

MAKANA RISSER CHAI

Huna, Max Freedom Long, and the Idealization of William Brigham

IN 1936, TEN YEARS after his death, Bishop Museum Director William Tufts Brigham became the hero of a series of popular books. The author, Max Freedom Long, claimed to have met Brigham and with his help to have discovered “the ancient secrets of Hawaiian kahunas.”¹ He called these secrets Huna. Though few people took notice of his writing at the time, in the next 30 years Long published seven more books, wrote hundreds of newsletters, and developed a following of thousands of adherents. His 1948 book, *The Secret Science Behind Miracles*², sells briskly to this day. His students, their students, and others inspired by his work have become Huna teachers and authors who collectively have sold countless books worldwide with titles like *The Secrets and Mysteries of Hawaii*³ and *The Sacred Power of Huna: Spirituality and Shamanism in Hawaii*.⁴

Although most of these books contain at least a few accurate descriptions of authentic Hawaiian traditions, they mix in everything from Freudian psychology to New Age, New Thought, wicca, and

Makana Risser Chai researched and edited Nā Mo'olelo Lomilomi: The Traditions of Hawaiian Massage and Healing (Bishop Museum, 2005). Her book, Hawaiian Massage Lomilomi: Sacred Touch of Aloha (Hawaiian Insights, 2007) received a Keep It Hawai'i award from the Hawai'i Tourism Authority for authentic depiction of Hawaiian traditions. A lawyer, she also published a book on law with Prentice Hall. She has written a book on the history of the invention of Huna.

The Hawaiian Journal of History, vol. 45 (2011)

UFOs and call the whole thing Hawaiian. As examples of cultural appropriation, they are of little value to scholars.

What is interesting, however, is the role played by Brigham. Long claimed that half of his “case studies” came from Brigham, and quoted him extensively about what to look for in kahuna “magic.” Brigham gave Long’s theories an aura of credibility. Many Huna authors quote Brigham and idealize him. Some even say he was a kahuna himself.

Of greater concern to historians and academicians is non-Huna authors and university students who cite Brigham as a source of information on k̄ahuna, relying on Long’s accounts. The purpose of this paper is to answer the question of whether the anecdotes and quotes Long attributes to Brigham are actually his words, and if so, whether Brigham was a reliable source on k̄ahuna and Hawaiian religion.

WHO WAS MAX FREEDOM LONG?

Max Freedom Long was born in Colorado on October 26, 1890,⁵ and graduated from Sterling High School, located in the northeast corner of the state. Although he wrote that he majored in psychology at the University of California Los Angeles,⁶ according to school records he graduated with an Associate of Arts (two-year) degree in General Education from what was then called Los Angeles State Normal School. He attended from September 14, 1914, to June 22, 1916.⁷

Long wrote he arrived in the Islands in 1917 with a three-year contract to teach school on the island of Hawai‘i.⁸ Hawai‘i Department of Education records show his contract ran from September 1917 to June 1920.⁹ Coming from cosmopolitan California, he arrived at his assignment on a horse-drawn buckboard and found himself perched on a windswept desert surrounded by sugar cane fields and bare lava rock, first in Ka‘ū, then in Kohala above Waipi‘o Valley, and finally in South Kona. What saved it for him were the stories he heard about k̄ahuna.

For an excellent description of Long’s time on Hawai‘i Island, read his three novels, *Murder Between Dark and Dark* (1939), *The Lava Flow Murders* (1940), and *Death Goes Native* (1941).¹⁰ Reminiscent of Agatha Christie murder mysteries, the novels feature a local kine Columbo, a Hawaiian detective named Komako (“tomato” according to Long) Koa (“brave”) who shrewdly bumbles his way into finding the killers.

The plots are fiction, but the descriptions of the people and places are wonderful snapshots of the *haole* community and a few Hawaiians of that time and place. Long was an excellent creative writer. His colorful language and vivid descriptions of kahuna practices such as controlling weather and walking on hot lava made his somewhat routine stories a delight to read. Perhaps if he had continued in this way, he would have been the Tony Hillerman of his time, conveying native cultural practices through the device of the murder mystery. As it was, he abandoned novels for his Huna books because, as he wrote in a letter, he needed money:

I had two months work recently sanding boards, but none since. I have been driving to get out a third murder book, borrowing money to live on as I did so . . . There is a new pulp called 'UNKNOWN' which handles yarns of magic and such things as if all were true and possible. Rather amusing reading. I sent two to it . . . Too bad to have to try such methods to get beans . . .¹¹

DID LONG MEET BRIGHAM?

Long wrote that when he first came to Hawai'i and heard stories about the kahunas, no one would answer his questions. Despite that, he persisted. He wrote that after his contract ended he moved to Honolulu and went to the Bishop Museum to meet William Brigham, the director.¹² He hoped Brigham would tell him the truth about kahunas. Long said he was ushered into Brigham's office and began asking questions. Brigham told him he had been studying kahunas for forty years and they did do magic.¹³ Long asked Brigham, "How do they do it?" Brigham burst out laughing. He said he had been trying for years to answer the same question.

. . . in that hour he placed his finger on me, claiming me as his own, and like Elijah of old, preparing to cast his mantle across my shoulders before he took his departure. He told me that he had long watched for a young man to train in the scientific approach and to whom he could entrust the knowledge he had gained in the field – the new and unexplored field of magic.¹⁴

Long described Brigham vividly:

As he tells a story, see him: a huge old man in the eighties, hale and hearty, although recently having suffered the loss of a leg; mentally alert, enthusiastic, eager, humorous, and withal very earnest. It is night and he is seated in a great easy chair beside a ponderous oak table which stands in the centre of the long low room.¹⁵

With a description that intimate, it is obvious that they met. Isn't it?

