. The idea that a city can be planned in advance for future development is a relatively modern concept that goes hand-in-hand with the concept of modernity. Nineteenth-century urban planning showed a new spirit: to modernise cities according to the development idea. These projects were generally large-scale, expensive and far-reaching in their changes to the urban area. German urban planning in Tsingtau illustrates this developmentalist mentality of the era.

Therefore, the German colonial urban planning in Tsingtau can be understood in light of the two problems mentioned above. At the same time, it is necessary to consider the historical context of Germany's colonization of Kiaochow and how this colonization intersected with German perceptions of China. Long before colonising Kiaochow, German and other European intellectuals had already idealised Chinese culture and believed that China was a mysterious land rich in culture [11]. Sinophilia is a word used to refer to the admiration of Chinese culture and society. Jesuit missionaries spoke highly of China's bureaucracy and its model of rational organisation. German artists and architects also incorporated Chinese culture into some of their works. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, this admiration took the form of "Sinomania" and spread to cover all aspects of Chinese culture. However, starting in the nineteenth century, this "love for China" began to change, and "Sinophobia" arose instead; people began to look down on China's perceived backwardness and barbaric culture [11]. The Sinophobic attitude in Europe resulted in a patronising attitude towards China; the Europeans thought that China needed European guidance to achieve "civilisation." The view of China as a declining civilisation was the basis for the colonial attitude that Germany displayed in the second half of the 19th century, and it promoted German colonial expansion in China. Such behaviour was often linked to race, and Germany attributed China's perceived backwardness to the non-white population, calling the country dirty and uncivilised.

The German colonial occupation of Kiauchow started under the pretext that two German missionaries had been killed by the Boxers-affiliated anti-foreign and anti-Christian rebels in China. The Germans considered it an opportunity for military intervention in Qingdao and used this incident to obtain their 99-year lease of Kiaochow Bay from the besieged Qing government. This was to strengthen Germany's position among the other countries in Europe that were looking to

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expand their world power. Germany, however, had a different idea for Kiaochow. For example, it invested heavily in Kiaochow, despite this being one of its smallest territories. Kiaochow was also one of Germany's shortest-lived colonies, but it was the most expensive. In addition, the colony was not managed by the regular colonial administration but by the German Imperial Navy Ministry, so it fell under military rule rather than civilian rule. Therefore, the military took the lead in the development of Kiaochow as a German colonial base in the Far East. It also had a German school, which was Germany's only colonial college. Hence, German colonial rule in Kiaochow could be characterized as representing "different kinds of German colonialism and, more generally, the variety of imperial or colonial forms in the nineteenth and twentieth century" [12].

The selection of Kiaochow Bay was suggested by the geographer Ferdinand von Richthofen, who thought it had the potential to develop into a major transport and commercial center in northern China. Like most imperialists of the era, he also believed that the goal of Germany was to save the decaying Chinese empire, and Kiaochow could well be a base for exerting German influence. This context shaped how German colonial planners perceived Kiaochow and directly impacted their approach to urban planning. Despite their high ambitions and heavy investments—which sparked controversy back home—German rule in Tsingtau lasted no more than two decades. It soon lost its status as a "model colony in the world" during World War I, when Japan captured Qingdao. The post-war Treaty of Versailles in 1919 later recognized Japan's full control over Tsingtau under international law.

3. Segregation in colonial urban space

One of the guiding principles of German colonial urban planning in Tsingtau was to ensure strict segregation between the Germans and Chinese. Accordingly, the Tsingtau urban area was divided into three sections: the European quarter (*Europäerstadt*), the Chinese business and residential neighborhood (*Dabaodao*), and two workers' villages (*Daxizhen*, lit. the Big Western Village; and *Dadongzhen*, lit. the Big Eastern Village) [13].

Once the Germans took control of Qingdao in 1898, the plan was to construct a European-style city, which they called the European quarter (*Europäerstadt*). As its name suggests, the European quarter was an area exclusively reserved for the Europeans. The idea of racial segregation was deeply rooted in the minds of the German colonial urban planners, as a newspaper report in 1899 stated: "Tsintau today is still Chinese in its external appearance" but "in a few months the impression our Asian colony makes on a stranger will be completely different" [14]. In fact, one of the navy's surveyors added that the goal was to produce a clear "demarcation of our territory from China." Similarly, the German Admiral of the time, Von Tirpitz, voiced a comparable sentiment later by saying: "We avoided being in direct touch with China" [11]. In short, the desire to build a racially segregated European city on Chinese soil was widely shared by many German officials across various quarters.

