# HOHONU

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Hohonu celebrates its second successful year with this issue which is dedicated to all the students who offered their writing. Thank you for contributing to our mission: To encourage academic discourse and enhance the educational experience at the University of Hawai`i at Hilo and Hawai`i Community College.

Hohonu, which means “deep, profound” in Hawaiian, was founded last year by the UH Hilo and Hawai`i CC Board of Student Publications who saw a need for a publication that recognizes excellent work and provides high-quality examples of the diverse interests of UH Hilo and Hawai`i CC students. Hohonu publishes non-fiction academic writing in any format and on any subject. This year Hohonu is proud to offer three essays in Hawaiian to reward those fluent in the language and to encourage everyone to learn the language of our island home.

Many Mahalos go out to our `ohana from the Hohonu staff. Mahalo to the Board of Student Publications for sponsoring Hohonu. Mahalo to the staff at Campus Center for their help with the submission process and especially to Lai Sha Delo Santos for her aid in taking care of our fiscal paperwork. And Mahalo to UH Hilo Graphics Services for their help in design and publication. Hohonu is indebted to Luke Bailey, who helped create Hohonu last year and continues on as our Faculty Advisor. Hohonu appreciates the continuing work of founding student editors Alicia Cuttrell, Andy Gramlich, and Kalyan V. Meola. Hohonu also extends our aloha to Cheryl Berg, Heather Gannon, and Angel Gramlich, who joined our staff this year.

Mahalo to all,

Andy Gramlich, Editor In Chief

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# CHINA, A MAGIC PLACE THE GEOGRAPHY OF CHINESE PHILOSOPHY

*Steven Martin*

China is a magic place, a real-life theme park -- fun, different, and exciting. I remember digging in the back yard as a child and my grandmother telling me not to go too deep or I'd end up in China. It was an intriguing proposition. Eventually I did dig deep enough. Though imagination evoked farmers in pointy hats and water buckets balanced at the ends of bamboo poles, my beginning was a jet-propelled flight to Beijing, where I found fast food, bustling markets, living museums, and a complex history of philosophy and religion.

Starting in 1995, I lived and traveled during summers in China. My experiences revealed the chronology of Chinese culture and thought beginning with a hike up Tai Shan, duplicating the prehistoric Asian pilgrimage of emperors, scholars, poets, and peasants. As one of the world's mysterious mountains, it rises from the North China Plain in solitude, an ancient pathway etched on its side before recorded history. I beheld a place of clear springs and enchanted forests which seemed to yearn for explanation, as if for no reason other than to make mankind ponder life's riddles. In a temple courtyard at the base of Tai Shan, an ancient stone tablet is inscribed "Number One Mountain." A guide and professor from Peking University told me, "Tai Shan holds the most influence on the culture and history of China, serves as an index to Chinese culture and development, and encourages people to live a more energetic life." Calligraphy engraved on the granite face of the summit proclaims: "High but accessible, huge but intimate, pines and stones are bones, clear springs as heart, breathe in the cosmos; Tai Shan is the soul of China."

As a youngster, I enjoyed cartoons of an old and humble man who expressed, "Confucius says," stating worldly truths like, "A journey of 1,000 miles is equal to reading 1,000 books," or, "A slow hand deflects a thousand blows." Whether or not such quotes really came from Confucius doesn't matter as they represent the wisdom of China's collective unconscious. In 1997, I sought the cradles of Eastern philosophy, such as the hometowns and temples of the Duke of Zhou (Zhou Dynasty, 1100-256 B.C.), Confucius (551-479 B.C.), and Mencius (372-289 B.C.). These momentous philosophers built upon each other's teachings. I uncovered that despite dynastic cycles which outlawed this ideological trend, they created a mainstream philosophical identity, masculine in temper, and globally recognized as Confucianism. They believed that it was acknowledging and practicing humanity (called Jen) which set individuals apart, that all human beings were morally reachable, and that moral principles gave life quality, happiness, and personal fulfillment. Today, like the flowering branches of a cultural tree, Confucian ideals continue to influence and flourish in many forms throughout China, Japan, Korea, and the world. Confucian analects transcend time and reflect ethics: "At 15 my heart was set upon learning. At 30 I was firmly established. At 40 I had no more doubts. At 50 I knew the will of heaven. At 60 I was ready to listen to it. At 70 I could follow my heart's desire without violating the truth."