Long wrote that he met Brigham "at the beginning of my fourth year" in the Islands. Since Long's contract ended in June, 1920, presumably he moved to Honolulu in the summer of 1920. "At the beginning of my fourth year" could be the fall of 1920, or perhaps the beginning of 1921.¹⁶ The 1921 Honolulu City Directory lists Long as a salesman for the Honolulu Photo Supply Company. He is not listed in the 1919 or 1920 directories.¹⁷

In any event, according to Bishop Museum annual reports, Brigham retired and was made director emeritus as of December 31, 1918, one and a half years before Long got to Honolulu. Brigham traveled and was gone from the museum for most of 1919 and 1920. In 1921, he worked at the museum completing a book manuscript intended to be his *magnum opus* on Hawaiian religion and kahunas, called "The Ancient Worship of the Hawaiian Islanders, With References to That of Other Polynesians."¹⁸ After that, he worked off and on for various museum projects.

As of December 31, 1919, according to one record, Brigham did not have an office at the museum.¹⁹ Other records indicate he did have an office after that. Even if he did not, it is certainly possible he was allowed to use one when he was at the museum. Long could have met him at *an* office in the museum. Long does not say they always met in his office; in fact he talks of sitting on the lanai in the darkness, presumably at Brigham's home.

The idea that Brigham could be the source of Long's books was surprising to Pali Jae Lee. Lee (1925–2009) worked for almost ten years as a researcher at the Bishop Museum Department of Anthropology, and later taught as a *kupuna* or elder in the schools for the Hawai'i State Department of Education. She and her husband, Koko Willis, wrote the book *Tales From the Night Rainbow*,²⁰ based on *mo'olelo* or traditions they learned from the family of Kaili'ohe Kame'ekua, who descended from Makaweliweli, the renowned *kāula* or prophetess of Molokai.²¹

Lee disagreed with Long's books and wondered if Brigham could have been the source of his misinformation. She decided to read Brigham's notes about his meetings with Long. Brigham kept voluminous hand-written personal journals. Lee wrote:

In 1997, I did some research at Bishop Museum to see what Long had learned, if anything, from Dr. Brigham, as I did not agree with much of what was in his books. I went through page after page of [Brigham's] journals, year after year, looking for some note, some meeting, some mention. I found grocery lists and what he paid for each item, mention of sore legs, croup and weather conditions. I found all the letters from his relatives. He had not thrown out a thing. Everything was there. There was no mention of Max Freedom Long.²²

Lee also interviewed Edwin Bryan, Jr., and Dr. Donald Kilolani Mitchell, who both worked at the Bishop Museum. Both told her that Long had tried and tried but could not get an appointment to see Brigham. They called Brigham an "old wind-bag" and Mitchell said, "That man had an ego that never stopped." They concluded Brigham would never lower himself to meet with a mere schoolteacher turned salesman.²³

Just to give a glimpse of his class consciousness, Brigham never met Hawaiian scholar Mary Kawena Pukui, though their paths crossed at the museum for a few years. Granted, she was just at the beginning of her career in the 1920s, but she already had served as a source for books by Martha Beckwith and Laura Green²⁴ because of her deep knowledge of Hawaiian ways. Yet this man of science who was working on a manuscript about Hawaiian religion did not interview a woman who was trained by her grandmother, a kahuna in the Pele line.

A local paper noted of Brigham, "He wasn't much of a mixer in the community, limiting his circle of friends to men of science."²⁵ He even refused to meet with M. H. de Young, publisher of the *San Francisco Chronicle* and founder of the de Young Museum.²⁶

In his "Ancient Worship" manuscript Brigham bemoaned the "terrible chaos when the malihini [newcomer], here for a few weeks, undertakes to write history much less religious history."²⁷ Would Brigham then meet with a *malihini* like Long and encourage him to write religious history?

Brigham completed his "Ancient Worship" manuscript the same

year he supposedly was meeting with Long. None of the stories Long said he heard from Brigham are in this manuscript. Brigham wrote of a few of his own observations of kāhuna, but admitted he had few interactions with them. Mostly his manuscript reprints accounts previously published by others.

In two of Long's books he tells an elaborate story about Brigham walking across slightly cooled lava in the company of several kāhuna.²⁸ For pages, Long has Brigham describe the kāhuna, a *lū'au* feast, the trek to the volcano, and the lava flow. Finally they arrived at a lake of hot lava. The kāhuna tied *ti* leaves around their bare feet, and told Brigham to do the same. Brigham began tying his leaves on the outside of his boots, but the kāhuna insisted he take them off. He refused. When it came time to cross the lake of lava, he ran, but his

