

Monday, November 1, 2010, 15:00-17:00

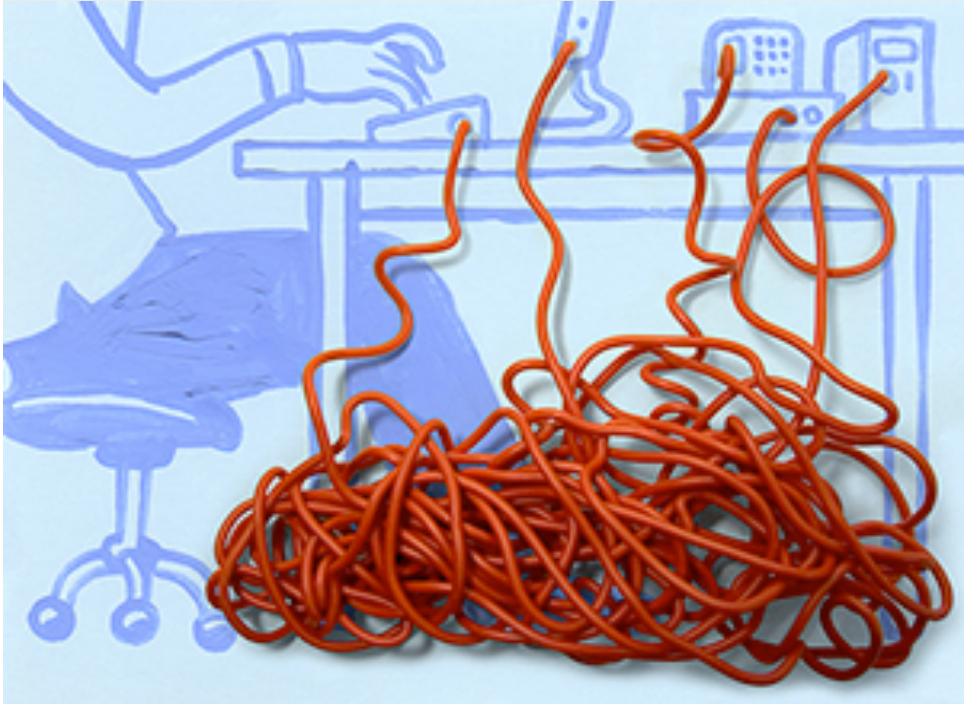
Stockholm University  
Dept. of Oriental Languages

"China in Asia" colloquia series  
Sal A, Kräftriket 4A

## **Staking a Claim in Paradise:**

### **The Appropriation of Central Asia by the Capitals of China (1625-1945)**

Philippe Forêt



## Introduction

### FIELD

The historical geography of China

### LECTURE TOPICS

- Landscape appropriation
- The importation of the landscape of Central Asia ("Tartary") into China ("The Eighteen Provinces")
- The capitals of China (1625-1945):
  1. Shenyang 盛京
  2. Beijing 京师
  3. Chengde 承德
  4. Changchun 新京
- Manchu state-building: claims to be the holder of the Mandate of Heaven, to be khan, and to be bodhisatva

## OBJECTIVE

Understand the non-Chinese notions at work in landscape-making and in the garden architecture of the imperial capitals of China.

## METHODOLOGY

- Examine imperial villas, gardens and temples.
- Hypothesis: These sites represent physically and explicitly theories and techniques on landscape appropriation.
- Case study: The residences of the Qing dynasty (1625-1912) in Shenyang, Beijing (Yuanming yuan and Yihe yuan) and in Chengde (Bishu shanzhuang), and those of Manchoukouo (1932-1945).

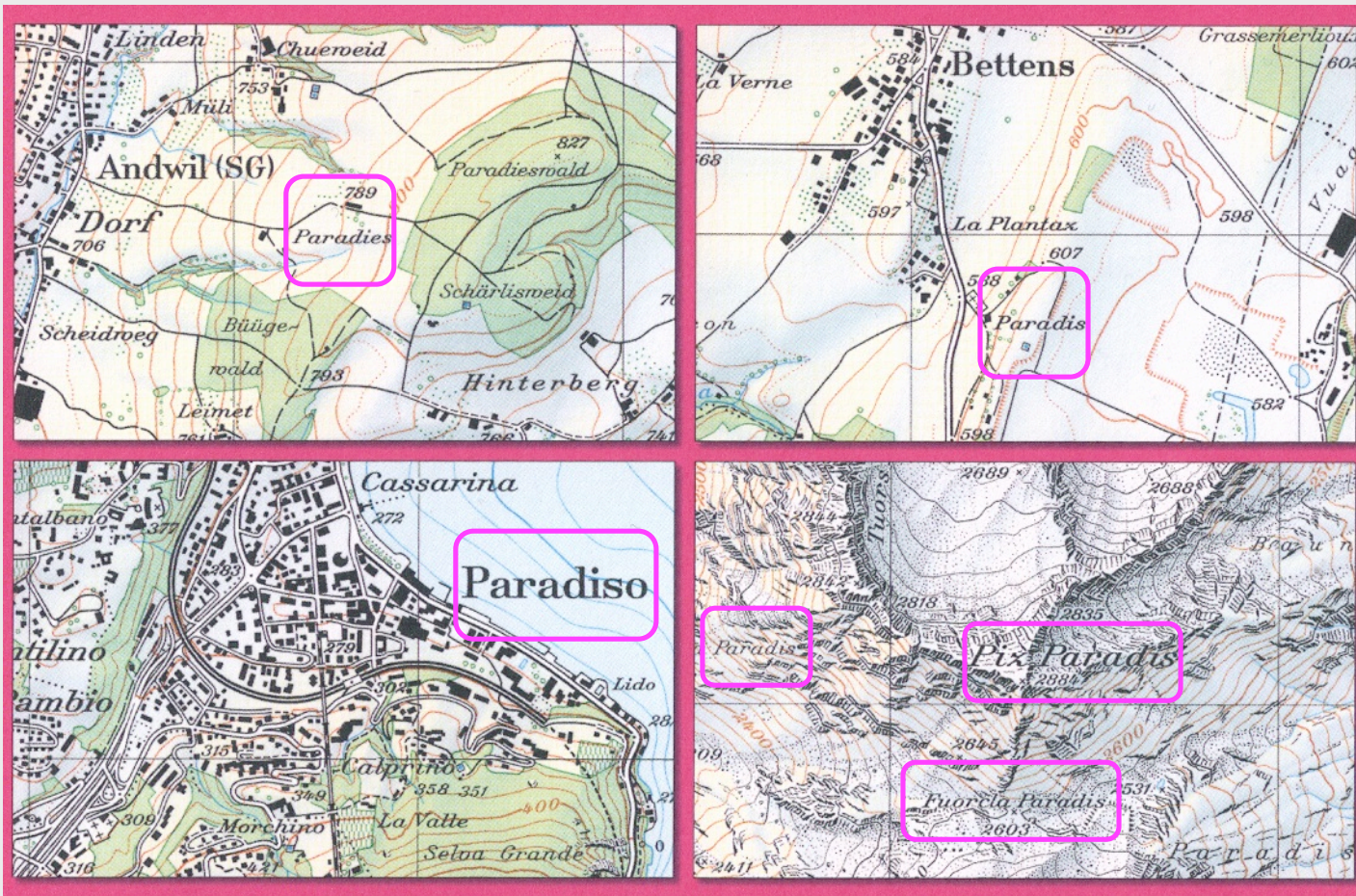
## EXPECTED RESULTS

Conceptualize the Qing landscape through changes in scale rather than through ruptures in time.

## FIRST QUOTATION OF THE DAY

Given the choice between a good hell and a counterfeit paradise, what will people choose? Whatever you say, many people will believe that a counterfeit paradise has got to be better than a good hell. Though at first they recognize that the paradise is bogus, they either don't dare or wish to expose it as such. As time passes, they forget that it's not real and actually begin to defend it, insisting that it's the only paradise in existence.

Lu Xun, *Shidiaode haodiyu* 失掉的好地獄 (A Good Hell Lost)



## THE OTHER QUOTATION OF THE DAY

Gold Mountain [Jinshan 金山] sends forth [dragon] veins, warm rapids divide the springs, clouds and pools are clear and deep. [There are] rocky ponds and dense green vegetation, broad rivers and fertile grasslands, yet nothing harms the fields and cottages. [...] The wind is clear, summer bracing; it is an ideal place for people to be nourished. Arising from heaven and earth's inborn qualities, it is the sort of place where people can commune with nature.

The Kangxi Emperor,  
Preface to *Yu zhi Bihu shanzhuang ji*  
御制避暑山庄记

香山徐氏恭摹  
大同書局恭印

御製避暑山莊記  
金山發脈暖溜分泉雲壑潄泓石  
潭青靄境廣草肥無傷田廬之害  
風清夏爽宜人調養之功自天地  
之生成歸造化之品彙朕數巡江  
干深知南方之秀麗兩幸秦隴益  
明西土之殫陳北過龍沙東遊長  
白山川之壯人物之樸亦不能盡



## Dramatis personæ

The main architects of the landscape appropriation program were the two most energetic emperors of the Qing dynasty as well as the weakest of all:

- The Kangxi emperor (1654-1722) chose the sites for the palace and gardens of the Yuanming yuan and Bishu shanzhuang, named vistas in the gardens, commissioned illustrated albums like the *Yuzhi Bishu shanzhuang tuyong* 御制避暑山庄图詠, etc.

- The Qianlong emperor (1711-1799) enlarged the palace of Chengde, built ten Outlying Temples, conceived a new series of 36 vistas, reedited *Yuzhi Bishu shanzhuang tuyong*, etc.

- Puyi (1906-1967) was the last Qing emperor (1908-1924) and the emperor of Manchoukuo (1934-1945).

