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## Laudon's Garden

### Habsburg Legacy and the Warped Space of Empire

**ABSTRACT** This article traces how processes of physical displacement (and its corollary, re-emplacement) have emerged during multiple periods and in distant locales associated with the history and legacy of the Habsburg Empire. It focuses on an eighteenth-century Turkish garden made from Field Marshal Gideon Ernst von Laudon's spoils of war on the outskirts of Vienna. Utilizing Anthony Vidler's concept of "warped space," the article explores Laudon's garden as an exemplary form of imperial space. It then proceeds to argue that imperial capitalism continued to produce warped spaces based on processes of displacement and dispossession, using the example of the short-lived Austro-Hungarian concession in Tianjin. In doing so, the article argues for an understanding of imperial subjectivity that takes into account the built space of empire.

**KEYWORDS** warped space, empire, Vienna, Belgrade, Tianjin

I told all this, for the first time, to a little girl; the first time, from beginning to end, in some sort of order. In this way I put it together as a consistent story, one that had, hitherto, always lost itself in a confusion of isolated parts, in a fog of fear, in a sort of extratemporal occurrence.

—Selimović 14

On October 7, 1789, Gideon Ernst, the baron of Laudon, experienced his most glittering moment. After three weeks of siege and heavy bombardment, the Habsburg field marshal received the capitulation of Belgrade's Ottoman vizier, Osman Pasha. It was a crowning achievement of his military campaign, which had turned the tide in the empire's war against the Turk. Laudon was named *Generalissimo* soon after, answerable to the Habsburg emperor alone. In mid-December, Field Marshal Laudon returned to Vienna with much fanfare. Together with Laudon came the trophies of his glorious victory—marble from a city gate, a vizier's tombstone, a little girl. The three

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remained in Hadersdorf, his compound in suburban Vienna, reminding the baron of his conquest. Arranged in a Turkish garden, the looted stones were laid out to illustrate ruination and the passage of time. Among them, Laudon's eight-year-old captive, Thekla, strolled until Laudon's death, disappearing from the historical record soon after.

Created through the violent displacement of people and material objects, Laudon's Turkish garden was and remains a quintessentially imperial space. Thekla's archival "rescue . . . from the darkness of [historical] night" records her "encounter with power" and nothing more (Foucault 79). Her brief mention reflects its violent origins—it is incomplete, full of gaps, without closure. Saidiya Hartman has criticized such "asterisk[s] in the grand narrative of history" by refusing to fill in the gaps and provide redemption, writing with what she calls "narrative restraint" (Hartman 2). If we "cannot undo the violence," as Hartman warns, what stories should we tell?

In the richness of its material heritage, the archive of Habsburg built space offers little room for subjects of incomplete histories. Borrowing the linguistic metaphors of Habsburg architectural history (Moravánszky; Alofsin), we speak the language of buildings because they remain. Yet what can we say about people who inhabited those same spaces, those whose record is less firmly etched in the collective imaginary of empire? As this article argues, their brief mentions nevertheless represent imperial truths when put in conversation with the built spaces they inhabit.

Thekla's experience of Laudon's garden reflects the nature of many other unrecorded encounters with imperial power. As products of asymmetric violence, the built spaces of empire always index a broad spectrum of subjective experiences beyond the archive. As I proceed to argue, our subjectivities and perspectives are necessarily formed among the material remnants of empire, as testimonies of past and present violence. From this perspective, imperial spaces become an embodiment of Anthony Vidler's "warped space," in which the subject is "caught in spiral systems beyond its control and attempting to make representational and architectural sense of its predicament" (Vidler 9). Emphasizing how anxiety and dismemberment, disembodiment and displacement constitute the built environment, Vidler's warped space allows us to rethink imperial subjectivity from within the built space of empire.

Beyond a conceptual step, reading empire through warped space has important ramifications for the present. The debris of imperial pasts (Stoler) remains imbued with immense social, symbolic, and cultural meaning. Its lasting heritage continues to shape our subjectivity, structuring our relationships to the organization of space and the passage of time. From the perspective of imperial subjects, the space of empire is the space of power constituted

outside the subject, which the subject is forced to reckon with. Empire displaces our individual and collective sense of self through its displacement of people and objects. It renders us off-center.

