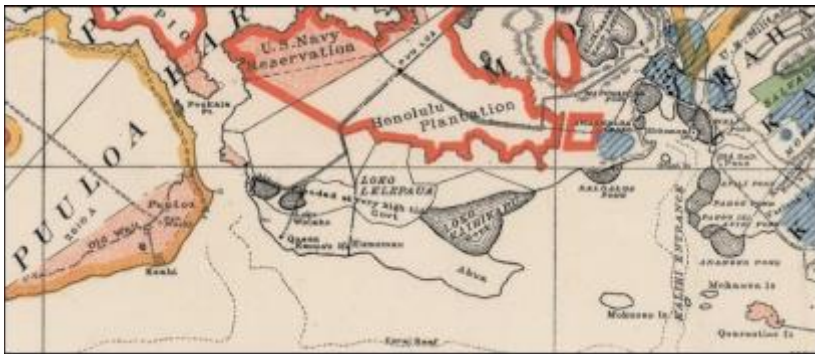


# All One *Place*: Reflections from the 11th East-West Philosophers' Conference

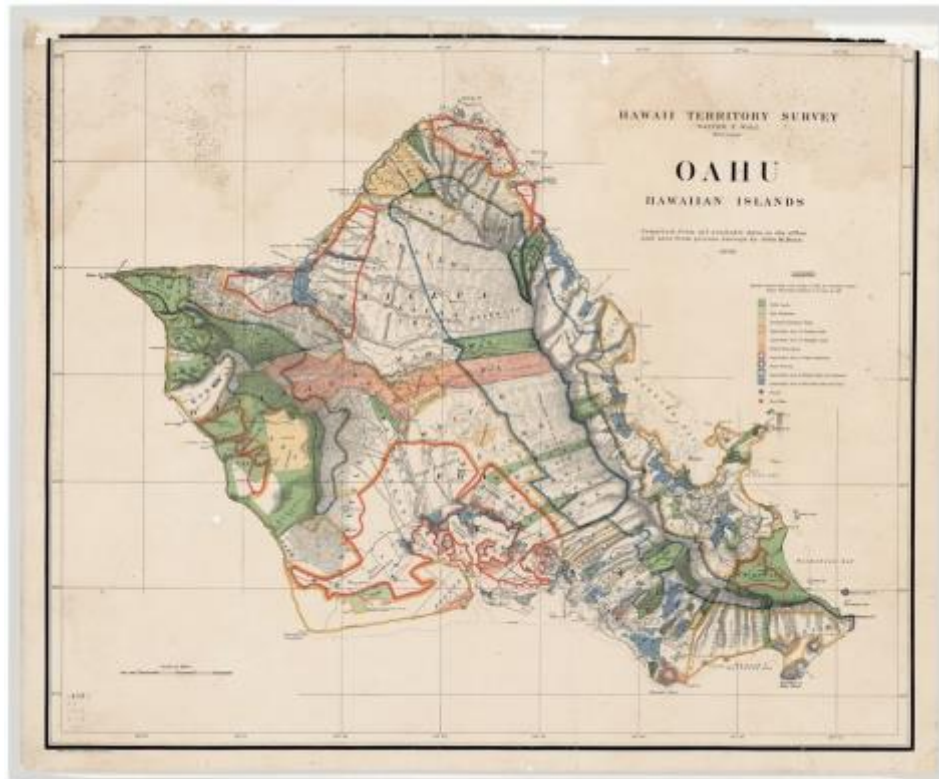
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Map courtesy of the Map Collection at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. <http://magis.manoa.hawaii.edu/maps/>



The U.S. survey map above of Oahu was drawn about four years after the joint resolution was passed that annexed the Hawaiian Islands. From this aerial perspective, swaths of sugarcane and pineapple were during this time the widening mark of outside influences, but the indelible changes wrought went beyond indentured-labor agriculture. This place was not an empty space to be filled, it was not a pure untouched land. It had already been shaped, lived-in, and vested with significance, and the clash of two into the space of one was visible even without the stain of blood and the scars of battle on the land. The detailed view of the southern shore, now the mouth of Pearl Harbor and the Honolulu International Airport, shows the overlapping Honolulu (sugar) Plantation, U.S. Navy Reservation, and Federal Reservation nestled next to the vestiges of a uniquely Native Hawaiian practice, the fish ponds. These stacked-stone enclosures were a sustainable and simple stamp of civilization on the land. This portion of the map tells the story of the turmoil of the time, when the island was crowded with ideas, expectations, and brimming full histories that crystalized still tumultuous margins of difference.

