

# The Garden of Perfect Brightness—1

## The Yuanmingyuan as Imperial Paradise (1700-1860)

by Lillian M. Li

The 3 Great  
Qing Emperors

Paradise  
on Earth

The 40  
Scenes

European  
Impressions

Sources  
& Credits

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#### SOURCES

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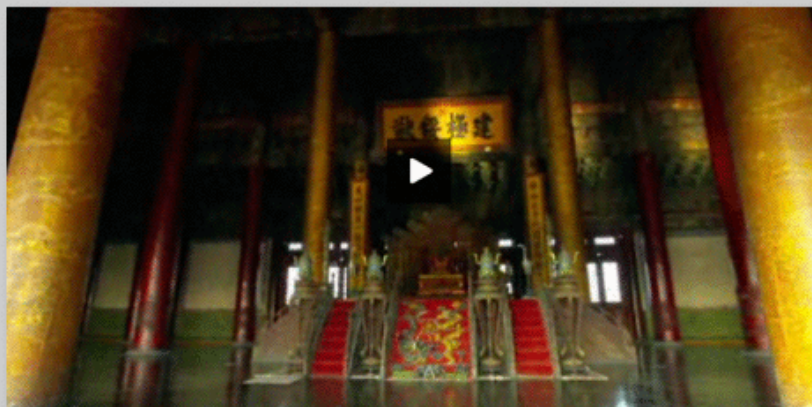
## Links

["The Looting of Yuanming and the Translation of Chinese Art in Europe"](#) by Greg M. Thomas (Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide).

["China Illustrated by Thomas Allom \(1804-1872\): Impression of the Great Empire of Qing."](#) Many of Allom's prints of China, published in four volumes in London between 1843 and 1847, are reproduced here (China History Forum).

"Chinese History: Thomas Allom's '*China Illustrated*.'" Selected prints with original commentaries by G.H. Wright (The Chinese Outpost).

"History of Gardens in East Asia" by François Louis, Bard Graduate Center. Includes online resources and bibliography for the Yuanmingyuan.



*Video from the Forbidden City at the Peabody Essex Museum*

*"Zhiguo Hall at Lianxilechu in the Old Summer Palace"*



*A recently-discovered photograph of a pavilion in the Happy Place of Lianxi (Lianxi lechu 濂溪樂處)*

[ymy\_wooden\_ZhiguoHall]



Watch a documentary about Yuanmingyuan  
Part one : Part two

## NOTES

1. The iconography of this image is discussed in *Worshipping the Ancestors: Chinese Commemorative Portraits*, edited by Jan Stuart and Evelyn S. Rawski (Washington, D.C.: Freer Gallery of Art, 2001), pp. 120-21.

2. Forêt, Philippe. *Mapping Chengde: The Qing Landscape Enterprise* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2000), p. 70. This painting and artist are discussed in *China: The Three Emperors, 1662–1795*, edited by Evelyn S. Rawski and Jessica Rawson (London: Royal Academy of the Arts, 2005), pp. 393-94.

3. Forêt, Color Plate 3, and pp. 49-53.

4. Bell, John. *A Journey from St Petersburg to Peking, 1719–22*. Edited and with introduction by J. L. Stevenson (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1966). Bell, pp. 132-137, describes the reception of the Russian ambassador and entourage by the Kangxi emperor at Garden of Joyful Spring (Changchunyuan) in 1720. They were required to perform the kowtow ("Great pains were taken to avoid this piece of homage, but without success." p. 134), but otherwise, Bell was impressed with the quiet and ordinariness of the event. "By these means every thing goes on with great regularity; but at the same time with wonderful quickness. In short, the characteristic of the court of Peking is order and decency, rather than grandeur and magnificence." (p. 135) Bell remarked on the entertainments, including music, dancing, wrestling matches, and fireworks displays, to which they were invited. He found the emperor was most cordial and seemed more nimble than his sons.

Bell also records the Kangxi emperor's greetings to Peter the Great, including cautioning him to guard against overexertion in the cold weather. Peter the Great (1672-1725) died shortly after Kangxi (1654–1722), but was considerably younger. Also in Malone, Carroll Brown. *History of the Summer Palaces under the Ch'ing Dynasty* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1934), pp. 37-42.

