Where Dragon Veins Meet: The Kangxi Emperor and His Estate at Rehe. By Stephen H. Whiteman. Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2020. Pp. xix + 271. $70.00.

In this outstanding study of the Qing imperial summer retreat, Bishu Shanzhuang 避暑山莊 (Mountain estate to escape the heat, hereafter BSSZ), Whiteman attempts to reconstruct from texts, material remains, and court-commissioned artworks, the initial phase of its creation under Emperor Kangxi (r. 1661–1722). BSSZ lies in the Wulie River 武烈河 valley northeast of Beijing, outside the Great Wall that traditionally divided China Proper from the Inner Asian hinterland. A World Heritage site today, the 220-acre estate is best known for the events it hosted during the Qianlong reign (r. 1736–1795). Here the emperor fêted Inner Asian notables, and rested en route to Mulan 木蘭, where he engaged in the annual hunt with his Mongol allies.[1] Qing rulers were patrons of Tibetan Buddhism, the religion of Mongolia. They built Tibetan-style edifices within and beyond the estate's walls as places of worship and accommodations for high-ranking prelates.[2] Mongol nobles attended Qianlong's massive assembly to celebrate the return of the Torghuts (a Mongol tribe) from Russia (1771), and the Panchen Lama visited BSSZ in 1780 during Qianlong's seventieth birthday celebrations. His meeting with the embassy of Lord Macartney in 1793 reveals that the site functioned as an informal summer capital during his reign.[3]

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[1] Ning Chia, "The Lifanyuan and the Inner Asian Rituals in the Early Qing (1644–1795)," *Late Imperial China* 14.1 (Jun. 1993): 60–92; James A. Millward, et al., eds., *New Qing Imperial History: The Making of Inner Asian Empire at Qing Chengde* (London: Routledge, 2004).

[2] Elisabeth Benard, "The Qianlong Emperor and Tibetan Buddhism," in Millward, et al., *New Qing Imperial History*, pp. 126–28; and Anne Chayet, *Les Temples de Jehol et leurs modèles tibétains* (Paris: Éditions Recherche sur les Civilisations, 1985). Whiteman argues against those who cite his construction of the Purensi 溥仁寺 and Pushansi 溥善寺 as evidence that Kangxi shared with Qianlong the intention of using Tibetan Buddhism to strengthen ties with the Mongols (pp. 51–54).

[3] James L. Hevia, *Cherishing Men from Afar: Qing Guest Ritual and the Macartney Embassy of 1793* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995); a recent reinterpretation of the embassy's historical significance is presented by Henrietta Harrison, "The Qianlong Emperor's Letter to George III and the Early-Twentieth-Century Origins of Ideas about Traditional China's Foreign Relations," *The American Historical Review* 122.3 (Jun. 2017): 680–701.

BSSZ has most often been analysed as it existed at the end of the eighteenth century, following the multiple renovations and new constructions enacted by Qianlong. Whiteman, by contrast, seeks to present BSSZ at its very inception. How did Kangxi envision the project in 1702, when he ordered the Board of Works to stake out the land for "a large complex" (p. 22)? What was its condition in 1708, when he first showed the garden to a select group of officials, and upon completion in 1713? What can we learn from the available sources about the emperor's intentions, the phased development of BSSZ, and the various cultures from which the design of the estate drew?

In "Note to Readers," the author lays out his approach to studying BSSZ by introducing the term *jing* (景, translated here as "scene"), "a space that is experienced holistically through the senses and imagination, drawing both on the immediately accessible environment and on historical, literary, and artistic tropes to which it makes reference" (p. xvii). While beginning with a physical description of the estate and its many features, Whiteman is primarily concerned with delving into "the multisensory, the intellectual, and the affective" (p. xvii) perceptions aroused by BSSZ in its imperial creator. He hopes to achieve his goal by "Mobilizing the landscape as evidence, working iterations of the Mountain Estate [BSSZ] against one another and [against] the broader context of intellectual . . . production in the Kangxi court" (p. 10).