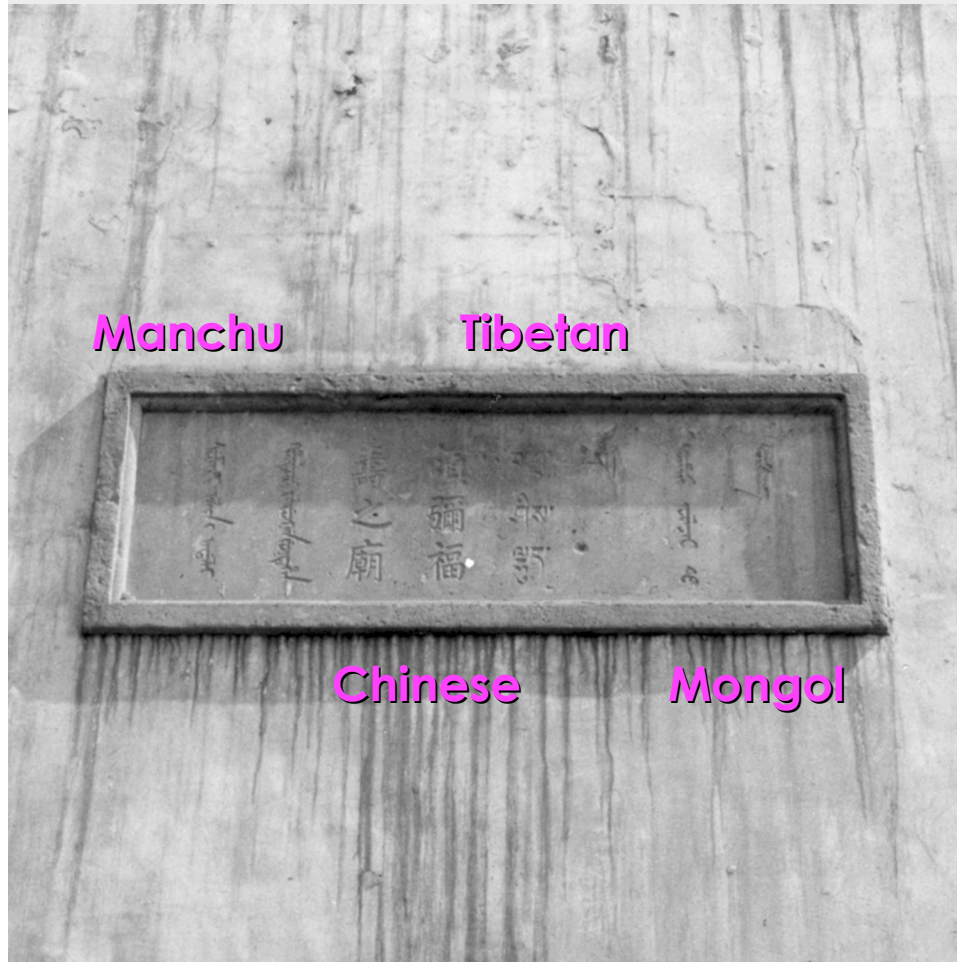
## Anonymous dramatis personæ

Imprinted picture postcard from Manchoukuo, showing three Mongolian girls in front of their yurt (domestic mail, 1941)





Plaque above the entrance gate  
to the Sumeru temple 须弥福寿之庙  
of Chengde



Manchu

Tibetan

Chinese

Mongol

## The guiding principles of Qing policy

1. Pro-Manchu and Mongol  
“affirmative action”
2. Racial and spatial segregation
3. Administration and integration of  
Central Asia within the Empire
4. Emperor's patronage of the arts,  
literature and religion, including  
Tibetan Buddhism

## A program in landscape architecture conceived for appropriation

1. Facilities built to entertain  
Mongol vassals, Tibetan dignitaries  
and foreign ambassadors
2. Construction of Sino-Tibetan  
temples
3. Sojourns every summer of the  
Qing court in Chengde 承德, and  
hunts in Mulan 木兰围场 (Mongolia)

## **Qing landscape**

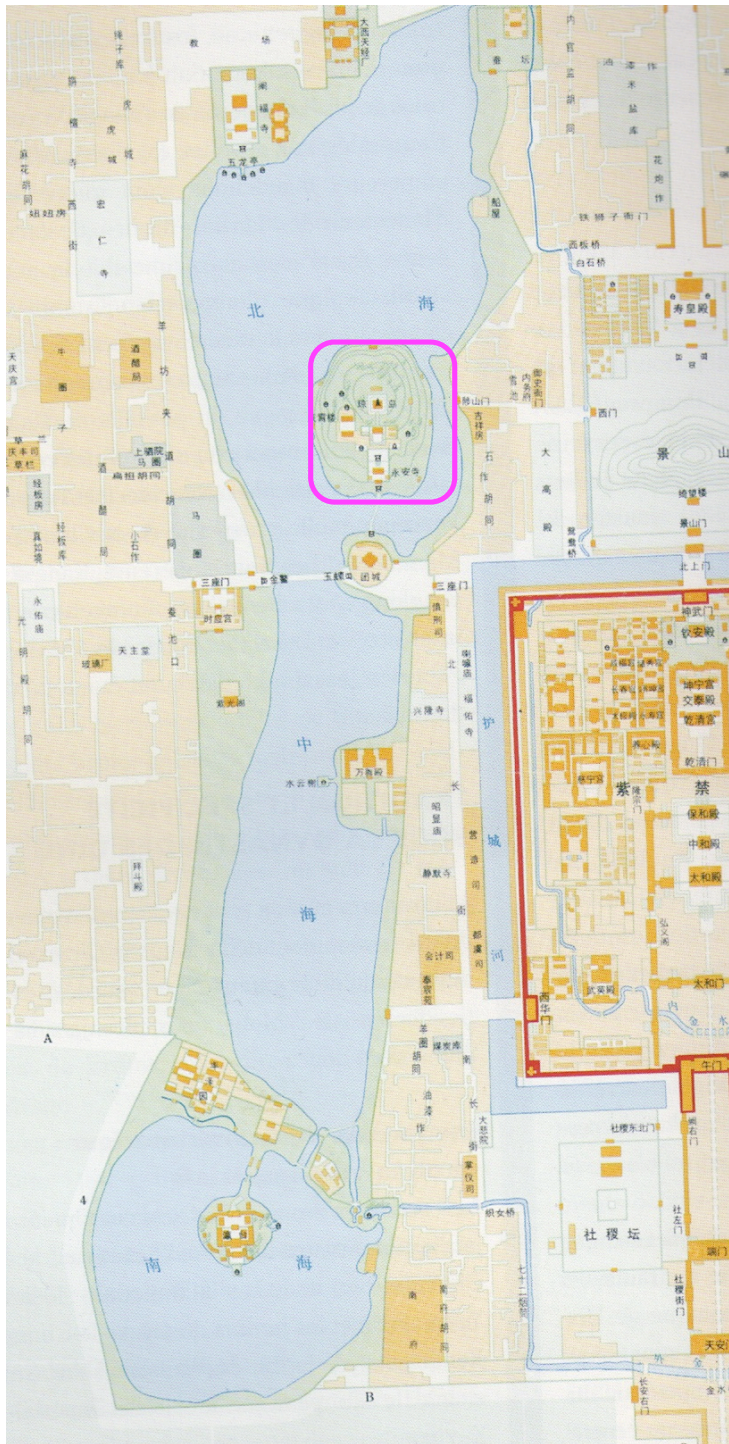
The Qing enterprise has defined a dynamic, inspiring, and spatially isolated network of places in the strategic Beijing-Changchun corridor.

Away from the rigidity of the Forbidden City rituals, the emperors applied cosmic notions to landscape making and garden architecture under the strong influence of historical precedents, Chinese aesthetics, Buddhist cosmology, and practical concerns.

Apart from their official functions, these locales were designed by the Qing monarchs to facilitate passage between:

- the visible and the invisible,
  - the real and the metaphorical,
  - the physical and the metaphysical,
- and the fusion of geographical scales.

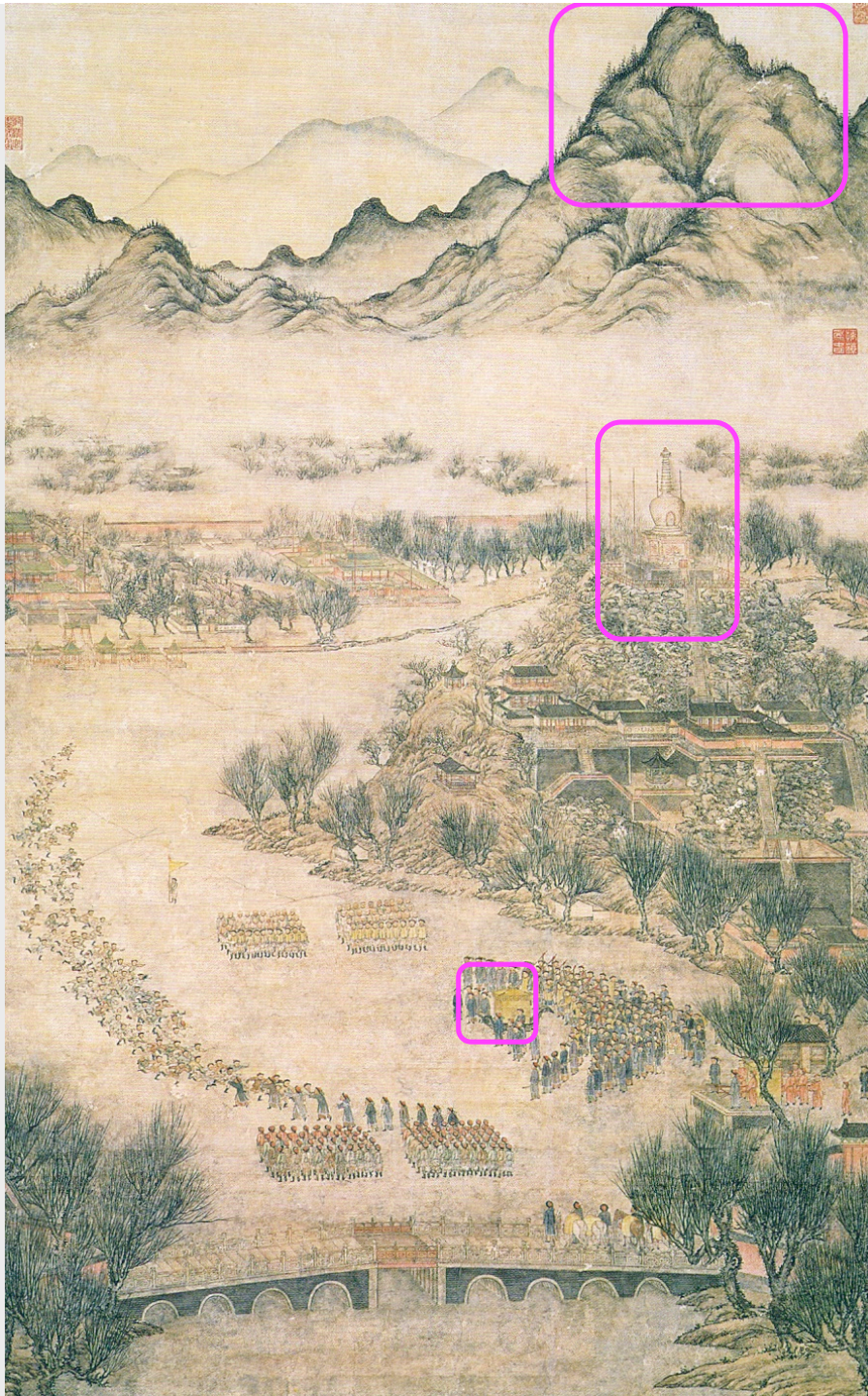
All of this within a carefully controlled environment that exalted the universal pre-eminence of the Emperor.



