The 2011 APEC Summit is being held on the beautiful island of Oahu, Hawai‘i in November this year. The leaders of twenty-one economies will meet to discuss global issues pertaining to the Asia-Pacific region. This article specifically addresses the importance of historical, present and potential connections between China and Hawai‘i.

Chinese in the State of Hawai‘i

- State population: 1,360,301
- Chinese population: 54,955
- State GDP: 64 billion
- State GDP per capita: $42,055
- Chinese-owned Business: 11%

History of Chinese in Hawai‘i

The earliest official arrival of Chinese to Hawai‘i soil occurred in 1788. Many of the immigrants were carpenters who travelled by trading ships sailing back to China from North America. In 1802, a Chinese entrepreneur farmer Wong Tz-Cheun arrived on the island to cultivate and process sugar. Later on, another Chinese entrepreneur Huang Tai built a sugar mill in Wailuku, Maui. The Hawai‘i Chinese population increased dramatically during the mid-1800s. In 1852, the first group of Chinese contract workers arrived on the island’s sugar field in Hawai‘i.

Most of them were coming from Kwangtung and Fuken provinces in southern China. By 1882, Chinese represented around 20 percent of Hawai‘i's population and nearly 49 percent of the sugarcane workers in Hawai‘i were immigrants from China. The commercial sugarcane industry and equipment for sugarcane introduced by the Chinese quickly became the largest contributor to state income in Hawai‘i.

Chinese Alumni

Hawai‘i is known for its rich cultural diversity. As a result, we learn about people from all over the globe, and their stories of economic and cultural success on the beautiful islands of Hawai‘i. Over the centuries, people from China made their contributions to the Hawaiian economy, bringing with them a wide range of occupations and industries to enhance life on the Islands.

Jason Scott Lee comes to mind as a young and handsome actor, who represents ethnic diversity within Hawai‘i, with Lee being an American movie star of part Chinese and part Hawaiian blood. Hiram Fong, the seventh of eleven children was born to a Chinese family from Hawai‘i, and became the first Asian-American to serve in the U.S Senate and also making history to be the first Asian-American presidential candidate.
University of Hawai‘i and William Kwai Fong Yap

The Father of the University of Hawai‘i, William Kwai Fong Yap, was born in 1873. He was the first of Chinese descent to serve on the professional staff at the Bank of Hawai‘i. With his assistance from the College of Hawai‘i, President Arthur Dean and Regent Wallace Farrington, drafted and circulated a petition for the expansion of the college into a university offering graduate degrees in 1919. The petition demonstrated the necessity of a university to equip the people of Hawai‘i with professional careers and serve as a fulcrum for Asia-Pacific relations. With more than 400 signatures, Senate Bill 76 became the “Act to Establish a University of Hawai‘i,” and was passed unanimously being signed into law on April 29, 1919.

For more information, please visit Center for Chinese Studies at: http://www.chinesestudies.hawaii.edu/

Dr. Sun Yat Sen

Dr. Sun Yat Sen received his high school education in Hawai‘i, at what is now known as Iolani and Punahou School from 1879 to 1883. In 1894, he founded Revive China Society in Hawai‘i with the support of the local Chinese population as a ground base for his revolutionary activities. In 1911, Dr. Sun was elected as the provisional President of the Republic of China and officially ended the era of Qing Dynasty.

Historical sites of Dr. Sun Yat Sen in Hawaii:

1. Sun Yat Sen statue at age 13 and Sun Yat Sen memorial park
2. Sun Yat Sen statue at Chinese Cultural Plaza
3. Iolani and Punahou High school
4. Mid-Pacific Institute
5. St. Andrew’s Cathedral
6. The historical site of the inauguration meeting of Hsing Chung Hui
7. Sun Mei’s Kula ranch
8. The office of the Chinese Newspaper <Liberty News>

For more historical landmarks, please visit Dr. Sun Yat Sen Hawaii Foundation online at: http://www.sunyatsenhawaii.org/

Brief written by Naiyang Chang, UH Mānoa Economics undergraduate student, and does not necessarily reflect the views of UHERO or the University of Hawai‘i.
Links between Hawai‘i and China in recent decades

Besides the Chinese workers who arrived in the 18th century, today Hawai‘i and China share extensive cultural, economic, and political links. Four of the China provinces have sisterhood status with the state of Hawai‘i starting from Guangdong in 1985, Hainan in 1992, Taiwan in 1993 and Tianjin in 2002. The interactions between Hawai‘i and China are focused on four major grounds: education, environment, tourism and investment.

Education and Environment

There have been numerous exchange programs for students, faculty as well as leaders from the public/private sector between University of Hawai‘i systems and universities/firms from China since 1999. The educational exchange programs allowed Hawai‘i to assist in preparation and training processes in the 2008 Beijing Olympic and 2010 World Expo. In 2005, Zhongguancun High technology Park (China) and High Technology Development Cooperation (Hawai‘i) formed a partnership in order to facilitate business opportunities between Hawai‘i and China.

Investment

In 2003, Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism (DBEDT) organized a group of Hawai‘i businesses and organizations into an entity called Integrated Development Group (IDG) to level up small-medium enterprises for the competition with larger firms. In the same year, U.S Department of Commerce (USDOC) Marketing Development Cooperator Program awarded a significant grant to DBEDT to support IDG and tourism related conference in China and Hawai‘i.

Tourism

In 2009, the China Central Government announced to build Hainan as the world’s top island destination. As a result, there have been several visits to Hawai‘i by the Hainan Provincial government agency. In 2010, Hawai‘i state Governor Linda Lingle visited China in June, which was a major event to stimulate interaction between Chinese tourists to Hawai‘i and as well as the Hawai‘i visitors. According to DBEDT, the Chinese visitors in Hawai‘i had increased 57% in 2010 from previous years with total amount of 66,048 visitors and anticipates 20% growth of tourist from China in each of the following 4 years. As the Foreign Trade statistic by U.S Census showed, 63 million worth of goods and services were exported to China and 292 million were imported from China through the State of Hawai‘i in 2010.

For more information, please visit DBEDT at: http://hawaii.gov/dbedt/

The Memorandum of Understanding for granting the U.S as an Arrival Destination Status in 2007 provided an opportunity for China and the U.S to acknowledge cultural variations, which also promoted the international relationship between the two countries. The introduction of goods and services, investment opportunities and the technological cooperation between Hawai‘i and China improved the environmental preservation for our earth. Academic communication between Chinese and Americans in Hawai‘i furnished a foundation of intellectual upgrade. We would like to encourage further interaction between Hawai‘i and China, due to the substantial benefits we will be able to secure from the cooperation and the influences of Chinese culture.

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