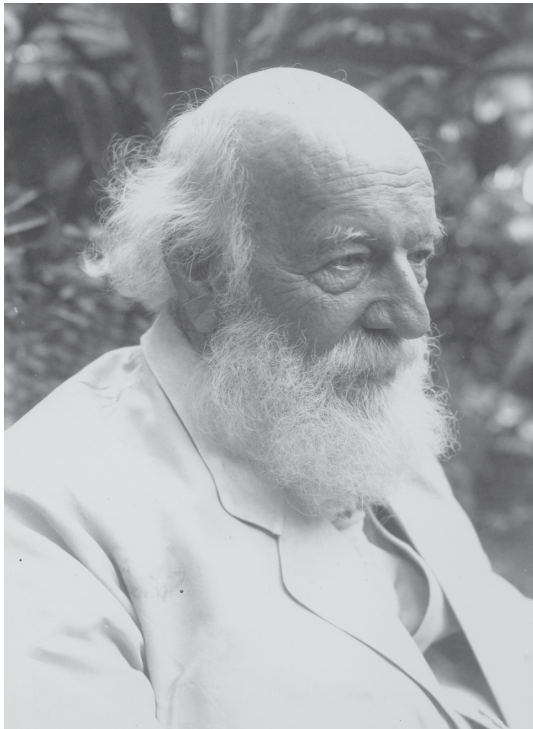


FIG. 1. William Brigham. Photo by R. J. Baker. 1925. Hawai'i State Archives.

boots began to burn. One sole got stuck and left behind, and the other flapped on his foot, slowing him down. Once safely on the other side, the kahunas laughed and laughed at him and his boots.²⁹ This story is so vivid, it feels so realistic, it just has to be true. Doesn't it?

Brigham devoted an entire chapter in "Ancient Worship" to fire-walking. In it, he recounted his own experience of walking on hot lava. There were no *ti* leaves and no kahunas:

No one was with me to remonstrate, and I decided to attempt to cross the recently cooled crust although the edges were still incandescent and lazily sputtering with a slight rise and fall . . . I made a great leap over the magic ring and there was a sensation of sinking footsteps but I did not wait to examine any footprints . . . My shoes held together until I climbed the steep rail to the house, but were of no further use; my feet were not burned . . .³⁰

If Long's story was from Brigham, why didn't Brigham put it in the manuscript he was working on at the time?

Similarly, Brigham's book, *Ancient Hawaiian House*, written in 1908, contains a wonderful story about Brigham receiving *lomilomi* massage.³¹ In Long's book the account of *lomilomi* supposedly observed by Brigham is not nearly as interesting as the story Brigham wrote himself.

Long cites Brigham as his source in seven of his case studies. In addition to walking on hot lava and observing *lomilomi*, Long claimed he heard from Brigham about five other kahuna practices.

Long asserted that Brigham studied "the ancient kahuna practice of holding heavy wooden sticks in the hands and, by an effort of mind, causing bodily electricity to enter a stick and charge it heavily." He said that Brigham had found the sticks gave off an electric shock, and that the kahunas used the sticks in battle. In his manuscript, Brigham wrote of the common practice of *ho'omana*, in which a stick is deified "until it seems as much a god as Maui."³² No electrical shocks ensued. He also referred to kahunas in battle but said they did not fight. Instead, they held the war god who was brought to the battlefield.³³

Long said Brigham studied several cases of instant healing.³⁴ Though Brigham's manuscript covers healing practices, the manuscript does not include *lā'au kāheha* or instant healing. Nor does Brigham report about a boy brought back to life with *lomilomi*, contrary to Long's

story.³⁵ Long wrote that Brigham “had many first-hand accounts” of seeing the ghosts of warriors past, or night marchers.³⁶ Everything Brigham wrote about night marchers was from other authors’ previously published works. Long also claimed Brigham killed a kahuna with a “death prayer,” something Brigham never claimed. In short, none of Long’s “Brigham” case studies were documented by Brigham himself.

Brigham’s manuscript also contradicts the central tenet of Long’s claimed relationship with him. Long wrote that because Brigham was a respected man of science, “Magic was a matter forbidden to him.”³⁷ He needed Long to do the research he was not allowed to do. This is not true. The subject of Brigham’s manuscript is the kahunas and their “magic.” One chapter is even titled, “Magic.”

Another clue is found in the last page of the manuscript, where Brigham lamented the lack of photographs for his work because he was denied the use of the Bishop Museum’s photographic facilities. Brigham had a contentious relationship with the museum before and after he left, so it is not surprising he was denied use of their lab, especially since his manuscript was not publishable. But if he was a close friend of Long, who worked in and later owned a photography shop, why did he not use Long’s lab? In addition, Long was an amateur photographer who took pictures while in Hawai‘i and published them in his books. Yet Long did not take a picture of Brigham.³⁸

Based on this research, there is no evidence that they met, and there is circumstantial evidence that they did not meet. However, there is one piece of contradictory evidence—from Charles Kenn.

Half-Hawaiian, half-Japanese, Charles Kenn (1907–1988) was born and raised on O‘ahu, was fluent in Hawaiian, and was regarded as an authority on Hawaiian history, culture, and traditions. He translated early Hawaiian writings, published numerous scholarly pieces in journals such as *Social Process in Hawaii*, and wrote popular articles for *Paradise of the Pacific* magazine and local newspapers. To share his wide knowledge of Hawaiian culture and religion with teachers and students, he taught at the University of California Los Angeles and at the University of Hawai‘i, and was a consultant at the Kamehameha Schools.³⁹ In the 2006 book, *Lua: Art of the Hawaiian Warrior*, he is honored as the *‘olohē lua* or master who kept alive and helped revive the ancient martial art.⁴⁰ In 1976, Kenn was the first person ever

named a Living Treasure of Hawai'i by the Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawai'i, and the only one given the honor that year.⁴¹