My quest carried on to southern China, across the Yangtze River, to broaden my experience at Huang Shan (Yellow Mountain), a mystical home of Taoist artisans. I found twisted pine trees clinging to enormous pinnacles of stone rising toward misty clouds which swirled like entangled dragons. Whereas Confucianism flourished in China's northern fertile plains known for golden grains, Taoism came from the south, where moving blue water, fantastic mountains, and green rice purveyed. Edifying the natural energy of the universe, Taoism is the natural way to freedom. At Huang Shan, a Taoist told me, "A battering ram can knock down a door but it can't stop a hole," as if he measured the power of something by its relative emptiness: the more empty, the more powerful. He added, "Taoism is like freeing yourself through actualizing that conflicts can be resolved in your own mind." To me, embracing the Taoist laws of change, such as yin and yang principles, is like approaching a torrential river on an important journey and not feeling discouragement at my inability to cross. I learn to stop and relax, allowing time to lend new meaning, direction, and salvation for the turmoil and ignorance occurring within myself. Similarly, Tao can be seen perpetuated through the passiveness of Tai Chi (Chinese shadow boxing), as if it were a game of intuition and intention. I find Tao in surfing, not by examining the board, but through harmonizing with the nature and momentum of the water, mind willing to give up expectations, sticking to the experience as it changes, and allowing the body to harmonize with the waves. A poem presents the enigma of China's true "home-grown" religion, "Breathe the wind, drink the dew, ride the clouds, and wander about."

When I traveled on the Silk Road, I learned of the many legends of Chinese history and literature, such as Fa Xian (who's journey began 399 A.D.), Xuan Zang (602-664 A.D.), Marco Polo (13th century), as well as the Monkey King (from the epic Journey to the West, a tall tale published in1592 and often played out in contemporary Peking Operas). My 5,000-mile journey westward traversed the Gobi Desert, the Tarim Basin of Chinese Turkestan, and the Karakoram Mountains of Northern Pakistan. I discovered that the Silk Road was also the road of Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, and much more. However, only the Buddha espoused a foreign religion accepted whole-heartedly by the ancient Chinese. Monks, transporting scriptures from India as early as the first century A.D., avoided the Himalayas and dared the mountain passes

near K-2 (the world's second highest peak), located on China's border with Pakistan. Next they mounted Bactrian (two-humped) camels and faced unyielding deserts in search of the security and power line of the Great Wall system. I learned that Buddhism changed China and China changed Buddhism, integrating and transforming Indian philosophy into brand-new varieties of Buddhism as it mixed with Confucianism, Taoism, and Chinese folklore. These innovative and popular Chinese sects, such as Pure Land and Chan (Zen in Japanese), kindled profound impact throughout China, Japan, Korea, and the world. An ancient maxim expresses this syncretism process: "San Jiao Fa Yi," meaning, "Three teachings flow into one." A Zen verse captures the new-found possibilities for sudden enlightenment: "Boundless is the sea of bitterness, yet a man who repents can reach the shore."

In 2000 I pursued personal quest to visit Tibet and ascend Mt. Everest (29,028 ft.), or at least to venture as far as my lungs would allow (18,000 ft.). Historically pilgrims to Tibet have felt that the longer and more arduous the journey, the more enlightened the participant. I relished that notion while enduring downtown Beijing traffic and pollution in preparation for the journey, which was like being in the lair of a bureaucratic dragon. The dragon instilled change: from clouds, to rain, to sunshine; to my quest for travel documents, gear, and tickets to Chengdu and Lhasa. I discovered that people of Tibet were once animists (Bon religion) with elaborate rituals to suppress demons and encourage merciful spirits to serve human needs. Eventually, most Tibetans adopted Mahayana Buddhism, Tantric ritualism, and Sanskrit writing through India which combined to produce complex socio-political religious sects uniquely identifiable as Tibetan, each with spiritual and temporal rulers, such as the "Yellow Hat" sect which recognizes the Dali Lama as its own. I learned of majestic legends, such as Guan Yin, the Chinese goddess of mercy, who came to Lhasa from the East China Sea and meditated in a cave (many Tibetans I met believed the Dalai Lama is a Guan Yin incarnate). I heard eerie campfire tales of Yeti, the Himalayan snowman, and saw vast plains, sparkling glacial streams, and magnificent fields of brilliant yellow flowers grown for vegetable oil. It seemed possible to experience Heaven and Hell in the same hour: from poverty, begging, and deathly roads of cliffs, landslides, and dust; to the most glorious mountains and empowering skies in all existence.