The book's six chapters are organized into four segments, bookended with an introduction and a conclusion. Part One, "Recovering the Kangxi Landscape," uses Zhang Yushu's 張玉書 1708 account, *Record of Travelling at the Invitation of the Emperor* (*Hucong ciyou ji* 扈從賜遊記), to trace the pathways, waterways, and the private/public sectors of the vast walled estate as they emerged from the first phase to completion of construction.[4] The first chapter in Part Two, "Allegories of Empire," explores the emperor's decisions in garden design within several different cartographic frameworks.

Cartography was one of several tools that Kangxi used to consolidate the realm after the turbulent and drawn-out conquest ended in 1683. His numerous tours, touching primarily the north-eastern, south-eastern and north-western portions of the empire, are well known. So too are the maps. Jesuits introduced European cartographic techniques to the court, and Kangxi commissioned

[4] Zhang Yushu (1642–1711), *Hucong ciyou ji*, in *Zhongguo bianjiang shizhi jicheng: Dongbei shizhi* 中國邊疆史志集成・東北史志, part 1, vol. 7 (Beijing: Quanguo tushuguan wenxian suowei fuzhi zhongxin, 2004).

them to compile a new atlas which incorporated the northeast Asian Manchu homeland into the empire (*Huangyu quanlan tu* 皇輿全覽圖, 1718). Beginning in 1671, two years after he had overthrown the Oboi regency, Kangxi made his first trip to the Manchu homeland to sacrifice at the ancestral tombs and tour the region. In following years, he ordered a survey of Changbaishan 長白山, the north-eastern mountain peak that is linked to the mythic origins of the Manchu people, and established it as a place marked by many auspicious features where miraculous events occurred. State sacrifices to Changbaishan were established, then gradually raised in status to equal those performed at the Five Sacred Mountains. In 1682, Kangxi performed the *feng* 封 and *shan* 禪 sacrifices to Changbaishan, a ritual of dynastic legitimacy that was traditionally reserved for Mount Tai 泰山, the sacred peak in Shandong province. In his writings about BSSZ, Kangxi used the language of geomancy to assert the primacy of Changbaishan over Mount Tai and tie the Manchu Qing to the earlier Liao and Jin conquest dynasties that had also ruled these lands. He suggested that the auspicious energy emanating from the sacred mountain of the Manchus also extended in a straight line to Rehe, the site of BSSZ.

In directing the creation of his summer retreat, Kangxi exhibited an interest in incorporating the multiple cultures comprising the Qing imperium. Stating that "*Imperial Poems* represented the primary literary and artistic interpretation of the site with which subsequent visitors would . . . engage" (p. 96), Chapter 3 draws on Kangxi's poems to analyse his sentiments concerning BSSZ. BSSZ was modelled on a long-standing Chinese literati garden tradition developed in the Lower Yangtze which focused on individual apprehensions of nature through (carefully contrived) landscape vistas. Devising these vistas, naming them, and writing poems about them were a part of Han literati culture that Kangxi adopted. His poems express Confucian tropes—concern for farmers' toil and the wish for abundant harvest, pleasure in nature, the ruler's concern to exercise frugality in his personal life—but also a keen awareness of Qing origins, as in his description of Rehe as the space of "open fields grown wild" (p. 81), referring to its historical status as the borderland between the steppe and the sown. Whiteman concludes that BSSZ was both "a vantage point located at the pivot of the new Qing" and a "metonymic construction of [the] same whole" (p. 102).

Part Three, "Space and Pictoriality," turns to visual images of BSSZ. In Chapter 4, the author uses *View of Rehe* 避暑山莊, painted around 1710 by

the court artist Leng Mei 冷枚, not only to confirm textual evidence concerning the specific buildings, lakes, hills, and water courses created in the initial stage of BSSZ's development, but, more broadly, to dissect the "stylistic modes, generic leitmotifs, and parapictorial references drawn from Chinese painting and the court's own evolving landscape manner" (p. 106). Qing court painting was greatly influenced by the Jesuit painters who worked alongside their Chinese counterparts. Even though Leng Mei was an adherent of the Orthodox school of landscape painting, Whiteman discerns in *View of Rehe* a new innovative approach mingling traditional (the "auspicious" blue-green colouring, the "dragon veins," and auspicious *lingzhi* 靈芝 symbols in mountains and islands) with European, i.e., "new" elements (adoption of perspective and measured sight lines, and interest in optical perspective).