## The “Great Interior” in 1750

- The gardens inside the Forbidden City proper
- Jingshan mountain
- The Xi yuan imperial park (Beihai today) with its Tibetan White Dagoba temple (Baita si), built in 1270 (in pink).

The resulting landscape exhibits moving, incongruous and undulating patterns that would have allowed the emperor to: “remain close to the eternal fluctuations of nature. He is aware of how they minister to the needs of his life. He is, though, so close to this cosmic play, so much of it himself, that he is almost unconscious of his riches.” George N. Kates, *The Years that Were Fat, Peking, 1933-1940*. Oxford UP, 1988, p. 256.

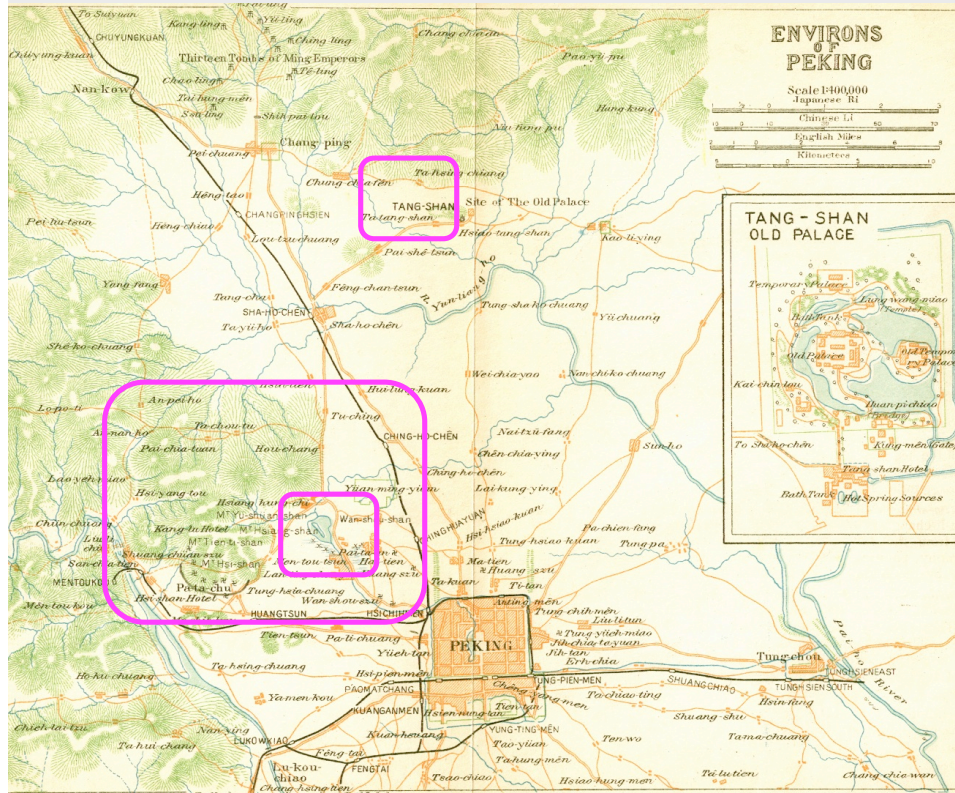


## Painting of Lake Beihai, an example of incongruity in the landscape

Soldiers from the Eight Banners perform acrobatics on the frozen lake in front of the Qianlong emperor.

“Ice Games, on Imperial Order,”  
painting by Shen Yuan [1740].

## The gardens beyond the city walls

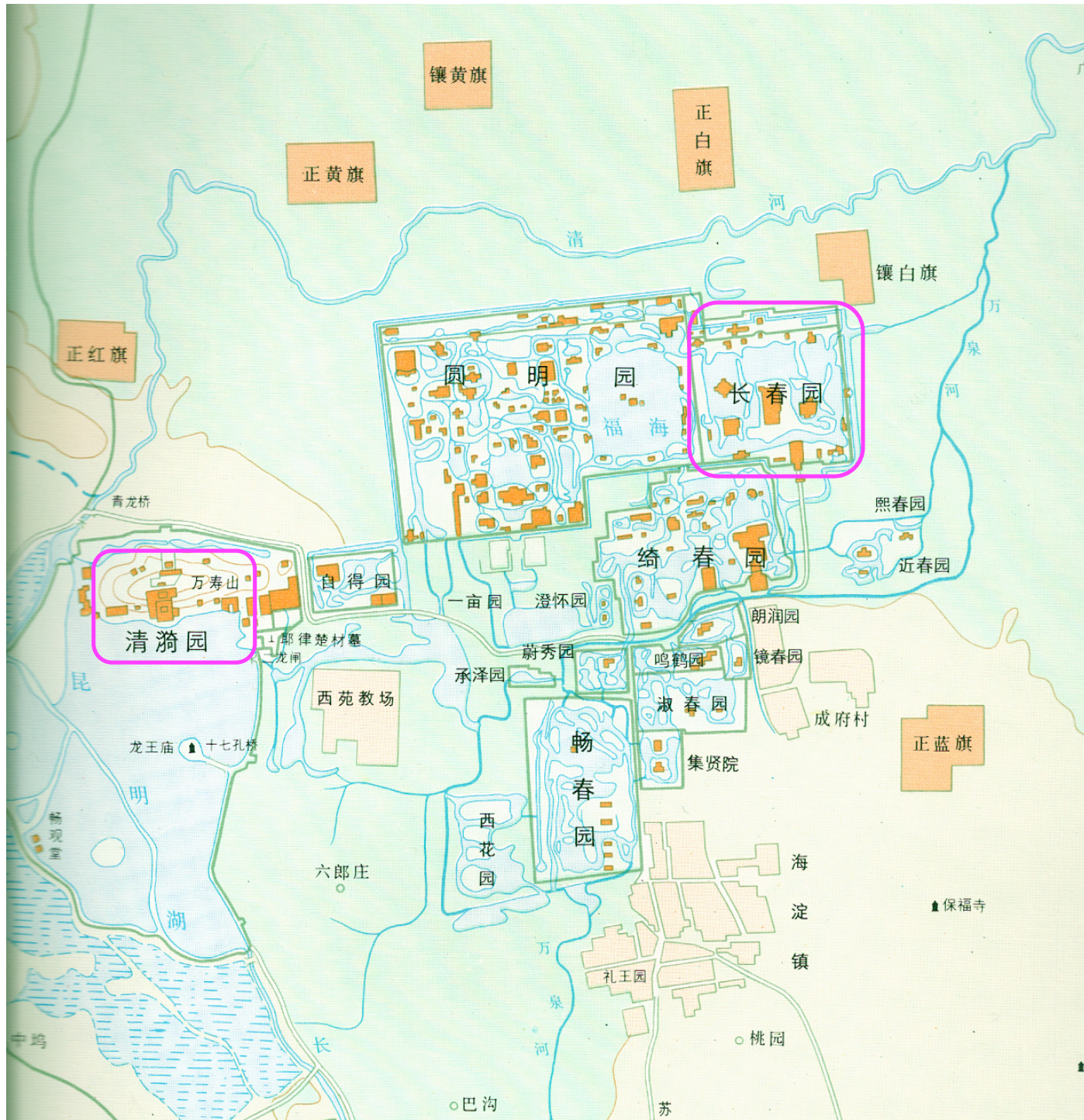


- The *xingong* palaces of the "Two Mountains and Five Gardens" of Xiangshan mountain

- The Yuanming yuan garden (the Summer Palace today)

- The hamlet of Chengde

"Environs of Peking," *Guide to China*. Japanese Government Railways, 1924



## The Yuanming yuan garden complex

It includes the Changchun yuan with the famous baroque Xiyang lou built by Castiglione, and the Qingyi yuan whose Xihu Lake is dominated by the Wanshou shan.