Throughout my far flung travels in China, I have had opportunities to view nature reserves, see the raw beauty of East Asia, and to dip into the fairytale China of my childhood imagination. I have followed the sound of water to rice paddies, primary forests, colossal mountains of legend, powerful rivers, gushing waterfalls, and endangered pandas. I have visited a myriad of "minority" cultures, which have crystallized my perceptions of China's ethnic diversity, a country with 56 linguistic identities, each with colorful customs, legends, and individualities. During ancient periods of regional conflict, cultures not assimilated into the Chinese majority (Han majority) would move toward the peripheral frontiers. This implies that today's Han majority are descendants of an ancient majority, often expressed as, "There is a little of me in you and a little of you in me." Although they have always retained respective degrees of autonomy, China's minority cultures have profoundly contributed folklore and philosophy to the Han majority for thousands of years. Among the many minority societies I have met, each was deeply endowed with a wealth of song, dance, and tradition; each lent me lasting impressions of language, culture, and history.

China is a place of isolation and absorption, inclusion and exclusion. The conqueror eventually becomes absorbed into Chinese thought, essentially swallowed by its depth, flexibility, and passivity. Thus the conqueror becomes the conquered, and the intruder inadvertently lends its strength to the Chinese collective conscious. In this way, China's profound isolationism (in terms of geography, philosophy and politics) maintains an intrinsic ability to acknowledge and absorb other philosophies, forming an unconventional bond with that which was alien or unwanted.

I have learned, with curiosity and intrigue, to perceive many modern Chinese as having little time for pious loyalty to a single philosophy. Each of China's three great schools of thought flowed into the other: Confucianism and Taoism into Buddhism; Confucianism and Buddhism into Taoism; lastly Taoism and Buddhism into Confucianism. The Chinese are insightful people who cling to Buddhism in times of disparity, to Confucian ideals in times of prosperity, Taoism as an explanation for the cosmic laws of change, and Christianity as a fresh identity. These philosophies, combined with an ability to emerge with specialties, brought forth new and dynamic trends of consciousness, such as Neo-Confucianism, Neo-Taoism, and Zen Buddhism. Flexibility and syncretism are the elixirs of Chinese sensibility.

Born in the year of the Tiger, I fancy that China has fashioned me high-spirited traveler. Integrity is something still greatly admired by an ancient culture now tempted to compromise dignity in trade for the contemporary yuan (Chinese dollar). I have found the Chinese in a quandary; identity difficult to regain in their changing and dynamic era (consider the transformations in China since the period of the Cultural Revolution). I have witnessed millions grabbing at the urban sprawl of gigantic new super-cities with both chopsticks, yet just beyond, as if from a line drawn in the sand, stretches out ancient philosophical tradition. Today, these worlds, ancient and modern, are mingling and meshing, cultural centers changing, philosophies combining and reconciling. The face of China is red and rushing, like ancient philosophy and culture on steroids. Explosive new economic centers fuel new sources of inspiration, sparking social, political, and economic reform. Called "Special Economic Zones" ( SEZ's), they fuse eastern and western worlds at specific locations, such as Shenzen (including Hong Kong), Xiamen, or Pudong (including Shanghai), and Hainan Island. Although many felt that China would absorb Hong Kong when the British returned it, it was Hong Kong which absorbed China. Free trade and capitalism were no longer isolated to a pint-sized island. Extraordinary change is underway in China; the dragon flies high in the sky and swims deep in the sea.

I recall a joke regarding China's favorable intrinsic connection with the West: "If China and the West were to enter into confrontation, and a U.S. pilot were shot down on Asian soil, he need not bring a gun, but merely smile and extend an open hand. Surely the people would be kind to him." Perhaps this nearly came true in the Hainan Island incident, where despite the media playing it up on all sides, I found the Chinese completely unconcerned with the event, and I felt more than welcome wherever I went in their country.

It is my impression that China, although characterized to be geographically shaped as a chicken, is more like a rooster in personality: frisky and masculine in nature. Sometimes the individual is proud, with head high, the rooster's crest back; other times shuffling, hunched over, crest hanging. Men seen arguing in Beijing peck at each other in short jerky motions, compared to men in Shanghai, who back off with intellectual pride, chest protruding. Manchuria is the head, Gansu Corridor the neck, Taiwan and Hainan the feet, from Shanghai to Hong Kong the breast, and Tibet the wings to the heavens.

Chinese philosophy often alludes to Western logic and allows divine intuition. A Chinese philosopher can see the same thing from many perspectives, suggesting that if truth is one, it can be expressed in many forms, as if all waters reflect the same moon. China has disciplined me not to be holier-than-thou and to use the word "perhaps" more than I was previously inclined, emphasizing empathy through the reconciliation of

contrasting viewpoints. Offering a window to an ancient world, the oldest continuous civilization, China still holds the magic and mystery of life for those with an open mind and a quest to learn. I feel that a traveler willing to recognize, reason, and come to terms with the jewel of China is unendingly enriched.

*EDITOR'S NOTE: This is a paper discussing things learned during the China study culture tour that was written for Philosophy 301, History of Chinese Philosophy/Chinese Study Tour.*