While Vidler's work on containment, individuality, and subjecthood explores the "active role of objects and spaces in anxiety and phobia" (13), his focus remains on modernity rather than empire. Vidler's conceptualization emerges from a tension between two unique affects of modern city life, agoraphobia and claustrophobia. Yet, as decolonial scholars have argued (Quijano; Mignolo), the modern subject is necessarily constituted within a colonial/imperial matrix of power. Beyond the alienated individual of industrial society, who both recognizes their unjust predicament and fails to find a firm footing against it, lie those subjects acutely aware of the source of their oppression and their relative position within hierarchies of power. In short, the modern capitalist subject has always been part of an imperial story. As subjects of asymmetric power relations, we all have the potential to recognize our built environments as one form of Laudon's garden.

In what follows, I present Laudon's garden as an exemplary form of imperial space. The paper traces how processes of physical displacement (and its corollary, re-emplacement) have emerged during multiple periods and in distant locales associated with the history and legacy of the Habsburgs. I begin by discussing how Laudon's conquest of Belgrade and his Turkish garden became part of shared European imperial myth, evolving new symbolic meanings by the nineteenth century. I then proceed to explore the colonial context of these mythic afterlives, tracing parallel reverberations of displacement in other locales of imperial built space. In conversation with the growing literature on Habsburg coloniality, this section takes further the *off-center* vantage point of Eastern Central Europe, seeing the region as asymmetrical-yet fully integrated within global colonial relations (Sauer, *k.u.k. kolonial*; Bilgeri; Fischer; Sauer, "Habsburg"; Olin).<sup>1</sup> Zooming in on the short-lived Austro-Hungarian concession in Tianjin (天津, Tientsin), I argue that imperial capitalism continued to produce warped spaces based on processes of displacement and dispossession. The final section returns to Thekla and the imperial center, extrapolating her perspective from the scant historical record of her time among the Türkensteine of Laudon's garden. I conclude by bringing Thekla's perspective to contemporary Tianjin, where Habsburg built heritage has been reemployed for the purposes of accumulation in ways that echo the warped space of empire.

### **The Turkish Garden and Imperial Myth**

At first glance, Laudon's garden appears as an off-center site to study wider European developments, coming at the tail end of a century in which the

Enlightenment constructed itself against an imagined Orient. In categorical terms, the garden represented an unremarkable example of Turquerie, what Haydn Williams has called an “eighteenth-century European fantasy” (Williams 6–16). As Nebahat Avcioglu has shown, built displays of “Ottoman-ness” developed into a key form of European upper-class self-representation from the late seventeenth to the early nineteenth century (Avcioglu 14–24). In this context, the Hadersdorf Türkensteine are neither exemplary nor imposing, particularly when compared to earlier sites like the Schwetzingen mosque complex or London’s Kew Gardens. From such perspectives, the Hadersdorf Türkensteine offer little insight into sites of empire beyond the garden. However, approaching Laudon’s garden not as a fixed space, but a temporary, material expression of an ongoing process of imperial myth-making through displacement sheds new light on the social role played by built spaces of empire.

Laudon’s victory in Belgrade greatly contributed to the Generalissimo’s ascendancy to the pantheon of significant imperial figures. Soon after his death, two songs celebrating his prowess became part of the popular canon of soldiers’ songs. Adapted to an earlier melody but with slightly modified lyrics, “Marschieren wir in das türkische Land” sang of Laudon’s resolve and the might of his artillery. In the song’s last stanza, the decisive general ends a tense showdown: “Come on, gunners altogether / Jolt the pieces to the wall; Strike, give fire that thunders and crashes” (Ditfurth 61). In another song, entitled “Laudon vor Belgrad,” the “heavy fire” of Austrian bombs and cannons resolves the tension, emasculating Osman Pasha by singeing his beard (Ditfurth 62). The formulaic nature of “Marschieren wir” contributed to its popularity, with versions quickly adapted for the inter-imperial battles of Mainz (1793), Mantua (1797), Głogów (1806) and Sacile (1809) (Brenner). By the nineteenth century, Laudon’s figure overshadowed the tune’s early roots in the Habsburg Netherlands, and the Balkanologist Felix Kanitz confidently attributed the song’s origin to the 1789 conquest.<sup>2</sup> In its popular afterlife, the Generalissimo’s siege of Belgrade represented both personal achievement and imperial success *in nuce*.