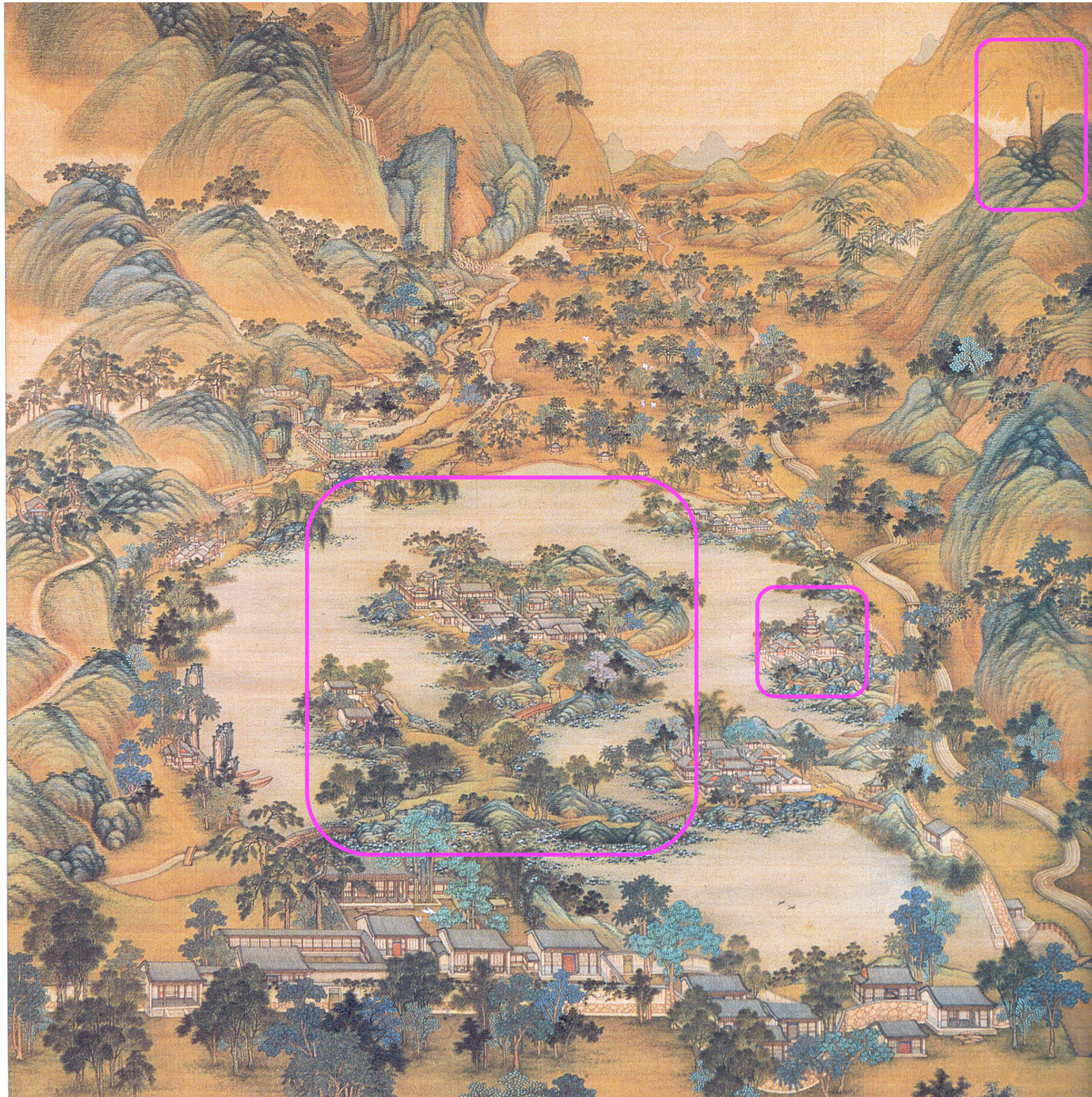
The Tibetan Puning si temple is built on the northern side of that hill.



## The Tangshan prototype

The resort has two bathing tanks. It consists of two rocky mounds which stand in a vast plain 20 km north from Beijing.

Tangshan hot-spring became a temporary imperial residence during the Kangxi era (1661 to 1722). The Yongzheng emperor built there a villa and several buildings to welcome his guests.



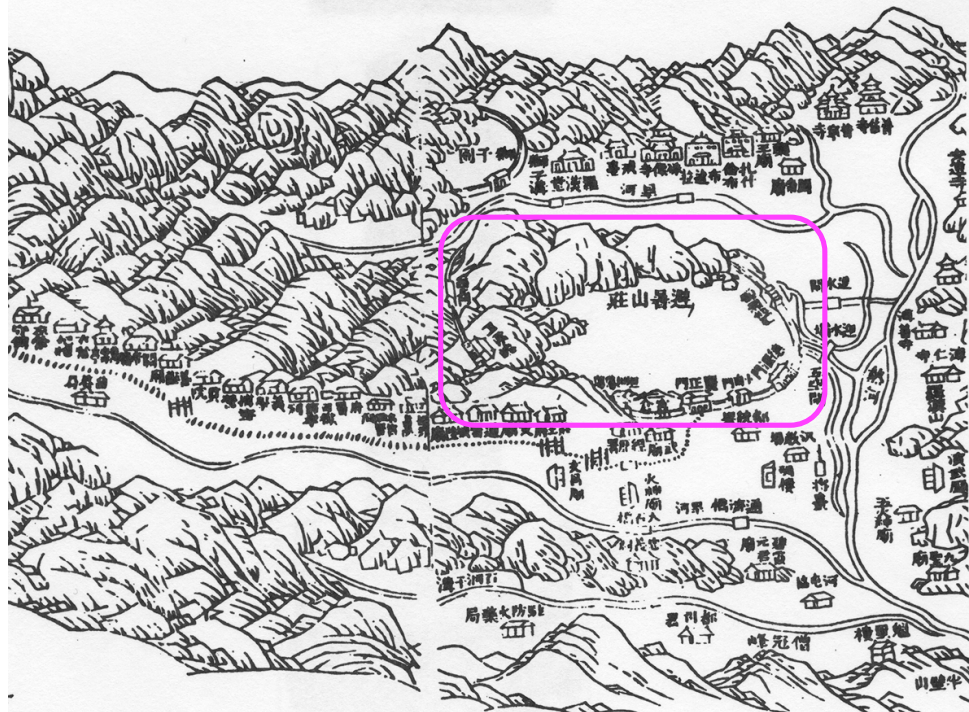
## **Bishu shanzhuang**

Map of the  
“Mountain Hamlet  
to Flee Summer  
Heat,” — the  
summer residence  
in Chengde of the  
Qing emperors.

避暑山庄，  
painting by  
Lengmei [1720].

## The site of Chengde

Qinding Rehe zhi 钦定热河志,  
Chengde zong tu map 承德总图



Chengde is a small city in Hebei (Zhili) province, north of the Great Wall. The Qing summer capital is sited in a plain sheltered by monasteries and the surrounding mountains.

Twice as big as the Yuanming yuan summer palace of Beijing, the Bishu shanzhuang mountain resort of Chengde is the largest imperial park in China.

A warm spring and a river feed the lakes of the residence gardens. The garden vistas “borrow” a strange rock formation to the northeast of the residence that contributes to the landscape design of the resort.

## The hunting lodge of Kalahetun, a precursor to the resort of Chengde

Qinding Rehe zhi 钦定热河志,  
Kalahetun xinggong map  
喀喇河屯行宫



The Kangxi emperor established a network of 21 *xinggong* 行宫 hunting lodges along the road he built to link Beijing through the Gubeikou gate to the Mulan hunting grounds.

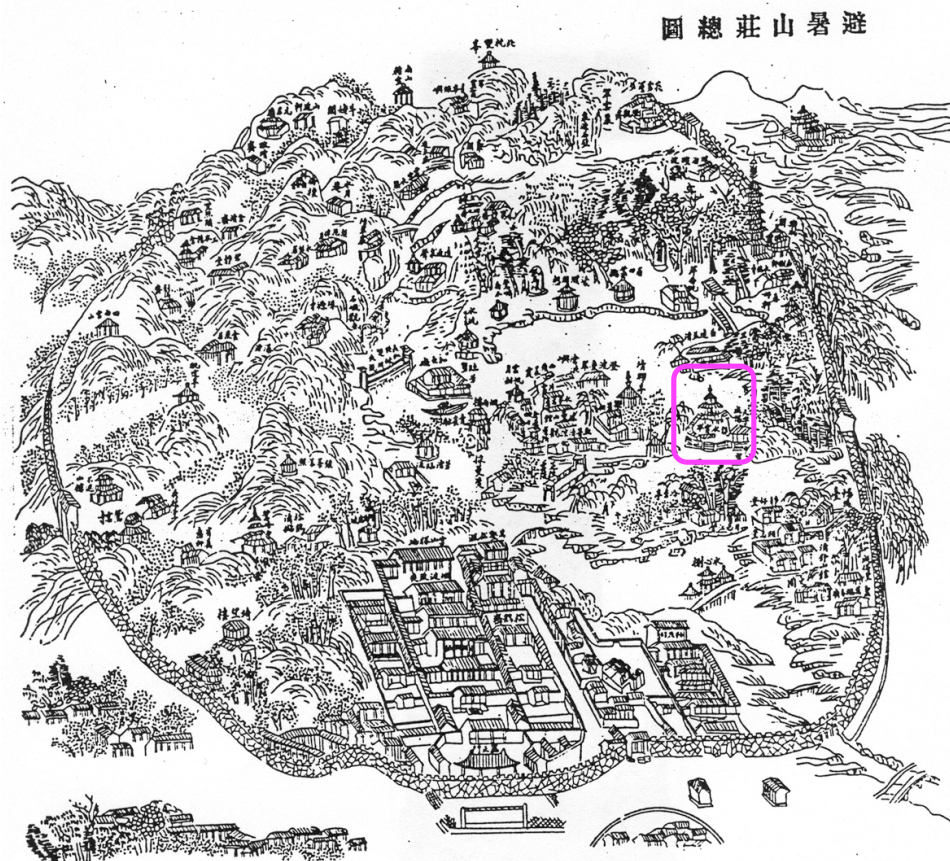
Rehe *xinggong* 热河行宫 was thus the first name of Chengde.

Originally designed like Kalahetun, the resort quickly became anything but a "Mountain Hamlet."

From 1703 to 1820, Chengde was the functional summer capital of the dynasty.