The European quarter was full of various administrative and commercial buildings that met the needs of German colonial officials and other Europeans. The roads were wide and spacious, and there were many European-style houses and imported trees. As shown in the maps, the roads were arranged in a regular grid, and the buildings were large and splendid [15]. According to the building regulations at that time, the building area was not allowed to exceed 55% of the total land area; this is why the Tsingtau of today is still well-known for its large number of urban green spaces. In the centre of the European quarter was the German governor's residence, directly opposite the city's main church, which had been built in the grand Neo-Baroque style typical of Kaiser Wilhelm II's time. All the main roads were named after the German royal family and other famous people in

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politics. The buildings and urban planning in Tsingtau were very European, so some European visitors said that after stepping into this quarter, they felt like they had returned to Europe.

At the same time, the Chinese population was moved to other areas of the city: the Chinese business and residential area (Dabaodao), and two workers' villages (Daxizhen, which means Big Western Village; and Dadongzhen, which means Big Eastern Village). The Chinese residential area of Dabaodao was where the rich Chinese lived. However, it was much more densely built up than the European quarter, and the housing density reached 75% in accordance with the land code. Even for the wealthy Chinese, their houses were not perceived as elegant as those of the Germans. Some German merchants and government officials also lived in the area, so it became more racially diverse and thus went against the policy of racial separation. It can be seen that segregation did not go as planned by the Germans in practice. It was nearly impossible for the European quarter to be completely separated from the Chinese neighborhoods. In addition, it was necessary to have Chinese servants in the European area to serve the European masters and ensure the regular operation of the colonial city. The servants lived in small houses called "kohli houses."

As for the workers' villages, they were exclusively for Chinese people and located even further away from the city centre, at the easternmost and westernmost ends of the city; thus, they were named the Big Eastern and Western Villages. To ensure public safety, the German colonial authorities built a police station in the middle of the village, a constant reminder of colonial power. The Law Code set strict hygiene standards in the workers' villages, reflecting the assumption that the Chinese were inherently unhygienic. This belief justified the construction of the city's sewage and water supply works.

In addition to the physical segregation of the city, the German colonial authorities also imposed strict legal segregation between the European population, including the Japanese, and the Chinese residents [2].

During the colonization of Qingdao, the German government offered low compensation to the Chinese landowners and subsequently relocated about 4,500 people to build the German city. They believed that by building a "perfect" colony, they would demonstrate the superiority of Germany. As most of the Chinese people were forced into the rural areas, the Europeans were left with much more space in the urban areas. Although the Chinese landowners were compensated, they lost their freehold rights and it became illegal for Chinese citizens to own land or buildings in the European quarter.

The "Governor's Order on the Legal Affairs of the Chinese" comprised very strict laws of segregation for the Chinese and Europeans. While the Europeans had a relatively mature legal system, the Chinese laws in Kiaochow were usually established by a local officer without legal training. Hence, "Any civil case involving only Chinese and in which the stakes were not sufficiently serious was to be judged by the German district commissioner according to his interpretation of Chinese law" [11]. The German officials were also allowed to apply corporal punishment to Chinese residents for minor offenses without any formal trial. This was not an oversight but a deliberate measure designed to belittle the Chinese population. Curfews were also legally enforced in Kiaochow, where the Chinese were required to carry lanterns for identification during curfews. Other aspects of the Chinese Law Code (*Zhongguoren Tiaoyue*) worth noting include: all types of parades required prior authorization, with the exception of weddings and funerals; all kinds of plays, shows and non-religious gatherings needed official approval; the use of fireworks was prohibited; and any posters in Chinese had to receive authorization before public display [2]. This, again, serves as a reflection of the colonial authorities' desire to control the indigenous population in all aspects of social life.

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Later on, the German colonial authorities began translating German law into Chinese and the Great Qing Legal Code into German. This created a dual legal system for the Chinese and subjected them to punishment for a wide range of offenses. "Offenses for which Chinese could be punished included any activities the governor declared illegal (par. 5.1) or any that were illegal according to German law (par. 5.2)—with the exception of practices related to religion, ethics, and so on—as well as anything that violated public order (par. 5.3) or that was publishable according to *Chinese* law" (par. 5.4) [11]. Although torture was officially prohibited, Chinese prisoners reported that it was still carried out. Selective application of Chinese legal procedures was relatively frequent; thus, this dual-track legal system was clearly unfair. In short, legal separation promoted spatial segregation in the German colony of Tsingtau by strictly dividing the Chinese and European populations.