Despite Habsburg rule over Belgrade lasting less than two years (1789–91), what Kanitz described as Laudon’s “last great act” quickly became part of imperial myth (Kanitz 21). Joining individual genius with technological prowess, the narrative of the 1789 siege was almost immediately incorporated into trans-European imperial culture. Belgrade’s siege figured as the culmination of Laudon’s biographies, the most popular of which proliferated in Europe soon after his death (J. Pezzl, *Laudon’s*; J. Pezzl, *Vie*; G. Pezzl). An early Italian retelling of the siege repeated the emasculating motif from “Laudon vor Belgrad” of Osman Pasha’s singed beard, here juxtaposed to the virility

of European cannons (*Istoria* 37). In Georgian Britain, Hannah Brand and James Cobb were inspired to thematize the siege in two 1791 operas. While undated, Cobb's libretto is most certainly about the 1789 siege, as it features the Austrian army prominently. Brand's opera deals with the 1456 siege, yet her production was an allegory of Laudon's contemporaneous conquest. Decades later, Austrians "dealing destruction's devastating doom," while "every endeavor engineers essay," fascinated readers of Alaric Alexander Watts's (1797–1864) alliterative "The Siege of Belgrade" (Watts 118).<sup>3</sup> Featuring awesome power, military genius, and the conquest of an Other, Laudon's victory became recognizable across Europe's cultural landscape as a quintessentially imperial backdrop.

In the German-speaking world, Laudon's myth was more intimately tied to both national and imperial ideologies. Contemporary to the memorialization of Laudon's siege, his Turkish garden played a small but potent role in Johann Gottfried Herder's *Letters on the Advancement of Humanity* (1792–97). Speaking to the necrologist Friedrich Schlichtegroll from a church graveyard, the somber Herder called upon Laudon's legacy as transcending ephemeral, individual achievements, noting how "every dead man deserves a tear, but many a German dead man deserves more than a sigh" (Herder 17). For the philosopher, the meaning of the past was contained primarily in its function within living national culture. Herder called upon the example of the Türkensteine to illustrate the sadness of Laudon's last days in his garden, where the Generalissimo "erected his tomb of the ruins of an unstormed gate." Among the stones, Herder wrote, Laudon could reflect on his mortality, the sadness of his "shining star" being blown out. Even the greatest Germans must face the consequences of their historicity, he argued, their worldly successes but a mere "castle of grief" (*castrum doloris*), an elaborate and decorated sepulchral stage.

The cultural memorialization of the Generalissimo as a German and imperial icon began in earnest in 1813, when his statue was enshrined in Ludwig I's Walhalla memorial near Regensburg. Herder's interlocutor, the biographer Schlichtegroll, immortalized Laudon in his *Necrologues*, which formed the "prime model for the didactic and sociocritical impulse of Enlightenment biography" in the German-speaking world (Heinrich 9). Perhaps most illustrative of such cultural canonization was Friedrich Kaiser's 1875 opera, *General Laudon*, in which the Belgrade siege serves as a narrative device to bind together imperial person and power. A highly visual performance, the opera ends with a tableau in which the general receives the keys to the city from Osman Pasha. Through such staging, Kaiser echoed the work of famous military painter and lithographer Johann Nepomuk Hoehle

(1790–1835), who depicted both the siege and Laudon's entry into the city and encounter with the pasha (Hoechle and Wolf). In its ending cadenza, *General Laudon* evocatively portrayed the power of imperial myth. Instead of the bombardment featured in eighteenth-century popular songs, the Ottomans of Kaiser's opera surrender Belgrade without a shot, impressed by Laudon's name alone (Kaiser 65).

In Vienna, Laudon's mythic presence accompanied the city's nineteenth-century restructuring, in which a bourgeois-aristocratic alliance produced the Ringstraße and the Kaiserforum as new sites of imperial urbanity (Schorske). Between 1862 and 1864, the Generalissimo received a street in his name in the eighth district, a statue on the facade of Archduke Victor Ludwig's palace in Schwarzenbergplatz, and another life-size statue in the imperial memorial pantheon at the Viennese Military Museum. Such public memorialization culminated in Laudon's inclusion on the Maria Theresa monument (designed 1874, unveiled 1888), centrally located on the new imperial forum, between the Museums of Natural History and Art History.