Kenn first learned about Long's work in 1940. Long sent a copy of the manuscript for his first Huna book to Theodore Kelsey in 1935. Kelsey, who at that time worked for the Hawai'i Archives, showed it to Professor Fred Beckley of the University of Hawai'i. Beckley, a Native Hawaiian scholar, said it was filled with mistakes.⁴² Long never fixed the errors, but instead published it in 1936. In 1940 he produced a new manuscript.⁴³ He sent it and at least two more letters to Kelsey in 1940, asking him to ask others for their opinions of it. Kelsey wrote back that he had sent it for review to Kenn. He did not say what Kenn thought of it, although the 1940 manuscript retained the errors of the earlier book.⁴⁴

About eight years later, Kenn moved to Los Angeles and met Long, and the two hit it off.⁴⁵ Kenn joined Long's Huna Research Associates (HRA) and became particularly interested in fire-walking. He authored a book on fire-walking that Long published, *Fire-walking From the Inside*.⁴⁶ It included the story from Long's books about Brigham walking on hot lava.

In 1949, Kenn returned home to Hawai'i. Over the next twenty years, he and Long apparently often wrote long letters to each other with mutual affection and respect. Four letters in the Bishop Museum Archives from 1949 and 1969 appear to be part of an ongoing, sometimes weekly correspondence between them about their reading, activities, and research.⁴⁷

Despite their friendship, Kenn clearly was conflicted about Long and Huna. As he said in a letter to a member of Long's HRA in 1949, he had "no doubt about Long's sincerity, but he may have introduced some non-huna factors on account of his white-man's mind."⁴⁸ Ten years later, he wrote in a letter to his friend, author Julius Rodman, "Max Long was 'auana' [to stray morally or mentally]. I too cannot swallow his 'huna' stuff, and I told him so. . . . Max means well but, being a haole . . . is unable to comprehend the inner meaning of the kahuna philosophy."⁴⁹

In 1982, Kenn made a presentation at the Bishop Museum. During the question and answer period he was asked about Long and Brigham. Kenn said that they did not meet.⁵⁰ However, two years earlier, in 1980, Kenn spoke before a group of Long's adherents at

a Huna conference in Punalu'u. There he said that Long did meet Brigham, although "there was not much going between Max and Dr. Brigham."⁵¹

When Kenn said there was "not much going" between Long and Brigham, he certainly repudiated Long's story that he was Brigham's chosen one. But by saying they met at all, he contradicted his own testimony.

Although the evidence is strong that Long and Brigham did not meet, Kenn's contradictory statements make it difficult to come to a definitive conclusion. Thus a second question must be asked. Assuming for the sake of argument that they did meet, was Brigham a reliable source on kahunas?

WAS WILLIAM BRIGHAM A RELIABLE SOURCE ON KĀHUNA?

William Tufts Brigham (1841–1926) was born in Boston of a well-connected, wealthy family. After graduation from Harvard with a Bachelor of Science degree in 1862 and a Master's in 1864, he came to Hawai'i for two years on a geological and botanical expedition, and taught for a semester at O'ahu College (today Punahou School). The first day he arrived in Hawai'i he met Charles Reed Bishop, and a few days later he met Sanford Dole. He remained lifelong friends with both men.

Brigham returned to Boston for more than twenty years. Dole lived with him in Boston for several years while they both studied law with Brigham's father, and were admitted to the bar in 1867. Brigham taught biology at Harvard for a year, and over the next dozen years lectured and published books and articles on classical art, volcanology, geology, seismology, and botany.

In 1883, he joined a group of entrepreneurs that bought and operated a plantation in Guatemala. The venture failed, and he declared bankruptcy. During bankruptcy proceedings, a shortage of \$17,000 was discovered in his legal trust account (more than \$375,000 in today's dollars). Brigham was arrested in February, 1887, for allegedly embezzling the money. Although the charges were never proved, he was forced to liquidate all his remaining assets, and "his family and friends cast him out, penniless and destitute."⁵²

Brigham fled to Hawai'i. He appealed to his friend Bishop for a job,

proposing to write a book on the history of the Islands. Bishop agreed, on the condition Brigham would consult with him on the museum he was planning to build as part of the Kamehameha Schools campus. Brigham acquiesced reluctantly. He had no interest in a “dime museum,” a “mere school cabinet of curiosities,” which he dismissed as “simply a mortuary chapel, as it were, of relics.”⁵³

Brigham arrived in February 1889 and worked on the history book for almost two years. He met with Bishop a few times to discuss the museum during those years, but finally agreed to become curator only because Bishop refused to continue funding his book. Although he was not officially hired until February 17, 1891, he began working in January of that year.⁵⁴ And even though often referred to as “Doctor,” Brigham held only an honorary doctorate from Columbia University, conferred in 1905.

