



The Saga of a Taoist Nun, 1: English Edition: Novel of Martial Arts

Hanson Chan

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This is the English version of “The Saga of a Taoist Nun”, Book 1. Hanson Chan’s The Saga of a Taoist Nun, Book 1 & 2, in English editions are in fact the second and revised editions of Hua Hu, Book 1 & 2, which were previously published in 2006. Both are translations from the original Chinese versions by the same author. In real history, “Hua Hu” or “Lao Tzu’s Hua Hu Jing” was an ancient Taoist scripture that circulated in China in the fourth century. It stated that Lao Tzu, after having finished the Tao Te Ching and discovered Tao, left China for India, where he taught a disciple named Sakyamuni. This disciple founded a religion called Buddhism, which preached kindness to all. However, its story was challenged by Buddhists and deemed as a slander. For centuries, debates between the two religions were held with no result until the Kubilai Khan’s reign when the Taoists were allegedly defeated and the Mongol emperor decreed all copies banned and burnt. Hanson Chan’s two martial arts novels about Hua Hu Jing are based on this particular event and more..... Here is one of the reviewers commenting on book 1: In Hua Hu, Book 1: The Forbidden Scripture, Hanson Chan weaves Chinese history, legend and some of his own speculations into a fast-paced adventure story. The ascension of Mongol emperor Kubilai Khan and the defeat of China's Taoists is the backdrop for this tale in which Taoist Mystic Pearl finds herself the protector of the last surviving copy of the Hua Hu scripture. Keeping the scripture safe means fleeing the world she knows and setting out on a quest to find the Taoist monk Uncle Eighteen. Danger and treachery lie in wait for Mystic Pearl at every turn, but her good training, a little luck and some help from a newly won ally are there to help her succeed in her quest. Like Dan Brown's The Da Vinci Code, the novel's premise draws upon historic fact and religious controversy to create a page turning story. Rather than Brown's Catholicism, the religion is Taoism whose belief system and history will likely be new for many Westerners. Using the surviving, but incomplete Hua Hu manuscript as a starting point, Chan imagines the flight one manuscript might have taken in its escape from those who sought its destruction. Suspense and martial arts action move the story along, while colorful descriptions bring the cast of characters and the Chinese towns and countryside the story takes place in to life. The novel closes with a powerful ending that also leaves room for the continuation of the story in sequels.

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Lorraine Brown:

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