The ability to manipulate and transform urban space was a key part of Habsburg imperial myth, its civilizational mission intimately tied to the captivating power of architecture. For the Balkanologist Felix Kanitz, Laudon's Turkish garden exemplified Habsburg ability to rewrite history by remaking space. In his last major work, Kanitz describes in detail the monumental restructuring of Belgrade under Habsburg rule between 1717 and 1739. Evidenced in the stone was the colonists' civilizational mission, rudely interrupted. "All monumental buildings . . . bear the unmistakable stamp of Vienna's great architectural epoch," he wrote, "despite the later attached blue fields with the Sultans gilded name" (Kanitz 16). To exemplify this cover-up, Kanitz presented an image of the *Türkensteine* in Hadersdorf and a translation of their historical inscription, or *tarih*. Behind their Oriental facade, Belgrade's European structures called upon Habsburg return to collect the empire's unclaimed bounty. With Laudon's conquest, the course of history was corrected for a time. The *tarih* stone was brought to Vienna to "remind of the [Generalissimo's] last great deed" (19). In Kanitz's narrative, Laudon's myth transformed from personal triumph to the fulfillment of imperial space-making destiny.

### **Making Warped Space through Displacement**

During the nineteenth century, Habsburg colonial policy came to be intimately tied to the production of imperial spatial assemblages, which included the collection and display of material items. As assemblages made through re-emplacement, spaces like Laudon's garden were reinterpreted not only as

aristocratic displays but also as precursors to contemporaneous colonial processes. Particularly after the destruction of Vienna's city walls, the display of scientific collections and exotic others was coupled with the production of historicist imperial space in the capital (Jovanović). During the same period, imperial and aristocratic collections became open to the Viennese public. These included Eugene of Savoy's large exotic plant and animal collections as well as Francis II/I's animal and plant cabinets. By the early nineteenth century, the Austrian naturalist expedition to Brazil (1817–21) had attracted widespread attention of the news reading public. Thousands of the objects it collected were displayed in a "Brazilian Museum" located in Vienna's Harsbach Palace (Schmutzer and Feest 278). This trend culminated in the opening of the Imperial and Royal Natural History Museum in 1889, centrally located on the Kaiserforum. In increasingly public ways, Habsburg imperial identity was presented as constitutive of the European colonial family through the display of displaced objects.

Similar processes took place in newly colonized Ottoman territories, such as Bosnia-Herzegovina and the sanjak of Pljevlja/Taşlıca.<sup>4</sup> In both, the acquisition of ethnographic items and objects, their cataloguing, and display remained a central part of Habsburg cultural and military policy. As Diana Reynolds-Cordileone has shown, the display of such collected items back in Vienna "occurred through staging and presenting the occupied territories as a place where Austria could expand, explore, and extract while doing all manner of good work" (Reynolds-Cordileone 49). While historians like Robert Donia have interpreted Bosnia and the sanjak as different, "proximate colonies," their spatial remaking under Habsburg rule nevertheless reflected the treatment of distant imperial possessions.

Overseas, the circulation and displacement of material objects played a significant role in nineteenth-century Habsburg colonial policy, tied to the display of imperial authority and its potential for expansion. Looted objects were never mere portrayals of foreign spaces for imperial audiences, but also an assemblage of past and future imperial reach. Illustrative of this dynamic was Maximilian's Second Mexican Empire (1863–67), an effort to reestablish Habsburg dynastic order in the New World under French support. In 1863, *criollo* monarchists invited the younger brother of Habsburg Emperor Francis Joseph, Archduke Maximilian, to the Mexican throne with the support of French invading forces. For the archduke, a Central American empire represented the potential to "wipe out [the] stain" of Habsburg absence from the Western Hemisphere (Corti 115). To bolster Mexican support, he called upon the Habsburgs' vast Spanish patrimony, sending for several New World

items from Vienna's collections. In 1864, Moctezuma's shield and Hernán Cortés's letter to Charles V were shipped to Veracruz upon his request (Duncan 54). While Maximilian's adventure in Mexico ultimately succumbed to anticolonial resistance under Benito Juárez, it nevertheless called upon material markers of previous conquests to expand imperial myth and lay claims to new territory.