Brigham did not study the *kāhuna* for forty years as Long says.⁵⁵ He was at the Bishop Museum for only thirty years, and prior to that had spent four years in the Islands, studying botany and history. As Theodore Kelsey wrote in his 1936 letter to Long:

I am sorry to say that Prof. Beckley has an exceedingly poor opinion of Dr. Brigham, whom you have made the ‘hero’ of the book, as it were. He was no linguist in Hawaiian, as you think. His twenty-two years at the Museum were practically wasted so far as preserving anything Hawaiian was concerned. What valuable material was written was largely written by others. Dr. Gregory, his successor, found a mass of untruth, and little done. You should read Dr. Gregory’s report, Prof. Beckley says. He also considers that the character of Dr. Brigham had a grave flaw.⁵⁶

Throughout his time at the museum, Brigham showed little interest in *kāhuna*. “Dr. Brigham’s work was what you would expect from a pioneer in the Pacific – very broad and very little done in depth.”⁵⁷ The one book he wrote in thirty years was on the ancient Hawaiian house. He wrote forty-six articles and monographs on Hawaiian botany, geology, and material culture such as mat weaving, *kapa*, feather work, and stone and wood carvings, but nothing documenting historic or contemporary *kāhuna*.⁵⁸

What he intended to be his *magnum opus*, “Ancient Worship,” was of such poor quality it was never published. It contained little original research, instead repeating Kamakau, Hale’ole, and other previously

published works. The section on “kahuna magic” was even worse, page after page of reprinted articles about fire-walking everywhere but in Hawai‘i.

In “A Last Word to my Readers” he wrote, “I have endeavored to present the old Hawaiians as I knew them more than half a century ago, and their ancestral religion as I heard of it from an aged priest and from many of the old chiefs.”⁵⁹



FIG. 2. This caricature of Brigham was probably completed after he returned to Honolulu in 1896 from a world tour collecting specimens. At that time his title was Curator of the museum; two years later it changed to Director, Bishop Museum.

Chiefs were not the best sources for information on kahuna practices. Other than chiefs, he says he talked with only one priest, but found out nothing about how he accomplished his works. "It was useless to discuss with him his training."⁶⁰

Why didn't Brigham learn more about kahunas? When Brigham was curator of the museum, King Kalākaua started a society called Hale Nauā, in part to document the practices of the kahunas. Brigham was not invited to these meetings, nor told of the results.

Honolulu Advertiser columnist Bob Krauss wrote in 1990, "Bishop's first director wasn't exactly 'Mr. Popularity.' . . . His problem was he didn't like people."⁶¹ The editor of the same paper complained eighty years earlier in a letter to the museum board of trustees that Brigham had "directed his ill will" to "almost everybody and everything else in the community."⁶²

He especially didn't like Hawaiians. He called Queen Lili'uokalani a "squaw."⁶³ In a letter he referred to the Queen as a "she devil," said he "hoped she would be shot or hanged," and wrote that the Hawaiians' attempt to restore the monarchy was "so that the nigger might reign supreme."⁶⁴

In his manuscript on ancient worship, Brigham described the kahuna process of deification, which took months of praying and then a lifetime commitment to feeding the spirit every day. That daily commitment extended to the descendants of the *kahu* or keeper who inherited the spirit. In commenting on this dedication, Brigham wrote:

One who knows the lack of persistence in the Hawaiian character, looks with astonishment at the accomplishment of such a long and arduous task; but that it should extend to another generation is almost beyond belief.⁶⁵

In other words, Brigham was saying, the Hawaiians were lazy.

Brigham theorized Hawaiians were prayed to death by 'anā'anā or sorcery because they were superstitious cowards—unlike the superior white man:

Those who know the Hawaiian character can well understand the hopeless feeling that attends the struggle against great odds, and the firm belief in the magic power. Apart from any anaana the average Hawaiian so feels his inability to compete fairly with the higher civilizations

of the haole with the white face, that he gives up the race while an Anglo-Saxon would at least try to put up more steam and get ahead of his rival.⁶⁶

In 1906, Hawaiians accused Brigham of anti-Hawaiian remarks. When asked to respond to the charges by the museum's board of trustees, he replied:

. . . it seems a little strange that some of the trustees should seem so ready to receive statements derogatory to me who am of the same race with themselves while I am not allowed to criticize however honestly and justly an inferior race.⁶⁷

As an attorney, Brigham was well aware of the law and his duty to uphold it as an officer of the courts. Yet in 1905 he conspired to plunder Hawaiian burial caves, cover up the illegal activity, and engage in conflicts of interest. An acquaintance of his, John Forbes, broke into a sacred cave on Hawai'i Island. Forbes found skeletons and cultural objects, and removed the objects. Although people today still argue about the legality of the removal, at the time Brigham was convinced it was illegal. He suggested Forbes cover up the theft:

In the meantime, keep the matter quiet for there are severe laws here concerning burial caves, and I shall not make the matter public, of course, until you say so. If you should wish to keep the collection or part of it, the coming from this place [Bishop Museum] would throw any suspicious persons off the scent . . .⁶⁸

After that, the museum bought and sold various artifacts to and from Forbes and his associates. Obviously, these transactions were not at arm's length.

As noted earlier, Mary Kawena Pukui did not meet Brigham, but she heard about him from Lahilahi Webb, the only Hawaiian on staff at the museum when Pukui began working with the researchers there in the 1920s. Pukui wrote in her notes about Brigham and a *kāhili*, a feathered staff made from the bones of a warrior's leg:

I had never met Mr. Brigham (the first Director) to talk to, but had seen him twice. A nice looking man, but according to Lahilahi, a bad tempered one who had a poor opinion of Hawaiians.

“He hated me,” she said, “and I didn’t like him too much either.” She pointed out a kahili with handle far too short for its feathered head. “See that? He had the handle cut so that it would fit in that space. It was sacrilegious and he paid for it in late years, when his own leg was cut off. He was a very unkind person.”⁶⁹

According to Brigham’s obituary, he “suffered loss of a foot, through amputation.”⁷⁰

William Brigham did not study kāhuna, did not know the Hawaiian language, did not respect Hawaiians, desecrated sacred objects, and conspired to plunder burial caves. He was not respected by Hawaiians. He was aware of the literature from others about kāhuna, but none of the incidents in Long’s case studies attributed to Brigham appear in his writings.