## The gardens of Chengde

Qinding Rehe zhi 钦定热河志,  
Bishu shanzhuang zong tu map  
避暑山庄总图



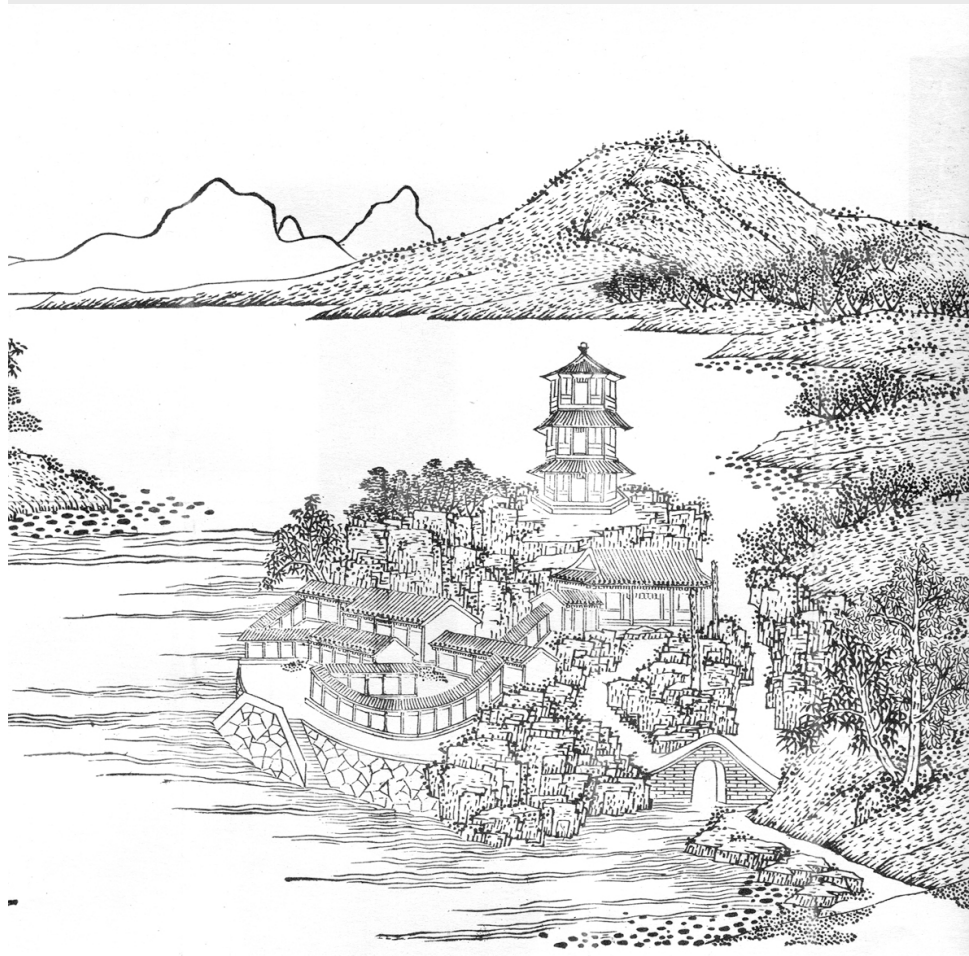
The composite style of the Chengde gardens is rich in political, esthetic and religious references.

The built landscape results from Kangxi and Qianlong's careful analysis of:

- the internal spatial organization of the residence,
- the interactions suggested by the physical and architectural landmarks of the site of Chengde,
- references and models from other gardens in the empire (Beijing, Hangzhou, etc.),
- and the cosmic appeal the two emperors wanted to grant to the Mountain Resort.

## Chengde Jinshan as pivot of the Buddhist universe

Qinding Rehe zhi 钦定热河志,  
Tian yu xian chang 天宇咸畅 plate,  
Kangxi's jing 景vista 18



In Chengde, Jinshan 金山 would stand for Mount Sumeru, which lies at the center of Buddhist cosmology.

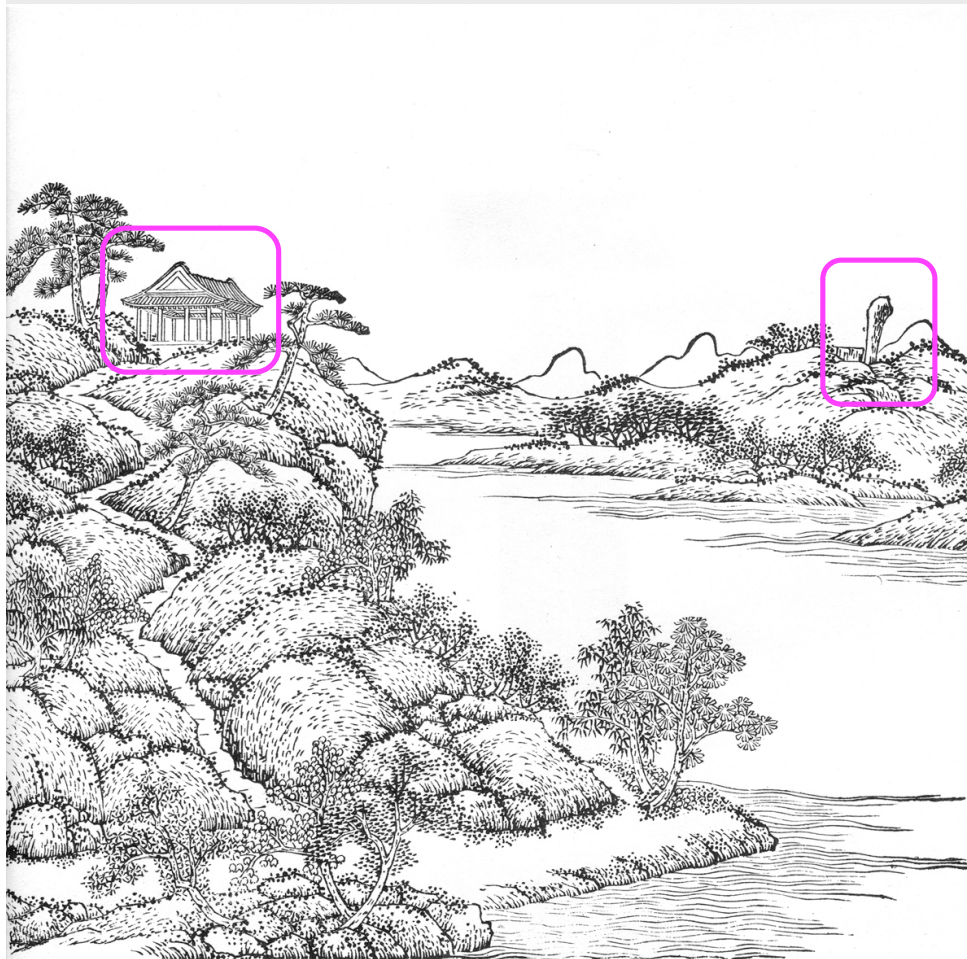
The various heavens of Buddhist cosmology are around the towering Sumeru.

The defender of Buddhism, Indra (Tiandi 天帝), lives on its summit.

Contemporary observers noted that the Kangxi emperor prayed in Jinshan every time he entered or left Bishu shanzhuang.

## From the Qing gardens to the paradise of Kunlun Mountain

Qinding Rehe zhi 钦定热河志,  
Chuifeng luo zhao 锤峰落照 plate,  
Kangxi's jing 景vista 12



The Chuifeng luo zhao 锤峰落照 vista is at the entrance of a mountain path. The Emperor would take it to walk from the Zheng gong palace to the kiosk of Si mian yun shan 四面云山.

Seen from Chuifeng luo zhao, the morphological association between Jinshan 金山 and Chuifeng Peak 锤峰 is obvious.

Jinshan established a visual link with Chuifeng Peak and the legendary Kunlun Mountain 昆仑山.

This implied that Bishu shanzhuang too was the abode of immortals.

**Chengde lifestyle:  
Isolation and contemplation,  
surrounded by clouds**

*Qinding Rehe zhi* 钦定热河志,  
*Si mian yun shan* 四面云山 plate,  
Kangxi's *jing* 景 vista 9



*Si mian yun shan* 四面云山 is emblematic of the imperial program for relaxation.

The Kangxi emperor selected this spot for the ninth of his 36 landscape vista series.

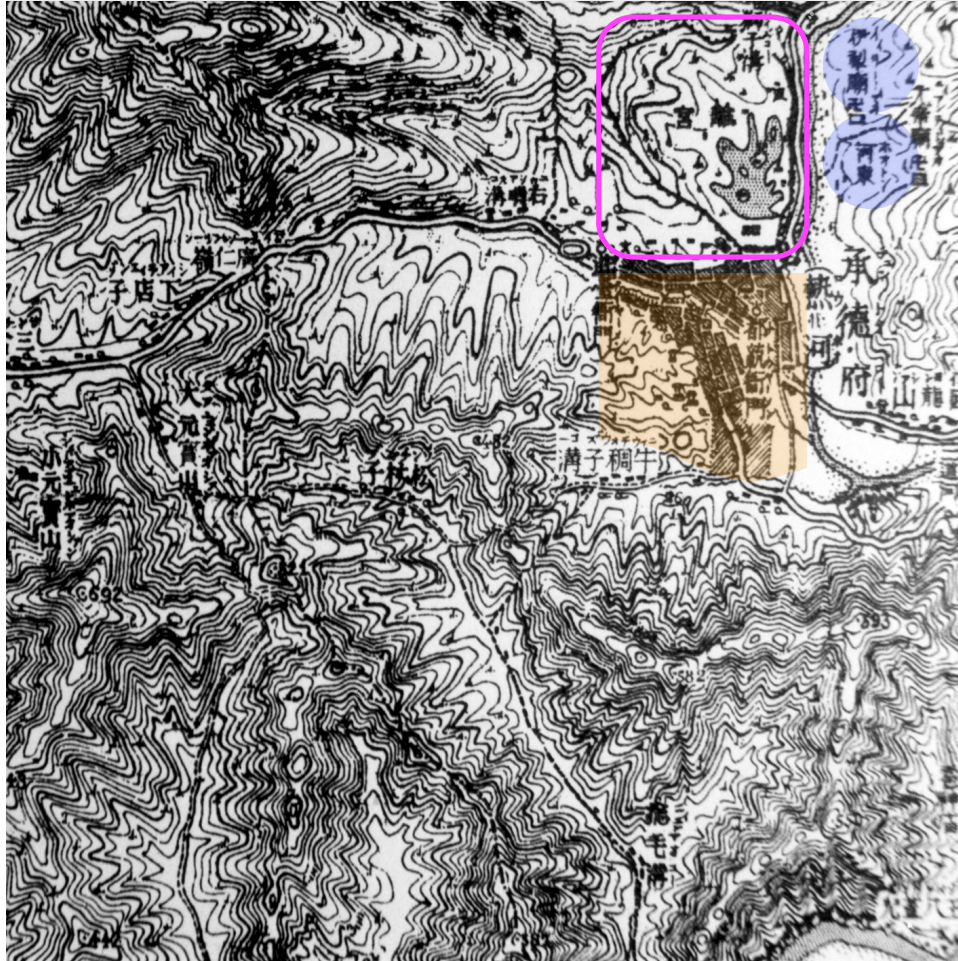
As the emperor wrote:

“Being fond of forests and streams,  
cherishing simple sentiments,  
I peacefully gaze out over all things on  
earth...”

The earthly versions of auspicious vistas  
emerge from distant purple mist.”