The deposition of looted items in Vienna played a dual role in imperial mythmaking, as a claim of belonging to the European colonial family and as materialized potential for expansion. Situating their legitimacy in the empire's historical power to displace, Habsburg scientific expeditions were central to this process. The empire's first large-scale expedition, the SMS *Novara*'s circumnavigation of the globe under Karl von Scherzer (1857–59) offers an illustrative example. Traversing the Indian Ocean, the *Novara* sailed to the Nicobar Islands in 1858 on a covert attempt to reestablish an eighteenth-century outpost of the Austrian East India Company. After its landing at Nancowry was upset by Nicobari resistance, the ship's expedition departed with four hundred items later deposited in Vienna's Museum of Ethnology (Mückler 54–56, 214).<sup>5</sup> Their material legacy offered a prelude to a later attempt at colonization by the SMS *Aurora*, likewise unsuccessful (Blumentritt).

In Northeast Africa, a site of Habsburg colonial interest throughout the nineteenth century, missionaries, traders, and medical advisers surveyed land and established outposts under the pretense of collecting ethnographic items (Stiansen; Chahrour). In today's South Sudan and northern Uganda, the Jesuit Ignacij Knoblechar collected a large number of items to be sent to imperial museums while profiting extensively from the ivory trade (Cisterino; Willink 322). Knoblechar was only one of a large number of Habsburg subjects in the region, whose "exploratory" missions were in fact massive colonial enterprises (Sauer, "Habsburg" 9). Irrespective of metropolitan skepticism toward colonial policy, the collection of material items remained part of Habsburg imperial practice that situated the empire within the family of European colonial states. Such public mythmaking was predicated on the empire's continued participation in material displacement, as well as the potential such bounty opened for the projection of military power.

Beyond material objects, creating the built space of empire depended on the ability to manage, displace, and collect racialized people. As Heather Morrison has shown in discussing the life and legacy of Mmadi Make/Angelo Soliman, an eighteenth-century Viennese of Nigerian descent, the symbolic subjugation of racialized bodies had been part of Habsburg imperial display since the early modern period (Morrison). From the eighteenth century

onward, a number of racialized people were captured or enslaved for the needs of imperial “exhibitionary complex,” some of their cadavers shown in the court’s Natural Cabinet (Schmutzer and Feest 275; Bennett, “Exhibitionary”; Bennett, *Birth* chap. 2). Such processes continued throughout the nineteenth century, tying imperial discourses of racial domination to the popularization of scientific expeditions. In 1821, in addition to a number of objects and live animals, the Viennese public was presented with two Aimoré people kidnapped by the previously mentioned Austrian expedition to Brazil (“Die Botocuden-Indier in Wien”). Named João and Francesca by their captors, the pair lived and worked in the newly opened court gardens in Vienna’s Kaiserforum. They were accompanied by Emmanuel Rio, an enslaved man of Afro-Brazilian descent, later also employed as an imperial gardener. At least three other Afro-Brazilians, Laureana, Jose, and Candido, were brought to Vienna by the naturalist Johan Natterer in 1836 (Sulzbacher 101). From the 1870s onward, the exotic animal trader Carl Hagenbeck organized elaborate *Völkerschaustellungen*, anthropological-zoological displays of racialized people, displaced objects, and flora and fauna across metropolitan Vienna (Foster; Scott). As part of “Habsburg scientific expeditions,” turn-of-the-century Vienna was constructed through white violence, emplaced in instrumentalized displays of kidnapped persons.

As evidenced by Thekla’s brief appearance in the archive, the aftermath of Laudon’s conquest forewarned latter displacements of imperial Others. Her own capture was inseparable from the mass resettlement of thousands of Muslim Belgraders that followed the Austrian capture of the city in 1789. According to Nikola Samardžić, 11,154 Muslims were forced to leave Belgrade as part of the city’s surrender (196). The kidnapping of people like Thekla, João, and Francesca showcased an imperial power to displace people and objects across the globe, both in the metropolis and the periphery.