Despite that, the so-called Brigham case studies are mostly accurate descriptions of authenticated Hawaiian traditions. As Long recounted, Hawaiians did walk on slightly cooled lava,⁷¹ employed “death prayers” to kill,⁷² used *lomilomi* to relieve backaches and to revive the dead,⁷³ practiced instant healing,⁷⁴ and observed night marchers.⁷⁵ Hawaiians did charge sticks and other objects with *mana*,⁷⁶ though there is no evidence these sticks gave off an electrical charge.⁷⁷ Hawaiians did offer malformed human infants or aborted human fetuses for transfiguration into *mo’o* (water lizards) or *manō* (sharks) and placed them into ponds or the ocean. They watched these beings grow, considered them members of the family, and fed them.⁷⁸

Because these stories are relatively accurate, but Brigham was not an authority, this is more evidence that he was not Long’s source. But then who was?

WHO GAVE LONG HIS INFORMATION?

Long himself said he asked questions and traced back as far as he could whenever a friend, neighbor or associate told him a story of a kahuna working.⁷⁹ Pali Jae Lee explained:

In Honolulu, he [Long] got a job working in a photo shop across the street from the Halekulani Hotel. He lived at the Roosevelt Resident Hotel, on Makiki Street. Every moment he could get away from work and try to find something out from someone, he did so. This little hotel

where he lived was surrounded by small houses, all ha'ole [sic] owned, but herbal medicine was used by many, many people in the 20s, 30s and 40s. It would have been pretty easy for him to get some of that information.⁸⁰

That accounts for Long's own case studies. But what of the information he claimed came directly from Brigham?

Long wrote that the first time he went to the museum, "At the entrance I met a charming Hawaiian woman, a Mrs. Webb."⁸¹ Lee confirmed that when she interviewed Bryan and Mitchell of the Bishop Museum, both told her Webb did meet Long.⁸²

Lahilahi Webb (1862–1949) was Hawaiian and one-sixteenth Spanish. Her great-grandmother was Haiamaui, a chiefess, who married Don Francisco de Paula Marin, a Spaniard who served as an advisor to Kamehameha the Great. Webb participated in the coronation of Kalākaua in 1883. From 1915 to 1917 she was the lady-in-waiting and nurse to Hawai'i's last monarch, Queen Lili'uokalani.⁸³

Webb was hired to work at the Bishop Museum in 1919. The first Hawaiian employed in a non-menial position, her job title was "Hostess and Guide to the Exhibits." At her post at the entrance to the museum, she kept a picture of the Queen to which she talked, chanted, and cried.

Over time she became respected by the scholars at the museum and her role changed to become their informant. In the 1931 introduction to *Kepelino's Traditions*, she is named as an authority on the old Hawaiian language, and by 1934 she was acknowledged in a museum publication as an "invaluable resource" of traditional wisdom about healing.⁸⁴ The Bishop Museum Archives contain a number of delightful first-hand accounts of her observations of kahunas at work.⁸⁵

Bryan and Mitchell told Pali Jae Lee that Webb knew a lot about Hawaiian traditions, but often, "when the need arose, she could be really kolohe [rascal or mischievous] and would tell the haole lots of foolishness."⁸⁶

If Webb was Long's source, it neatly explains the mystery. It explains why the "Brigham" stories were relatively accurate descriptions of Hawaiian traditions. It also might explain some of the mistakes Long made—perhaps they were little jokes she played on him.

Whether or not Lahilahi Webb supplied the "Brigham" case stud-

ies, it seems unlikely that she was the source of the conversations Long says he had with Brigham about “what to look for” to find “kahuna magic.” Rather, these dialogues probably are further evidence of Long’s great skill as a creative writer.

If Long did get the Brigham stories from Webb, why not just give her as his source? He wrote for readers in the U.S. Who would they be more likely to believe—a Harvard educated lawyer, the director of the museum, a man of science acknowledged in European and East Coast society? Or a hostess, a native, a woman? To Long’s credit, if he did get the stories from Webb, he did not share the prejudices of his time, but instead listened to and believed this treasured *kupuna* or elder.



FIG. 3. Lahilahi Webb. Photo by Williams. Bishop Museum

THE IDEALIZATION OF BRIGHAM

Since 1936, thousands of readers have been introduced to William Brigham through the books and newsletters of Max Freedom Long and his followers. Brigham gave Long's theories an aura of credibility. Many Huna authors quote Brigham and idealize him. Some even say he was a kahuna himself.

Long has been discredited by scholars from the beginning, but in recent years writers of popular books have tried to avoid his taint. Instead of quoting Long, they quote "William Brigham" from Long's books, giving their work an air of respectability.⁸⁷ "Brigham" has been quoted in at least one Ph.D. dissertation.⁸⁸

There is strong evidence that Long and Brigham did not meet at all, because none of the stories attributed to Brigham were in his own works. Even if they did meet, Brigham was not a reliable source on Hawaiian religion or kahunas. Any quotes attributed to Brigham sourced from Long's books are not credible.