Chapter 5 focuses on the depictions of BSSZ included in *Imperial Poems* 御製避暑山莊詩.[5] In 1713, preparing to show the garden to members of the conquest elite, Kangxi ordered that his poems, accompanied by calligraphy, be matched with images of thirty-six "views" of BSSZ and produced in three media: paint, copperplate engraving, and woodblock print. Several hundred woodblock-print albums, half in Chinese and the other half in Manchu, were made to be bestowed on a select group of high officials, Mongol and Manchu nobles, and imperial kinsmen who were invited to admire the completed project. An innovation in its own right, *Imperial Poems* "marked the first time in the Kangxi court that printed images documenting the emperor and imperial spaces were made, a process of imperial identity formation and propagandistic expression likely inspired by both domestic and foreign examples" (p. 153).

Imperial Poems was a collaborative project, carried out by the Chinese, bannermen, and European artists employed by the Qing court. Two years earlier, the emperor ordered a group of court artists to visit Rehe to "study the landscape for the thirty-six scenes" (p. 154). The artists in charge of painting the scenes for Kangxi's personal copy of the album (Wang Yuanqi 王原祁, 1642–1715), of producing the copperplate engraved images (Matteo Ripa), and of designing the woodblock prints (Shen Yu 沈喻) all toured the site. One set

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[5] The full title of the album is *Yuzhi bishu shanzhuang sanshiliu jing shi tu* 御製避暑山莊三十六景詩圖, in Liu Tuo 劉托 and Meng Bai 孟白, eds., *Qing dian banhua hui kan* 清殿版畫匯刊, vol. 1 (Beijing: Xueyuan chubanshe, 1998).

of paintings, completed in 1712, became the basis for the woodblock images for the albums distributed in 1713. A second set of images, based on the first, was produced between 1712 and 1714 for the copperplate engravings.

What did the original painted album leaves look like? Such a set, described in an imperial catalogue, is no longer extant, forcing Whiteman to delve instead into the surviving works of the painter of the now lost album paintings, Wang Yuanqi. He examines other albums of landscape paintings by Wang to expound on his style, elaborates on the practice of producing album paintings for literati clients, and suggests, upon comparison with the woodblock images, that Wang's *Imperial Poems* would most likely have been received by "visually literate viewers" as an "Old Masters album" (p. 178), i.e., a work that incorporated "an assemblage of classic styles and compositions done à la mode" (p. 171). A comparison of surviving copperplate engravings with the corresponding woodblock images leads Whiteman to conclude that Wang's paintings were most likely closely related to the woodblock print and copperplate versions. The woodblock-printed album "functions as a surrogate for the paintings" which "imitates the album's arrangement and mode of engagement with the landscape, pairing image and text in an intimately scaled format" (p. 182).

The final section of the book, "The Metonymic Landscape," returns to making the case for "reading" BSSZ as a representation of Emperor Kangxi. Zhang Yushu's account of the 1708 tour of BSSZ conveys "a sense of intimacy" with the emperor that was quite at odds with the protocols restricting individuals outside the imperial household from direct informal contact with the ruler. This "sense of intimacy" is precisely, Whitman argues, the achievement of *Imperial Poems*. Kangxi expanded a genre that had previously functioned on the level of small select social circles.

By creating *Imperial Poems* as a woodblock-printed album, he allowed a wider audience (even if it was still a tiny minority) to access a work that revealed him as a person and not simply the figure on the throne. Keeping human figures out of the landscape scenes in *Imperial Poems* "allows the viewer to bridge the pictorial frontier and imaginatively enter the imperial park in a way that would not be possible if the body of the emperor were present" (p. 222). The album performs several functions. First, it provides the viewer with visual access to BSSZ. Then, it shares with the viewer the emperor's experience of the landscape, enabling "a relationship of true intimacy" to buttress the bonds between emperor and recipient (p. 224).