### **Imperial Capitalism and Displacement**

Human displacement and dispossession shaped built space in the fin-de-siècle Habsburg periphery, through the agency of metropolitan capital. Between 1901 and 1917, dispossessing the local Chinese population was at the heart of Austro-Hungarian space-making in the port city of Tianjin, the empire’s most prominent overseas colony. As a result of Austria-Hungary’s participation in the Boxer War, a part of Tianjin directly across from the walled Chinese city and partially occupied by Habsburg troops officially became the empire’s concession in 1902. Linking the Bóhǎi Sea with the Grand Canal, Tianjin was split up between competing colonial powers, becoming a “hyper-colony” (Rogaski). The immense level of imperial competition in Tianjin

meant that Habsburg colonial officials were constantly confronted with other powers, both as competitors and potential cooperative partners (Sauer, “Habsburg”). In those parts of Tianjin under Habsburg control lived forty thousand Chinese residents, a few dozen European merchants, and a rotating crew of navy officers and marines, mostly Hungarian and Croatian. Thus, the Austro-Hungarian consulate played multiple roles: it headed the concessional authority, developed Habsburg economic interests, and defended the empire’s status as a European power.

In the early 1900s, Tianjin was an immensely productive site of remaking built space, an example of what David Harvey has called the *spatial fix*. For Harvey, the concept has multiple interrelated meanings that together reveal how capital makes and remakes space across the globe. At a basic level, the fix represents “capitalism’s insatiable drive to resolve its inner crisis tendencies by geographical expansion and geographical restructuring,” an always-temporary solution to crisis (Harvey 24). Yet such transformative solutions require material and temporal “fixity,” as capital is bound up in machines and infrastructure in order to facilitate its faster future movement. Between 1901 and 1917, the Habsburg presence in Tianjin exemplified these contradictory processes.

The Austro-Hungarian concession supported metropolitan industry by linking imperial capital with military power, a relationship at the heart of colonial space-making practice. For imperial powers, Tianjin was a site laden with potential, as the gate to Beijing and the banking center of northern China. The city was also a key stop on Austrian Lloyd’s shipping route from Trieste to the Pacific (Lee). On a local level, Habsburg industrial concerns remained in competition with German or British ones. Internationally, compacts such as the European Danube Commission and the Chinese Military Customs helped coordinate Austro-Hungarian capital and military force with other imperial powers. Facilitated by the Tianjin consulate, Viennese banks funded Chinese generals’ weapons purchases from Bohemian industrial concerns Škoda and Poldihütte.<sup>6</sup> The investment was backed against a potential takeover of property-tax collection in Zhili province, the movement of Viennese finance capital guaranteed by future imperial expansion.

For metropolitan capital squeezed by declining rates of profit, the building up of concession infrastructure opened another path to profit. Such endeavors did not come without difficulties. In 1903, the vice-consul of Tianjin Karl Bernauer reported that prospects of development were poor, as the concession housed “poorly-off merchants and tradesmen, as well as coolies who work in the Native City during the day.” Bernauer proposed a solution to the problem:

A development of the concession can only be expected if a company with sufficient capital is able to finance the concession; *it goes without saying* that this company must always be supervised by the authority entrusted with the administration of the concession . . . under certain conditions, the company could be granted *the exclusive right of expropriation of the current land and house owners. By building houses on this land, the company could undoubtedly make a profitable business.*<sup>7</sup>

Expanding upon his proposal, Bernauer also suggested that this new company take over the construction of a new bridge and quay on the Bái Hé River, increasing the volume of trade and the concession's income exponentially.

In December 1905 Bernbauer's plan came to fruition with the founding of the Hotung Baugesellschaft (奥界建造公司), a firm that undertook several Europeanizing urban projects in Tianjin in the following decade. Hotung Baugesellschaft was headed by the consular head secretary, the Fiume-born thirty-one-year-old Hugo Accurti. Figures like Accurti embodied the tight relationship between military force and colonial space-making in Austro-Hungarian Tianjin. As commanding officer of the navy corps he took part in the conquest of the city in 1901, becoming police inspector of the concession and consulate secretary in 1902. From the end of 1905 to his fall from grace in 1917, he led the Hotung company with his brother Gino.