NOTES

- ¹ Max Freedom Long, *Recovering the Ancient Magic* (London: Rider, 1936; Huna Press, 1978).
- ² Max Freedom Long, *The Secret Science Behind Miracles* (Santa Monica: De Vorss, 1954).
- ³ Pila of Hawaii, *The Secrets and Mysteries of Hawaii: A Call to the Soul* (Deerfield Beach, Florida, Health Communications, Inc., 1995).
- ⁴ Rima Morrell, *The Sacred Power of Huna: Spirituality and Shamanism in Hawaii* (Vermont: Inner Traditions, 2005).
- ⁵ San Diego County death certificate.
- ⁶ Long, *The Secret Science Behind Miracles*, 1.
- ⁷ Cathleen Parent, UCLA, personal conversation.
- ⁸ Long, *The Secret Science Behind Miracles*, 1.
- ⁹ Hawaiian Islands. Report of Superintendent of Public Instruction, biennium ending Dec. 31, 1918: 115.
- ¹⁰ Max Freedom Long, *Murder Between Dark and Dark* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1939); *The Lava Flow Murders* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1940); and *Death Goes Native* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1941).
- ¹¹ Long, Correspondence to Theodore Kelsey, Max Freedom Long file, August 28, 1940. AH.
- ¹² Long, *The Secret Science Behind Miracles*, 9.
- ¹³ Long, *The Secret Science Behind Miracles*, 9-11.

- ¹⁴ Long, *The Secret Science Behind Miracles*, 12–13.
- ¹⁵ Long, *Recovering the Ancient Magic*, 53.
- ¹⁶ In *Introduction to Huna* he says he met Brigham after his contract expired in 1919 but his contract did not expire until 1920. Long, *Introduction to Huna* (Phoenix, AZ: Esoteric Publications, 1975), 4.
- ¹⁷ *Husted's Directory of Honolulu and the Territory of Hawaii*, reprinted in *City Directories of the United States, Segment IV, 1902–1935, Territory of Hawaii* (Woodbridge CT: Research Publications, 1990). The city directory lists him as residing in Honolulu through 1931; he wrote that he left in 1932. However, he may have traveled extensively at times, as he wrote in *Recovering the Ancient Magic* (82) that he was in London in 1925.
- ¹⁸ William Brigham, “The Ancient Worship of the Hawaiian Islanders, With References to That of Other Polynesians.” MS SC Brigham Box 5.1. BPBM. On the cover sheet, Brigham describes himself as the former Director of the Museum, “Explorer of the Islands in 1864–65. A friend of Ancient Kahunas and Modern Missionaries.”
- ¹⁹ Brigham biography file, BPBM.
- ²⁰ Pali Jae Lee and Koko Willis, *Tales from the Night Rainbow* (Honolulu: Night Rainbow Publishing, 1990).
- ²¹ In the tradition of this ‘ohana, the island is pronounced Molokai not Moloka‘i.
- ²² Pali Jae Lee, *Ho‘opono* (Honolulu: Night Rainbow Publishing, 1999), 45.
- ²³ Pali Jae Lee, personal correspondence, June 9, 2007.
- ²⁴ Martha Beckwith, *Hawaiian Mythology* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1976); Laura Green, *Hawaiian Stories and Wise Sayings* (Vassar College, 1923).
- ²⁵ “Bishop’s Brigham,” *The Beacon*, v. 4, n.10, Oct. 1964.
- ²⁶ Bob Krauss.
- ²⁷ William T. Brigham, “Ancient Worship,” 1921, MS SC Brigham, Box 6.8, 313. BPBM.
- ²⁸ Long, *Recovering the Ancient Magic*, 50; Long, *The Secret Science Behind Miracles*, 31.
- ²⁹ Long, *Recovering the Ancient Magic*, 56–57.
- ³⁰ Brigham, “Ancient Worship,” Box 5.12, 296.
- ³¹ William T. Brigham, “Laau Lomilomi Kua,” “Ancient Hawaiian House,” *Memoirs of Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum*, vol. II, no. 3, 1908, 313–314.
- ³² Brigham, “Ancient Worship,” Box 5.2, 6.
- ³³ Brigham, “Ancient Worship,” Box 5.4, 67.
- ³⁴ Long, *The Secret Science Behind Miracles*, 191.
- ³⁵ Long, *The Secret Science Behind Miracles*, 201–204.
- ³⁶ Long, *The Secret Science Behind Miracles*, 207.
- ³⁷ Long, *Recovering the Ancient Magic*, 51.
- ³⁸ Charles Kenn said Long asked him to send him a picture of Brigham. “Ho‘oponono: The Complete Teachings of Morrnah K. Simeona” DVDs (Cape Girardeau, MO: Huna Research Institute, 2007), DVD #2.
- ³⁹ John Dominis Holt in the Foreword of Rev. J. F. Pogue, *Moolole of Ancient Hawaii* (trans. Charles Kenn), (Honolulu: Topgallant Publishing, 1978), vii.
- ⁴⁰ Richard Kekumuikawaiokeola Paglinawan, Mitchell Eli, Moses Elwood Kalauo-