## The Chengde 承德府 region in the 1930s

Kantô Army 関東軍 map service,  
Chengde sheet

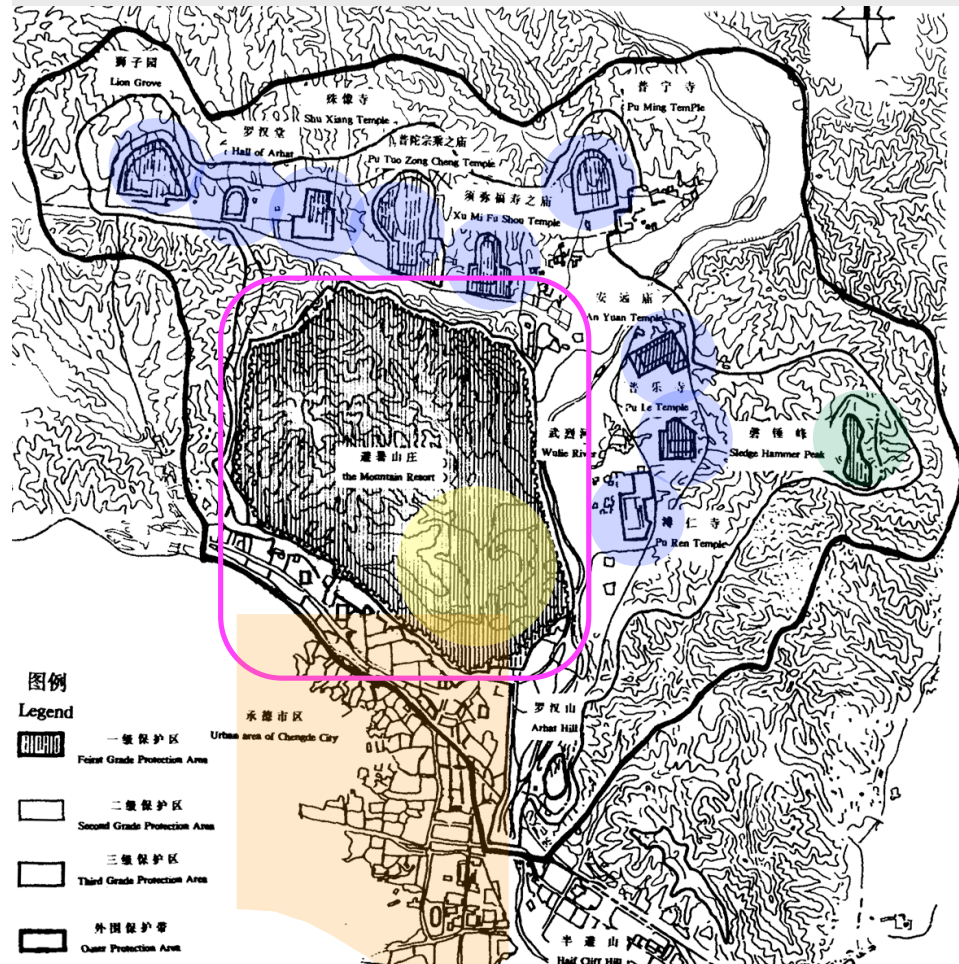


A mountainous terrain surrounds the small basin that the turbulent Wulie river crosses.

The imperial residence of Bishu shanzhuang (in pink) lies between the city of Chengde (in orange) and the Waiba miao temples (in blue).

## Protected areas of historical Chengde

避暑山庄及周围寺庙保护范围图, 1993



The resort and temples are located within a *weichang* 围场 basin (black circle) that Chuifeng Peak 锤峰 (in green) dominates.

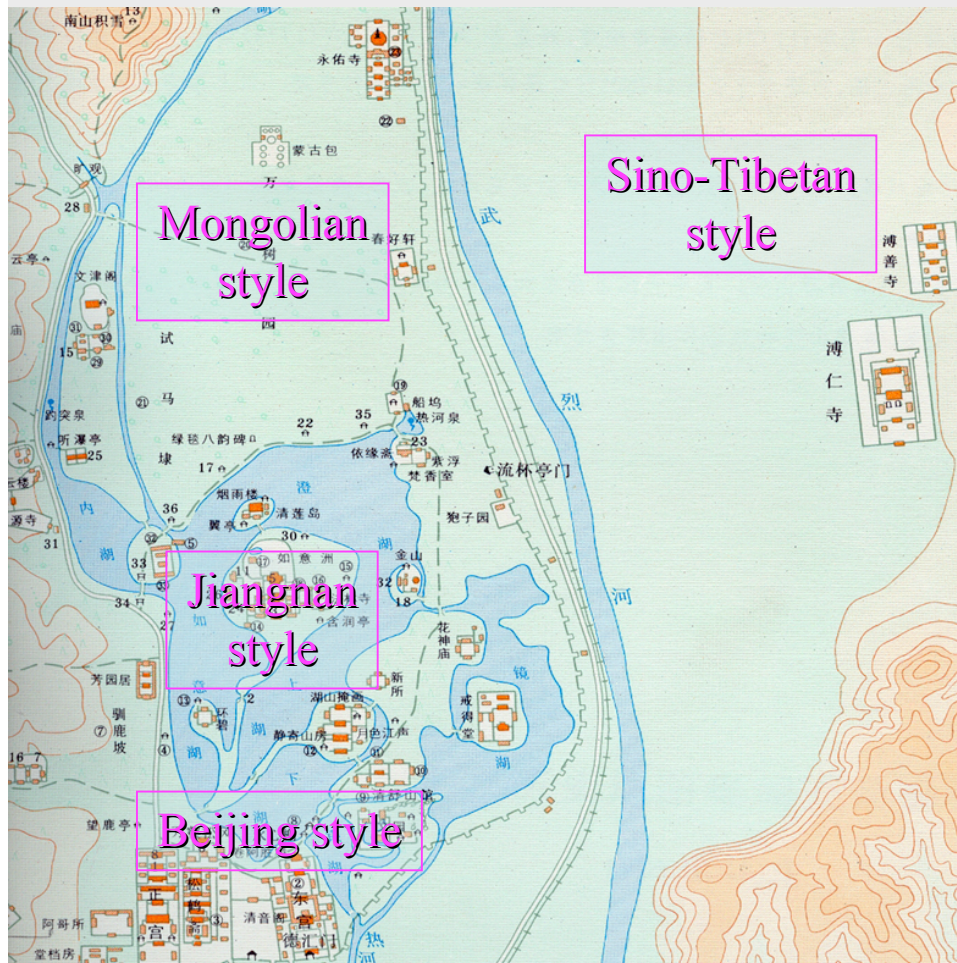
The layout of the “Mountain Hamlet to Flee Summer heat” (Bishu shanzhuang 避暑山庄, in red on the map)

and of the “Eight Outlying Temples” (Waiba miao 外八庙, in blue)

revolve around the gardens of the imperial residence (in yellow).

## The plain and lakes of Bishu shanzhuang

请避暑山庄 (1795) map in  
侯仁之,北京历史地图集,北京, 1985.



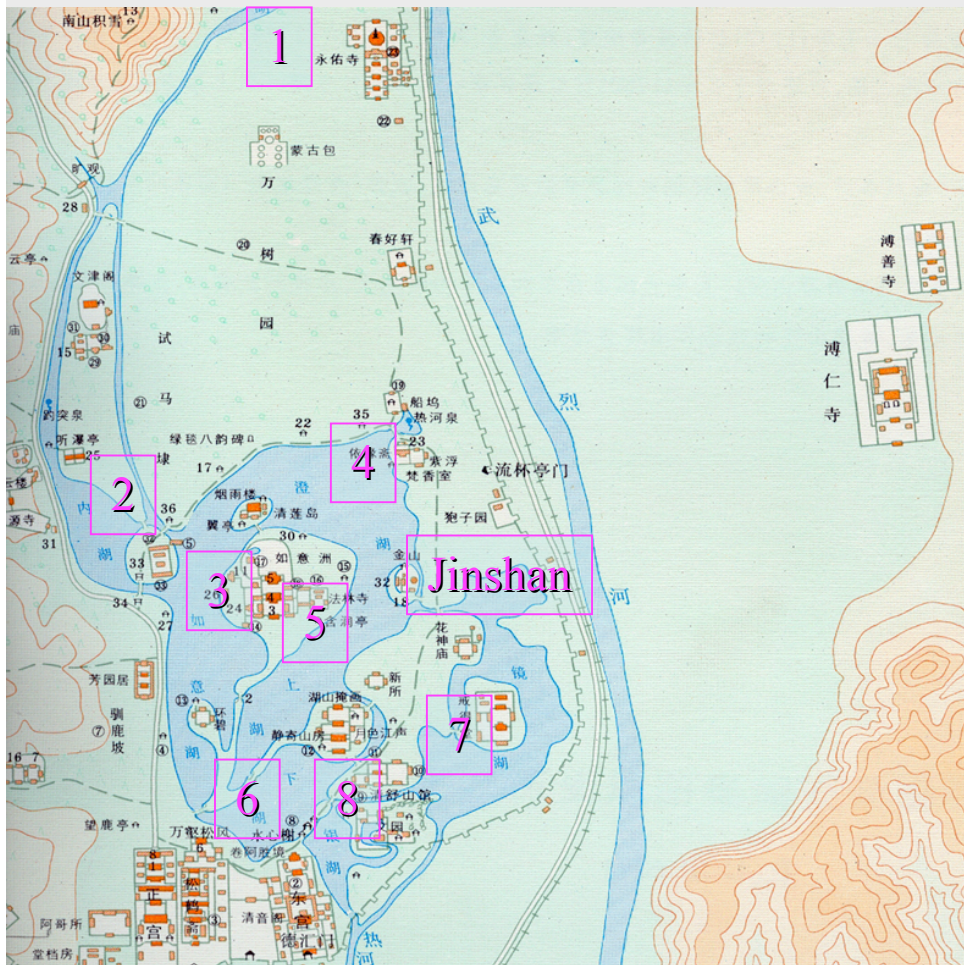
The Wulie river isolates four Waiba miao temples from the Qing residence, which is further protected by a massive wall and a dam.

Within the residence, three districts extend from north to south:

The Wanshu yuan 万树园 prairie around the Mongol camp,  
The Chinese garden district around the Ruyi lake and island 如意洲.  
Jinshan 金山 mountain stands opposite to Ruyi island,  
The three imperial palaces, including the Zheng gong 正宫.

## Jinshan as pivot of Bishu shanzhuang and the world

请避暑山庄 (1795) map in  
侯仁之,北京历史地图集,北京, 1985.