In the first decades of the twentieth century, the Hotung Baugesellschaft participated in a number of urban renewal projects, including the development of land around Baron von Czikanny Straße and the construction of the city's tramway line, quay, and the international bridge over the river. Just as Bernauer advised, Hotung Baugesellschaft relied on its tight integration with the concession authorities to displace residents and dispossess their land for hygienic reasons. By 1908, it owned fifty-nine *mu* of developed land, as well as interest in the tram line. The previous year, it paid out a dividend of 8 percent to its stockholders, Habsburg officials, and Chinese elites (Wright 751). While the empire's presence in Tianjin ended as a consequence of the First World War, its profound interventions continued to mark the city's urban tissue throughout the twentieth century.

### **Subjectivity and the Counterhistories of Warped Space**

Expanding upon the spatial relations congealed in the assemblage of Laudon's garden, this article has presented a history of empire as the builder of warped space. In particular, I've focused on displacement and re-emplacement as two connected imperial processes. With roots in the cultural world of aristocratic Enlightenment, such forms of manipulating human beings and their

material heritage continued to shape Habsburg space-making for the purposes of science and profit during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

My approach to imperial built space emerges from the perspective of subjects caught up in processes outside their control within asymmetric relations of power. This is necessarily an imaginative task, precisely because it extrapolates an imperial history from brief appearances in the archive. A counter-history that sees imperial space as warped space has to fill the gaps through informed resonances rather than causal links. Using the archival record not as the basis but as a starting point, this approach counters the methodological tendency of historians to “empathize . . . with the victor” (Benjamin 256). What little record exists of people like Thekla, as I argue, nevertheless offers lateral readings of the built space of empire, placing empire itself off-center to human perspectives.

What could be Thekla’s historical legacy, then? Not much is known about the “kleine Türkin” brought from Belgrade by Laudon. After his death, the papers recorded that he left two thousand florins in her name (Maruna 146). In contemporary reports of his passing, she is mentioned to have been “very sad, and wept without ceasing” (*Politische Gespräche* 240). At the time, the papers continued, the ten-year-old Thekla “spoke very good German.” They noted with care how the girl called her captor “Bascha Papa.” Was such journalistic romanticism merely an Orientalist rendering of “pasha”? Or did Thekla offer a sincere assessment to her captors—that she had been taken by a headman (*başı*) who liked to play the role of “papa”?

In contemporary sources, Thekla’s birth name does not appear. From her mention in Laudon’s obituary, we can extrapolate that she was eight at the time of her capture. Wandering the gardens of the Hadersdorf estate, she would have encountered displaced symbols of her home. In his Turkish garden, Thekla would have found a tombstone separated into four pieces and the decoration of Belgrade’s most majestic Istanbul gate. Like pieces of a broken mirror, they refracted the city of her memories in warped, disorienting ways.

Had Thekla focused on the largest of the stones emplaced in the garden landscape, she would have immediately noticed the sultanic seal (*tuğra*) of Mahmud I. As depicted in period drawings, this symbol of imperial power was placed upside down in Laudon’s garden, likely by a landscaper unfamiliar with Arabic script (Gurk and Gurk, fol. 19). Next to the sultan’s sigil lay the gate’s *tarih*, a set of verses commonly used in Ottoman architecture to describe the erection or renovation of a structure. Written by the Stambolite poet Mirzazâde Ahmet Neylî, its verses recount Mahmud I’s reconquest of

Belgrade from the Habsburgs in 1739 and his subsequent renovation of the city. Neyli's verse described "the most important gate of all, for it belongs to the exalted capital [Istanbul] and thus glistens full of decoration" (Rajković 237). From Thekla's perspective, the verse would have rung unendingly hollow, a broken stone describing a fortress, "even brighter and more solid." On the outskirts of Vienna, what was left of the gate's decoration remained hard to find. For centuries, its decorative marble lay scattered in the woods, known only to those venturing out to the suburbs for a forest stroll.