5. Wong, Young-tsu. *A Paradise Lost: The Imperial Garden Yuanming Yuan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2001), pp. 51-52.

6. According to Attiret, Qianlong returned to the Forbidden City only two to three months of the year. Attiret's years in China coincided with the Qianlong's major

constructions at Yuanmingyuan, which may have kept the emperor there more of the year. Attiret, Jean Denis (1702–1768). *A particular account of the Emperor of China's gardens near Peking: in a letter from F. Attiret, a French missionary, now employ'd by that emperor to paint the apartments in those gardens, to his friend at Paris*. Translated from the French by Sir Harry Beaumont (London: printed for R. Dodsley; and sold by M. Cooper, 1752).

Dates of residence are found from Chinese sources reproduced in *Yuanshi de huihuang: Yuanmingyuan jianzhu yuanlin yanjiu yu baohu*, edited by Guo Daiheng (Shanghai: Shanghai keji jishu chubanshe, 2009), pp. 70-74.

7. Attiret, p. 47

8. Kutcher, Norman A. "Unspoken Collusions: The Empowerment of Yuanming Yuan Eunuchs in the Qianlong Period," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 70.2 (Dec. 2010), pp. 449-495., pp. 449-495.

9. Strassberg, Richard E., "War and Peace: Four Intercultural Landscapes," in *China on Paper: European and Chinese Works from the Late Sixteenth to the Early Nineteenth Century*, edited by Marcia Reed and Paola Demattè (Los Angeles: The Getty Research Institute, 2007), p. 106

10. Tangdai 唐岱 and Shen Yuan 沈源. *Yuanmingyuan sishi jingtu yong 圓明園四十景圖咏 (40 Scenes of Yuanmingyuan)* (Beijing: Zhongguo jianzhu gongyuan chubanshe, 2007), preface. This volume reproduces the original set. I thank John Finlay (Paris) for this explanation, and for sharing insights about the 40 Scenes.

11. Chiu, Che Bing. *Yuanming Yuan: le Jardin de la Clarté Parfaite* (Besançon: Editions de l'Imprimeur, 2000), pp. 229-230. The translations of scene titles and understanding of their meaning in this unit are adapted from this source, as well as from Malone and Wong.

12. Malone, p. 77, and Wong, p. 28

13. Chiu, p. 235

14. The Qianlong emperor did not make the first of his six southern tours until 1751, seven years after the completion of the 40 Scenes album. So in a literal sense, he could not actually have been influenced by seeing the south. Rather he was inspired by what he already knew about it through poetry and painting, as well his grandfather's tours.

15. Wong, p. 35

16. Wong, pp. 36-37. Malone, pp. 83-88, has detailed description together with photographs of archaeological remains of the Ancestral Shrine.

17. Chiu, p. 264

18. Attiret 1982, 16-17, cited by Wong, pp. 43-46

19. Described by Attiret, pp. 26-31.

20. Malone, pp. 94-96.

21. Attiret, p. 5

22. Attiret, pp. 36-40.

23. Chambers, Sir William. *A Dissertation on Oriental Gardening* (Dublin: printed for W.

Wilson, 1773), pp. 11-12. An excellent overview of Chinese influence on European gardening is found in Strassberg, pp. 121-132.

24. The eight large tribute gifts left at Yuanmingyuan included a planetarium, clocks, barometers, and Wedgewood porcelain as well as model warships and guns. Wong, pp. 84-85.

25. Cited in Malone, p. 76.

26. Quoted in Barrow, John. *Travels in China, containing Descriptions, Observations, & Comparisons made and collected in the course of a short residence at the Imperial Palace of Yuen-ming-yuen and on the subsequent journey from Peking to Canton*, first American ed. (Philadelphia: Wm. McLaughlin, 1805 [also London: 1806] ), p. 87.

27. Reported in Staunton, Sir George. *An Authentic Account of an Embassy from the King of Great Britain to the Emperor of China*, 2 vols. and a folio atlas of plates (London 1797-98), pp. 121-22. But John Barrow's own account, op. cit., was not so favorable.

28. Barrow, pp. 73, 83-84; Malone, pp. 164-166; and Wong, p. 84.

## CREDITS

"The Garden of Perfect Brightness I: The Yuanmingyuan as Imperial Paradise (1700-1860)" was developed by Visualizing Cultures at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and presented on MIT OpenCourseWare.

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