Abstract

Yuan-Ming-Yuan (圆明园) was the imperial resort garden during the mid Ch'ing Dynasty. It had beautiful scenery, majestic buildings and within these buildings, antiques, masterpieces of painting, jewels and other treasures could be found. Unfortunately, this summer palace was burned and destroyed by the Anglo-French troops in 1860 and the eight foreign powers' military campaign during the boxer rebellion in 1900.

There are various interpretations for the burning and destruction of the summer palace by the Anglo-French troops in 1860. This academic exercise intends to provide a reappraisal of this incident. It is divided into six chapters: the first chapter gives a brief account of Yuan-Ming-Yuan. The second chapter briefly describes the events that resulted in the presence of Anglo-French troops in that part of China. The third and fourth chapters explore the details of the process of destruction of Yuan-Ming-Yuan which was carried out by the Anglo-French troops. The fifth chapter analyses reasons which led to the Anglo-French's decision to burn the palace. The final chapter serves as the conclusion of this study in which the buildings left behind after the destruction in 1860 are surveyed and the whole event of Yuan-Ming-Yuan's destruction is evaluated and assessed to the best knowledge of the author.

This study concludes that the destruction of Yuan-Ming-Yuan by Anglo-French troops was actually carried out in two phases -- on the 6th and 18th of October 1860 respectively. On the 6th of
October 1860, the destruction was mainly carried out by the French troops and the burning was on a small-scale as they were more interested in looting. The British army must bear the full responsibility for the large-scale burning of the summer palace on the 18th October 1860.