Contemporary Tianjin appears similar to the warped landscape of imperial Hadersdorf. The buildings built by the Hotung Gesellschaft were redistributed to the people after the Chinese Revolution. In 2005, this began to change as the Tianjin Municipal People's Congress inaugurated the Regulations on the Protection of Historic Buildings (市歷史風貌建築保護條例). Singling out 615 structures for protection and designating a number of historical and cultural districts (历史文化街区), the city government looked to colonial architecture as a resource.

Historic designation has perversely produced a major dispossession of the city center residents. What the law protected was not an existing urban fabric but its re-emplacment—an imagined urban ambiance constructed for the purposes of increased property values and tourist consumption. Since the early 2000s, different strategies have emerged to fight evictions in Tianjin, from petitions and public protests calling out the nominally socialist state to appeals for protection through the guise of historical heritage (Feng). In the context of Shanghai, Qin Shao describes how similar strategies shape the fight against "domicide," the destruction and eviction of one from their home (24–30).

Even before the 2005 proclamation of historic areas, new buildings purposefully borrowed and mixed elements from colonial architectural styles in the former Habsburg concession ("Rare Austro-Hungarian Architecture"). Developed as an extension of the nearby "Italian style town" project, large office buildings empty of residents dot the riverfront quay. In their commodified hybridization, they offer little pretense of historicity. Discussing the Italian colonial legacy in Tianjin, Maurizio Marinelli notes provocatively that the "concession has become today an example of hyper-*heterotopia*: a hyphenated space, 'something in between' which lives and breathes both historically and emotionally between different worlds" (Marinelli 425). For Marinelli, Tianjin "offers a significant example of indigenous appropriation and reinvention of emotional capital" yet also points to "asynchronous temporalities and spatialities of past and present." In his 2004 film *The World*,

Jia Zhangke presents such displacement as a hypercommodified landscape of unachievable desires, a moribund capitalism. Stripped of the veneer of authenticity, Tianjin's imperial space displaces the observer from coherent historical narratives.

Tracing a global history of Laudon's garden testifies to the immediate and long-term displacements produced by empire. Walking among the *Türkensteine* after the Generalissimo's death, the ten-year-old Thekla could have seen the imperial process revealed—as the twisting and breaking of bodies and lifeworlds, assembled lopsided in the gardens of elites. In his 1970 novel *The Fortress*, Yugoslav Muslim writer Meša Selimović offered a similar assessment of imperial subjectivity. In the book's opening chapter, the protagonist, Ahmet Šabo, recalls a horrific experience of wartime to Ramiz, a young student, who offers the following retort: "People's lives are hunger, bloodshed, misery, bare survival on their own land and senseless dying on another's. And the rulers will return home, every one of them, to tell of glory and to suck the blood of the survivors" (Selimović 11). As subjects displaced by imperial processes, our spatial perspective can only echo that of the student Ramiz and Thekla, the baron's young captive.

Like Thekla's, our displacement is both psychological and physical, a continued reminder that asymmetric power relations constitute the spaces we inhabit. Formed out of physical markers of conquest, Laudon's Turkish garden is an appropriate simile for the making of imperial built space. The manipulation of bodies and populations, the tearing of memory markers and their violent re-emplacement in new contexts is the groundwork of empire. Understanding the kinds of subjectivities produced by imperial power requires a history of empire that is attuned to the kinds of built space empire makes. ■

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## NOTES

- 1 On the broader region in the context of inter-imperiality, see Manuela Boatcă and Anca Parvalescu's contribution to this special issue.
- 2 Kanitz 21–22; on Laudon's myth, see Kunisch.
- 3 The poem has been reprinted many times without attribution. Watts's son claimed his father's authorship posthumously, stating that the first publication was in *Literary Gazette*, 1820.
- 4 In 1908, Bosnia was annexed, while the sanjak returned to Ottoman governance in 1909 after the Young Turk Revolution.
- 5 As of 2019, the items remain in the archive of the Weltmuseum Wien.
- 6 At-OeStA. HHStA-Diplomatie und Außenpolitik 1848–1918 GsA Peking 036-2 Skoda Lieferungen, 21 and Peking 036-4 Poldihuette, 3/331.
- 7 Karl Bernauer, "Vice-consul Bernauer an Graf Gołuchowski," January 1903, At-OeStA. HHStA-Diplomatie und Außenpolitik 1848–1918 GsA Peking 103-1, 9. Emphasis added.

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