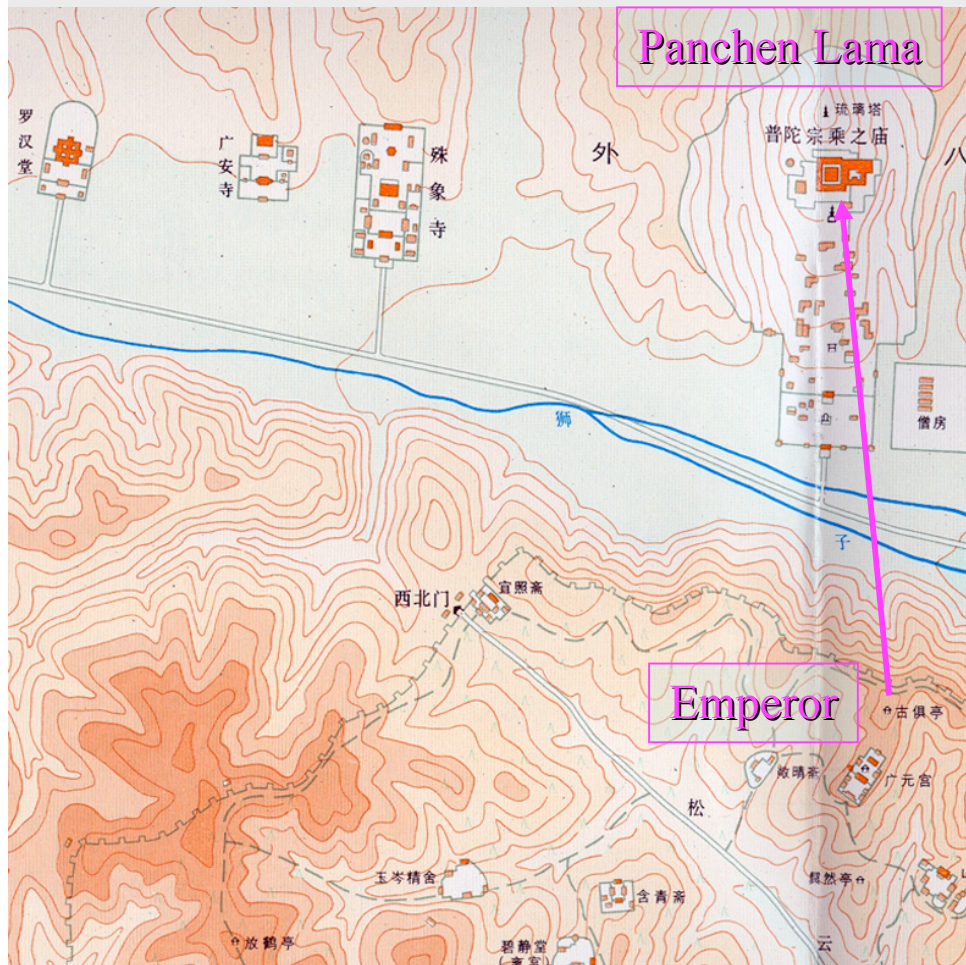


With its distinctive pagoda, Jinshan 金山 is the focal point of most vistas because the island is the highest landmark of the garden district. The island is surrounded by eight lakes and eight islands, which is a reference to the jiu shan ba hai 九山八海 landscape archetype.

The Buddhist universe is indeed constituted of a mountain at the center of eight concentric continents that are separated by eight seas.

Jinshan is also the collective name of the nine mountains of this cosmogony.

## The religious valley of Bishu shanzhuang

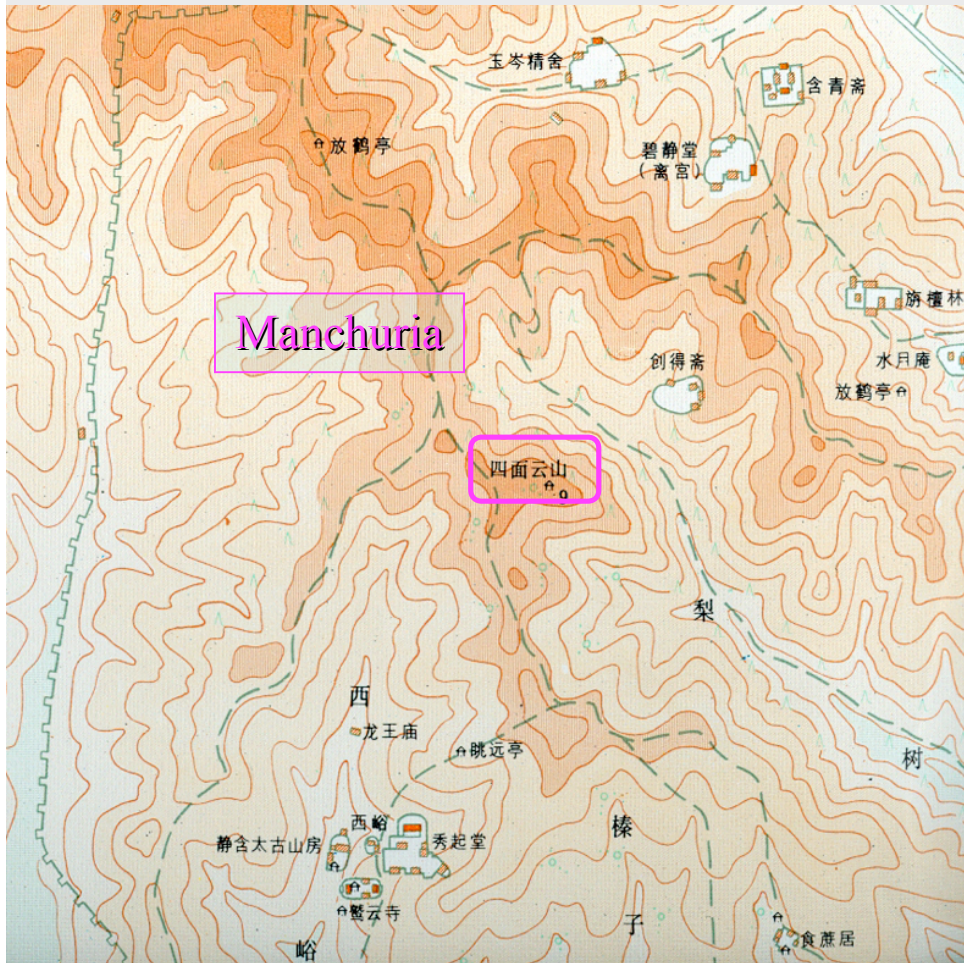


The panorama of the Waiba miao temples can be admired from residence wall and the kiosks erected on the summits of the imperial residence.

The most prominent Waiba miao temples, the Sumeru and Potala temples, are located in Shizi gou 狮子沟, north of the residence.

The Qianlong emperor used topography to magnify the unequal relationship the Qing state developed with the Tibetan Buddhist dignitaries after the Qing banners conquered Lhasa in 1720.

## The Manchu hills of Bishu shanzhuang



This is the largest and most original landscape component of the imperial residence.

It evokes the Changbai shan 长白山 mountains, where the Qing dynasty had its mythical birthplace.

The hill district was ostensibly designed for seclusion and contemplation.

Si mian yun shan 四面云山 is the name of the kiosk that lies at the center of this natural landscape.



## The first postcards and stamps of Chengde: the Sumeru, Potala and Jinshan temples

The stamp featuring Jinshan was issued by the Manchoukuo Government Supplies Division in 1936.



The entrance of Lion Valley, showing the Potala / Putuozongcheng miao (left) and Sumeru / Xumifushou zhi miao (right) temples.

“The temples are before us — different temple complexes are spaced up the mountain. I am overcome; it has been a long time since I have seen anything as lovely.”

*Hedda Morrison's Jehol: Summer Holidays 1934.*

General view of the Potala temple complex, Chengde, summer 1934





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## The Qing appropriation of Central Asia

“It made sound political sense to have an impressive centre of Lamaist Buddhism and of imperial power on the Mongolian marches of the empire. Religion and politics apart, Jehol [Chengde] is a very beautiful place on a great bend of the river ringed by mountains.” Hedda Morrison, 1934.

Pule si temple in front, with the imperial residence in the background.

## Sweden's appropriation of Qing Central Asia :)



The purpose of Hedin's expedition to the province of Jehol was to gather data on the inner temple of Sumeru. The exact copy he had made was displayed at the Century of Progress exposition in Chicago (1933-34), and at the New York World's fair (1939-1940).

Dr. Sven Hedin and his team having breakfast en route to Chengde, June 1930. Sven Hedin, *Jehol. Kejsar-staden*, Stockholm: Lars Hökerberg bokförlag, 1931.

## The Qing landscape exhibited abroad



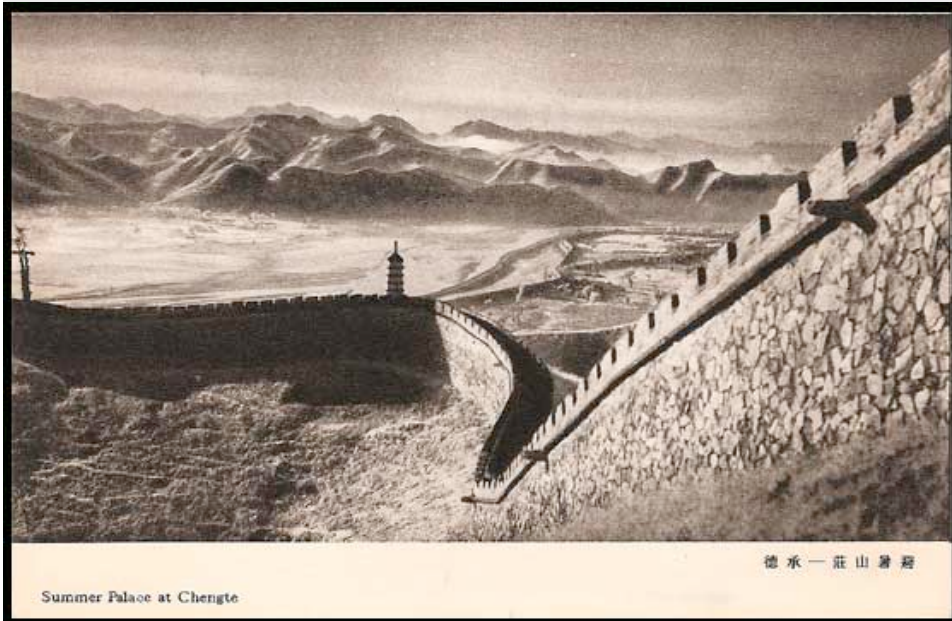
“The oriental splendors enjoyed by the old Manchu Emperors never approached the magnificence of the Lama Temple by night at the World’s Fair.”