In a brief conclusion, Whiteman summarizes the complex interpretations and arguments presented in earlier chapters through a comparison of two portraits of Emperor Kangxi. Both depict him seated, wearing a blue robe and a red-fringed hat, contemplating a Chinese-bound book (with blank pages). The hanging scroll, painted in ink and colour on silk, shows Kangxi against a backdrop of traditionally bound Chinese books arrayed on shelves. This backdrop is absent from the oval portrait, done in oils and mounted on a screen, that depicts him "in the style of a European seated portrait" (p. 228). The portraits, "in their context and creation," the author notes, "undermine the stability of the very categories they seem to represent" (pp. 229–30). He concludes, "the portraits represent a ruler and a court deeply enmeshed in cultural networks within and beyond the empire's boundaries. . . . these two works can be recognized as points of interchange, places in which inner and outer become one" (p. 230).

In his introduction, Whiteman hopes his work will "further the case for the centrality of art history in the fields of Qing history and early modern imperial history more broadly" (p. 10). Reading Whiteman's considered and painstaking monograph as a Qing historian, I am struck by the degree to which the Kangxi emperor seems to have foreshadowed the cosmopolitanism of the Qianlong age. We see evidence of new techniques and ideas in the cultural artefacts, from the Western perspective in Leng Mei's painted landscapes to the European modelling of Kangxi's face that appears even in the portrait painted in the Chinese style. From other scholarship we know that the emperor was intensely interested in European knowledge.[6] Ordering a set of *Imperial Poems* in copperplate engraving clearly reveals the European connection. Whiteman suggests that a precedent for the *Imperial Poems* was Louis XIV's *King's Cabinet*, oversize prints depicting the French royal palaces, which Kangxi had seen. To what extent was the emulation of European things simply a mirror of the emperor's desire to show that the Qing was not a continuation of the Ming, but part of a world of expansive possibility?

Whiteman's comparison of Kangxi to Louis XIV and other early modern rulers raises other questions concerning the relationship of king to subject. In contrast to Western European traditions of rulers who had direct contact with

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[6] Catherine Jami, "Imperial Control and Western Learning: The Kangxi Emperor's Performance," *Late Imperial China* 23.1 (Jun. 2002): 28–49.

their subjects (consider the royal processions, the myth of royal healing), Kangxi belonged to a tradition that sharply separated emperors from their commoner subjects: contrast the profusion of public depictions of kings in Europe with their absence in China / East Asia. The *Imperial Poems* were bestowed not on commoners, but on kinsmen and members of the Qing conquest elite. The "intimate gaze" of the emperor was directed only to members of a select group.

Whiteman displays a dazzling command of his subject. His careful presentation of the source materials, their defects, and the methods he chose to transcend obstacles bespeak a commitment to historical accuracy that is both commendable and impressive. Even as Kangxi's BSSZ remains ultimately unknowable, the reader comes away from this monograph with a significantly enhanced understanding of the Chinese literati garden tradition as a mode of self-cultivation and self-expression, the outstanding hydrological engineering involved in building BSSZ, and Kangxi's decision to depict the Qing as a multicultural empire, flourishing in a world of global exchange. BSSZ as a multicultural composite is a forerunner of imperial artefacts, such as the thirteen portraits of Emperor Yongzheng (r. 1723–1735), which depict Kangxi's successor dressed as a Tibetan Buddhist monk, a Mongol noble, a Chinese scholar, and even in European attire,[7] and the erection of a European-style palace, the Yuanmingyuan by Emperor Qianlong.[8] Whiteman illuminates the degree to which, with the BSSZ, Emperor Kangxi was already a participant in the early modern world order.

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[7] Fig. 167, pp. 248–49 and 429–30, in Evelyn S. Rawski and Jessica Rawson, eds., *China: The Three Emperors, 1662–1795* (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 2005).

[8] Kristina Kleutghen, *Imperial Illusions: Crossing Pictorial Boundaries in the Qing Palaces* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2015).