4. Cross-cultural interaction in colonial Tsingtau

Although the two communities were strictly separated on paper, they still interacted with each other in life. Although colonialism began with the one-sided exercise of power, contact between colonizers and the colonized established a "zone of contact", and thus strict separation was replaced by relatively free movement in the border area [2]. These engagements were of the type of conflict and cooperation. Politically, because the Chinese and German officials had to meet to discuss local governance of the Chinese population in Tsingtau, conflicts frequently occurred. Culturally, the missionary work by Germans in Shandong would be in conflict with the local people's traditional culture; thus, they were viewed as intruders. Activities organised by Chinese businessmen in Tsingtau could also cause a conflict of interest with their European counterparts. Despite these conflicts, the German presence in Tsingtau was largely a harmonious coexistence of the European and Chinese peoples. Sino-German relations in colonial Tsingtau are studied in terms of conflict and cooperation in this section.

At the beginning of the German colonial period in Tsingtau, the colonial authorities had many problems managing the Chinese people. The Germans were afraid of disorder and a possible uprising, so they talked to well-known Chinese officials and local leaders to address these serious problems. The Germans knew that they needed to work with the existing Chinese government, and these native Chinese officials were well-versed in the area and its people. In cooperation and promotion of mutual respect among the Chinese provincial government officials, the German officials hoped to reduce tensions and ensure the stability of their colonial government. Political cooperation continued even after the fall of the Qing Dynasty in 1911. Many former Qing officials and dignitaries chose to emigrate to Tsingtau and lived in the Chinese quarter of Dabaodao there. In short, although the Germans spoke of separating the Chinese and Germans officially, they still engaged in politics with Chinese government officials at a higher level.

Religious conflicts also occurred at this time. German missionaries in China often had different views: some respected Confucianism and hoped to adapt Christianity to local culture; others sought to reform the Chinese along more orthodox Christian lines; and the most extreme wished to "save" the Chinese by making them more European. Many Chinese people did not see the activities of the Christian missionaries as compatible with their traditional life. The excessive demands made by many missionary groups for conversion of the local people often resulted in strong opposition [2]. In fact, the massacre of the two German missionaries in Shandong prompted the German government to seek redress from the Qing government and thus enabled the German occupation of Tsingtau in the first place.

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Besides political and religious conflicts, other reasons for the division of Tsingtau's German and Chinese communities included conflicts of interest in business. Although there was strict racial segregation, the Germans knew that their businesses could not survive without the support of local Chinese merchants, so interaction between the "two worlds" gradually increased. As wealthy Chinese merchants started living in the German area and some Germans moved to the Chinese area of the city, economic exchanges between the two communities gradually began. In 1902, a "Chinese Committee" was formed by a group of Chinese merchants to protect their interests [12]. By 1908, with its expanding influence, it organised a boycott of German goods and defied the colonial government. Due to the increase in depot tariffs at the harbour, many people in Kiaochow joined the protests and thus alerted the colonial government. Only after the committee achieved some favourable concessions did it agree to end the boycott. However, as a result of this incident, the Chinese Committee was disbanded in 1910 and later replaced by a council of Chinese counselors chosen by the governor. In short, despite the boycott and protests, the German and Chinese business communities had to find a way to cooperate out of necessity.

Conflicts were inevitable, but the Germans and Chinese also cooperated in many ways to achieve a certain level of cultural blending. A case in point is education. The Germans built a German-Chinese college, and it was the only such one in all the German colonies [2]. The college was established in 1909 with a German director and Chinese inspector, and it was the only foreign school to be supported and officially recognised by the Qing government. The Qing government selected some students to study at this college, and both Western-style education taught by German teachers and traditional Chinese education in Confucian classics were available. The founding of the school was also affected by the political situation in China at that time; many Qing officials were starting to think that the German Reich would be an ally. After the fall of the Qing Dynasty in 1911, many former Qing officials chose to live in German Tsingtau and bought land and other properties. They sent their children to German schools for education. It shows that the colonial city of Tsingtau promoted cooperation and participation among all people.

Cultural interaction was also shown in the styles of buildings in the city [2]. During the German colonization of Kiaochow, the buildings in Qingdao began to blend elements of European and Chinese architecture in a new way. Their structures combined traditional Chinese elements with Western styles. Many architects were inspired by the elegant style of traditional Chinese buildings and used curved roofs with red tiles. A large German stone building is combined with a light Chinese-style roof to create a new style.

5. Conclusion

In short, this paper has studied colonial urban planning in German Tsingtau and found that, although it claimed to be about separation on paper, people still lived and interacted there in life. Although there were strict racial segregations, the European and Chinese people still interacted every day. The two main subjects of this study are colonialism and urban planning; the contradiction is also complicated. Colonialism should not be viewed as a one-way exercise of power by the metropolitan centre over the colonies, but rather as a negotiation between the colonisers and the colonised. Urban planning served to support the colonial discourse of the civilising mission and thus justified racial segregation in the city. However, segregation could not avoid interaction in practice, and thus a hybrid culture formed under the influence of the shared city gradually began to emerge.

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