A Century of Progress International Exposition, *Official Guide Book World’s Fair 1934.*

## Manchoukuo's appropriation of the Qing heritage

The Sumeru temple, Chengde  
The summer palace, Chengde  
The Beiling Mausoleum, Shenyang

Picture postcards, Xinjing, 1941

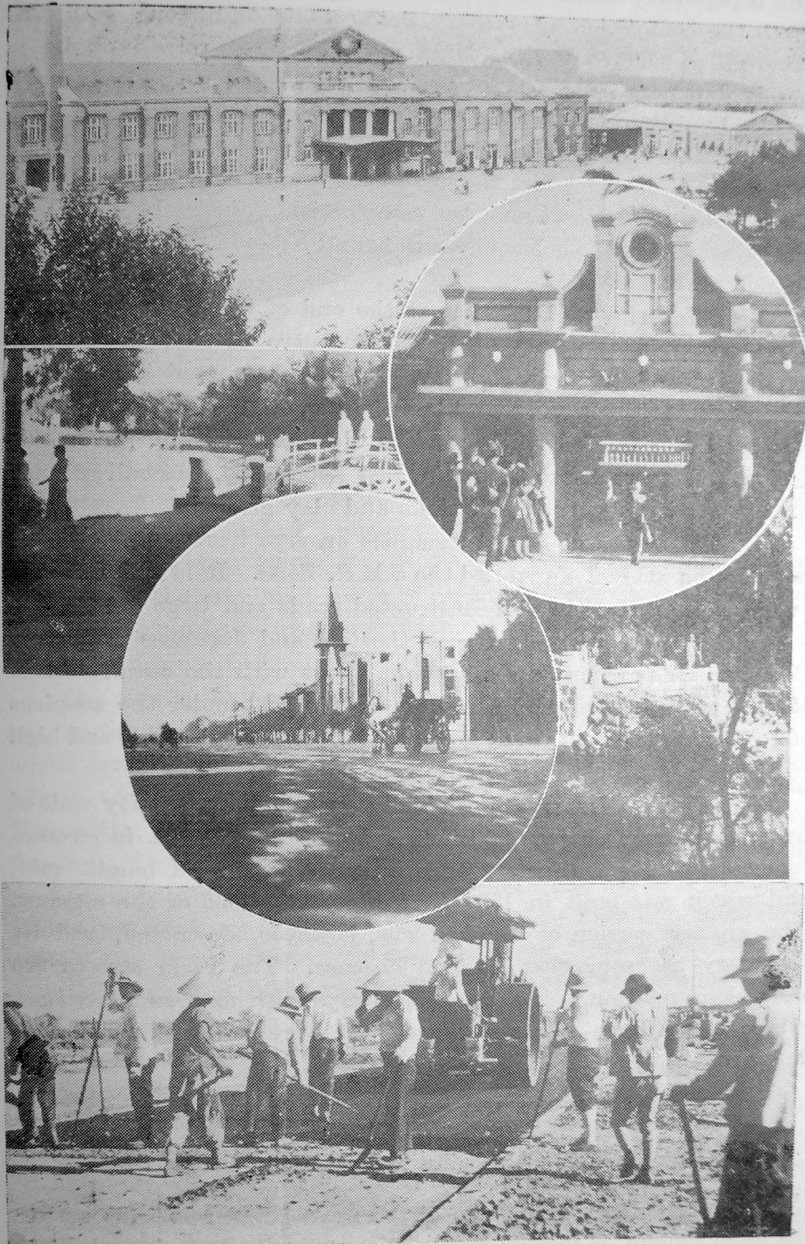


## The new capital

The Japanese implemented a five-year plan to re-build Changchun and develop the new capital of Xinjing into a modern city that will be ten times larger than before the foundation of Manchoukuo.

The postcard shows what the capital will look like after completion of the plan. The card was printed in time for the 1933-1934 Chicago International Exposition.





Hsinking. From Top:— Hsinking Station, Imperial Palace,  
West Park, S.M.R.Zone, Capital Construction underway.

## Travel literature

“The establishment of an earthly paradise in Manchoukuo through Railways” was the South Manchuria Railway Company’s motto.

Minami Manshû Tetsudô Kabushiki Kaisha. *South Manchuria Railway, the Pioneer on the Continent*. Tokyo, 1939, p. 19.

“Not only has this once forbidden land [Manchuria] been really opened to the world, but the Chinese inhabitants themselves have had their eyes opened to acres of diamonds at their very doors.”

Minami Manshû Tetsudô Kabushiki Kaisha. *Manchuria, Land of Opportunities*. New York, 1924, p. vi.

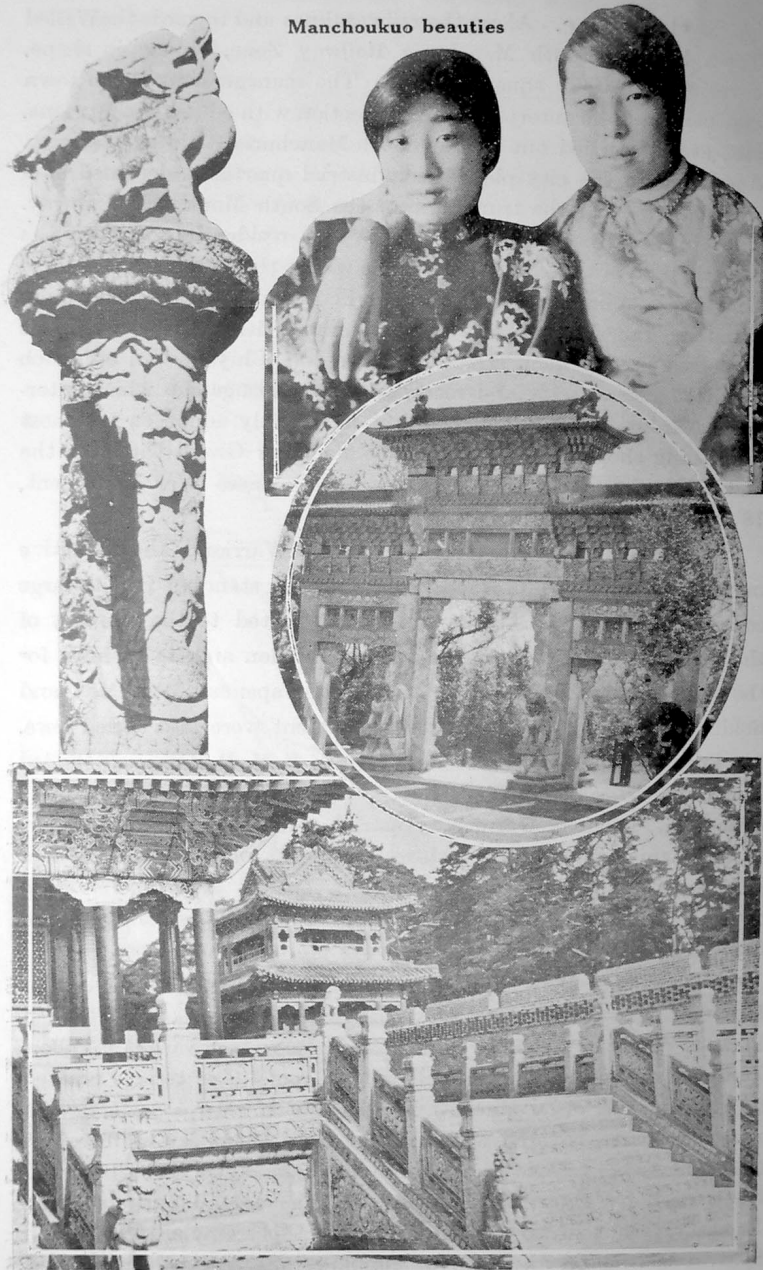
## The commodification of the Qing landscape

“Manchoukuo [...] possesses advanced transportation organs and excellent hotels which can well be compared with those in Japan proper and at the same time offers an alluring color of ancient Chinese life together with the interesting customs and costumes of Chosenese [Korean], Mongolians, Mohammedans [Hui] and white Russians, all of which can be viewed at once”.

Minami Manshû Tetsudô Kabushiki Kaisha. *Illustrated Guide Book for Travelling in Manchoukuo*. Dairen, 1934, p. 4.



Manchoukuo beauties



Picturesque Spots in North Mausoleum, Mukden

## Orientalism at its best

“It is no exaggeration to say that in no other place, the foreign traveler can find such charming mingling of the modern with the historic and romantic, so comfortable, interesting and instructive as in Manchoukuo.”



North Mausoleum, near Mukden, capital city of Manchuria



## Envoi

[...] 近之則與世界同化. 遠之則與天地同流.

Jìn zhī, zé yǔ shìjiè tónghuà. Yuǎn zhī, zé yǔ tiāndì tóng liú

“For now, may we assimilate with the world. For the future, may we follow the ways of the Heaven and Earth.”

Manchukuo Primer Minister Zheng Xiaoyu, State Council Decree No. 4, March 1, 1933.



## Conclusion

This lecture is a small contribution toward a better understanding of:

- Central Asia and China
- Imperial landscape
- Notion and representation
- Place and scale
- Manchu dynasty and successor states

... And of course more research needs to be done.

## Further readings

Che Bing Chiu. *Yuanming Yuan. Le Jardin de la Clarté Parfaite*. Les Editions de l'Imprimeur, 2000

Prasenjit Duara. *Sovereignty and Authenticity. Manchukuo and the East Asian Modern*. Rowman and Littlefield, 2003

Hedda Morrison. *Travels of a Photographer in China, 1933-1946*. Oxford UP, 1987

Rolf Stein. *The World in Miniature. Container Gardens and Dwellings in Far Eastern Religious Thought*. Stanford UP, 1990 (1987)

Young-Tsu Wong. *A Paradise Lost. The Imperial Garden Yuanmingyuan*. UH Press, 2001

Wen-hsin Yeh, ed. *Landscape, Culture and Power in Chinese Society*. Institute of East Asian Studies, UC Berkeley, 1998.



**Tack för er uppmärksamhet!**

Stamp issued in 1937 to celebrate modernity and progress in Xinjing.