



Is Huna Kupua “New Age”?

by Graeme Kapono Ulrich

The label “New Age” is often used loosely. It is applied to almost any modern teaching that speaks about healing, energy, consciousness, personal change, spirituality, or nature.

That use of the term may be convenient, but it is not very accurate.

The New Age movement did not arise simply because people began teaching old ideas in modern language. Its main historical roots lie in modern Western spiritual and esoteric movements: nineteenth-century Spiritualism, mesmerism, Theosophy, New Thought, occult revivalism, and later twentieth-century counterculture and Human Potential movements. Modern Druid revivalism is related to that wider Western revival landscape, but it is only one stream among many. [\[1\]](#)

These movements developed in particular social and historical conditions. They often combined ideas drawn from Christianity, Western occultism, Asian religions, psychology, healing movements, and modern ideas of individual self-development. That history matters.

It does not follow that every contemporary teaching concerned with consciousness, healing, nature, or personal effectiveness belongs to the New Age movement.

A label is not an origin story

Calling something “New Age” can describe a modern setting, audience, or style. It cannot, by itself, establish where a teaching came from, what its sources are, or whether it is derived from Western esotericism.

A teaching may be presented through books, workshops, online courses, psychology-informed language, or modern examples because those are the tools available to people now. That does not show that its underlying knowledge was invented in the present, nor that it comes from the same sources as modern Western occult or New Age movements.

Living traditions adapt. They have always adapted.

A navigator does not stop navigating because boats change. A healer does not stop helping because the language of illness changes. A practical tradition does not preserve itself by becoming a museum piece. It remains alive by finding forms that work in the world people actually inhabit.

Huna Kupua and Kahili Huna

Huna Kupua, also called Kahili Huna, is presented as a practical philosophy and body of methods associated with the Kahili family tradition and taught in modern form by Serge Kahili King and others.

It is not a religion in the sense of a required creed, a church structure, a system of worship, or a demand that people adopt particular beliefs. Its concern is practical: how people use attention, energy, imagination, communication, relationship, skill, and action to create beneficial change.

Its principles are taught as observations about life and experience. Its methods are intended to be tested through practice.

The fact that these teachings are now explained in contemporary language does not, by itself, establish a New Age origin or make them a version of Max Freedom Long's Huna system.

Why the confusion happens

The confusion is understandable. Both Max Freedom Long and Serge Kahili King used the word *huna*. Both discussed Hawaiian words and ideas. Both reached modern Western audiences through books and classes.

But shared vocabulary does not make two systems identical.

Long developed a twentieth-century formulation of *Huna* with his own terminology, theories, and historical claims. Discussions of Long's influences, including possible relationships with Theosophy, New Thought, and Western esoteric ideas, are best considered in relation to Long's system itself, unless there is evidence specifically connecting them to another teaching.

Huna Kupua should be examined in relation to its own sources, methods, history, and claims.

It should not be treated as Long's system under another name without evidence that specifically supports that conclusion. Nor should criticism of Long automatically be transferred to the Kahili tradition merely because both are discussed under the broad label "*Huna*."

Modern does not mean invented

There is an understandable concern about traditions being repackaged for commercial or spiritual markets. That concern is valid. It is sensible to ask where teachings come from, how they are transmitted, and whether claims are made responsibly.

But there is a difference between careful questioning and automatic dismissal.

A modern presentation may be superficial. It may also be the normal way a living body of knowledge continues to serve people in changed circumstances.

The relevant questions are more precise:

- What does the teaching actually say?
- What practices does it use?
- What is its relationship to the people and tradition from which it is said to come?
- Does it depend on the concepts and structures of Western New Age thought?
- Are criticisms directed at this specific teaching, or are they being transferred from somewhere else?

Those questions allow for discernment without conflation.

A more accurate approach

Huna Kupua does not need to be protected by pretending that it is untouched by the modern world. It is taught in the modern world, to modern people, using modern forms.

That is not a weakness.

The issue is whether a modern form has been mistaken for a modern origin.

Calling Huna Kupua “New Age” is a classification that needs evidence specific to Huna Kupua, rather than an assumption based on modern presentation, shared vocabulary, or association with other systems. It should not be used as shorthand for claims about origin, cultural relationship, usefulness, or identity with Max Freedom Long’s system.

A more accurate starting point is simpler:

Huna Kupua is presented as a distinct practical teaching associated with the Kahili tradition. It should be described, discussed, and criticised in relation to its own sources, methods, history, and claims—not through assumptions transferred from other systems that happen to use the word *huna*.

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[1] Levin, Jeff. “New Age Healing: Origins, Definitions, and Implications for Religion and Medicine.” *Religions* 13, no. 9 (2022): 777. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13090777>