Ruminations such as these evoke the search for a philosophy of place that combines elements of geography, history, and religion, as well as ethics, metaphysics, and aesthetics. *Place* was the theme of the 11th East-West Philosophers' Conference, held in the urban heart of the Islands, Honolulu, from May 24-31, 2016.

The conference was hosted jointly by the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa and the East West Center and funded by the generosity of local business and community leaders such as Dr. Hung Wo and Elizabeth Lau Ching Foundation, as well as the Uehiro Foundation for Ethics and Education, an educational and philanthropic organization based in Japan. Participants in the conference, which included about three hundred individuals invited to give short presentations, twelve plenary panel speakers, and one keynote address, were asked to consider questions and topics centering on the myriad ideas and conceptions of place. Academics and professionals from thirty countries contributed diverse and varied accounts of place, including **religious place**, such as Lauren Pfister's (Hong Kong Baptist University) presentation, "Ubication: A Phenomenological Study about Making Spaces Sacred," **metaphorical place** in Ronnie Littlejohn's (Belmont University) "Visiting the Dark Places of Wisdom," **metaphysical place** in Geoff Ashton's (University of Colorado at Colorado Springs) "Sāṃkhya and the Architecture of Devotion in the Bhagavad Gītā: Liberation through Re-Imagining Place as the Body of Krishna," **mystical place** in Sarah Haq's (University of Maryland) "My Place is the Placeless: A-Duality and Homeless Sexualities in Mystical Thought," **appropriate place** in Eiho Baba's (Furman University) "In Search of Appropriateness through Experience: *Gemu* and the Place to Conduct *Gongfu* as Transactional Events," and the **place of Philosophy** in Brian Bruya's (Eastern Michigan University) "A Place in the Margins: How the Philosophical Gourmet Report Shapes the Profession of Philosophy."

The importance of distinguishing types of places is important as we navigate our complex world and its diverse peoples and populations. Metaphors that play on geographical space abound in many philosophical traditions, as David McCraw (University of Hawai'i at Mānoa) posed in his "Metaphors of Place in Pre-Han Chinese Thinking" and Meera Baidur (Manipal University, India) in her "Accommodation, Location, and Context: Conceptualization of Place in Indian Traditions of Thought." In Kathleen Higgin's (University of Texas) "Putting the Dead in their Place," she explored various ways that survivors orient themselves in relation to the deceased, and the literal, spiritual, and physical places they create for the dead. In their special theatre performance, *Being in Place: There's No App for That!* Graham and Helen Parkes provided a Nietzschean reflection on being present in the digital age. Even though technology gives us more ways to connect, it exports our attention from the here and now.

Rooting the abstract in the real is one of the most valuable contributions of a philosophy of place. Celia Bardwell-Jones' (University of Hawai'i-Hilo) "De-colonial Perspectives of Land and Home: Yearning and a Sense of Place Within Native Hawaiian and Filipino Identities," and Tim Freeman's (University of Hawai'i-Hilo) "Place on Fire: Climate Change and the Summit of Mauna Kea," brought awareness to the tectonic

conflict imported by modernity to Hawai'i, and to the necessity of awareness of these issues for a chance at understanding and renewal. Gathering in the same space does not mean that we inhabit the same *place*, in a philosophically nuanced way, and this necessitates that we communicate and are open to the perspectives and histories of others if we hope for an inclusive sense of belonging in the world.

**Sydney Morrow** is a PhD candidate at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa studying comparative philosophy. Her primary research interests include Warring States Era and Han Dynasty philosophy and literature, twentieth century Existentialism, and the application of Confucian values to modern societal problems, especially homelessness and poverty. Her dissertation title is "A Comparative Study of 'Existential Destitution' in Pre-Qin Chinese Philosophy and Karl Jaspers in the Context of Homelessness in Hawai'i."