- kalani, Jerry Walker, *Lua: Art of the Hawaiian Warrior*, (Honolulu: Bishop Museum Press, 2006), 1.
- ⁴¹ Scott S.C. Stone, *Living Treasures of Hawaii—25th Anniversary of the Selections of Outstanding Persons as Honored by The Honpa Honwanji Mission of Hawai'i* (Honolulu: Island Heritage, 2000).
- ⁴² Theodore Kelsey, correspondence to Max Freedom Long, Max Freedom Long file, March 25, 1936. AH.
- ⁴³ Long, *Introduction to Huna*.
- ⁴⁴ Kelsey correspondence to Long, August 21, 1940. AH.
- ⁴⁵ Lee, personal correspondence, September 10, 2006.
- ⁴⁶ Charles Kenn, *Fire-walking From the Inside* (Los Angeles: Huna Research Associates, 1949).
- ⁴⁷ Long correspondence to Kenn, July 20, 1949, June 7, 21 and 29, 1969. MS Grp 361, Kenn Box 3. BPBM.
- ⁴⁸ Kenn correspondence to Ernest S. Bateman, September 13, 1949. MS Grp 361, Kenn Box 23.1. BPBM.
- ⁴⁹ Julius Scammon Rodman, *The Kahuna Sorcerers of Hawaii, Past and Present* (Hicksville, NY: Exposition Press, 1979), 131.
- ⁵⁰ Lee, *Ho'opono*, 56.
- ⁵¹ Kenn, "Ho'opono" DVD #2.
- ⁵² Roger G. Rose, *A Museum to Instruct and Delight* (Honolulu: Bishop Museum Press, 1980), 26.
- ⁵³ Rose, 40.
- ⁵⁴ Rose, 46.
- ⁵⁵ Long, *The Secret Science Behind Miracles*, 11.
- ⁵⁶ Kelsey correspondence to Long, March 25, 1936. AH.
- ⁵⁷ "Bishop's Brigham." *The Beacon*, v. 4, no. 10, Oct. 1964.
- ⁵⁸ Brigham biography file. BPBM.
- ⁵⁹ Brigham, "Ancient Worship," Box 6.8, 313.
- ⁶⁰ Brigham, "Ancient Worship," Box 5.4, 52.
- ⁶¹ Bob Krauss, "Bishop's first director wasn't exactly 'Mr. Popularity,'" *Honolulu Advertiser*, January 7, 1990, A-3.
- ⁶² Walter G. Smith, correspondence to W. O Smith, July 20, 1904, MS SC Brigham, Box 3.13. BPBM.
- ⁶³ Krauss.
- ⁶⁴ Brigham, correspondence to R. C. L. Perkins, January 29, 1895, BPBM.
- ⁶⁵ Brigham, "Ancient Worship," Box 5.4, 49.
- ⁶⁶ Brigham, "Ancient Worship," Box 5.4, 53.
- ⁶⁷ Brigham, correspondence to Board of Trustees, May 5, 1906, archives staff collection finding aid, Box 3.15. BPBM.
- ⁶⁸ William Brigham, correspondence to David Forbes, Nov. 11, 1905, archives staff collection finding aid, Box 3.15. BPBM.
- ⁶⁹ Mary Kawena Pukui, "Things Seen and Heard at the Museum," MS SC Handy, Box 8.4. BPBM.

- ⁷⁰ “William Tufts Brigham Dies After Stroke,” *Honolulu Advertiser*, 30 January 1926, 1.
- ⁷¹ Mary Kawena Pukui, *Nana i ke Kumu*, vol. 1 (Honolulu: Hui Hānai, 1972), 191.
- ⁷² Davida Malo, *Ka Mo’olelo Hawai’i* (Chun trans.) (Honolulu: First Peoples Productions, 2006) English 78.
- ⁷³ Makana Risser Chai, *Nā Mo’olelo Lomilomi: Traditions of Hawaiian Massage and Healing* (Honolulu: Bishop Museum, 2005) 76, 96.
- ⁷⁴ Chai, 93.
- ⁷⁵ Beckwith, 1976, 164.
- ⁷⁶ Malcolm Nāea Chun, *Ho’omana: Understanding the Sacred and Spiritual* (Honolulu: CRDG University of Hawai’i, 2007) 5.
- ⁷⁷ Weapons themselves sometimes were given names, passed down from father to son, and acquired *mana* through use. A weapon that killed a great warrior would acquire great *mana*.
- ⁷⁸ Pukui, 1972, vol. 1, 116; Beckwith, 1976, 128–139.
- ⁷⁹ Long, *The Secret Science Behind Miracles*, 14–5.
- ⁸⁰ Lee, personal correspondence, September 18, 2006.
- ⁸¹ Long, *The Secret Science Behind Miracles*, 10.
- ⁸² Lee, personal correspondence, June 9, 2007.
- ⁸³ Lahilahi Webb biography file, BPBM.
- ⁸⁴ Martha Beckwith, ed., *Kepelino’s Traditions of Hawaii* (Honolulu: Bishop Museum Press, 2007), 3; E. S. Craighill Handy, Mary Kawena Pukui, and Katherine Livermore, “Outline of Hawaiian Physical Therapeutics” (*Bernice P. Bishop Museum Bulletin* 126, 1934: 4.
- ⁸⁵ Lahilahi Webb, MS SC Handy, Box 8.4, September 8, 1936; MS SC Handy, Box 7.8, December 8, 1933; MS SC Handy, Box 9.36, October 27, 1933; MS SC Handy, Box 8.4, September 8, 1936. BPBM.
- ⁸⁶ Lee, personal correspondence, June 9, 2007.
- ⁸⁷ For example, Kristen Zambucka, *Ano ‘Ano [sic]: The Seed—The Classic Trilogy* (Honolulu: Mutual Publishing, 2005), i.
- ⁸⁸ Rima Bartlett, “Bringing the bright land into being: seeding and feeding space and place in Hawaii” (Ph.D. dissertation, University College, London, 2000).

