



Interview with Susan Pai'niu Floyd

November 2007

1. Why do you call Lomilomi Nui also Temple Style Lomi? Is it the same or do you draw a distinction?

Temple Style is a generic descriptive term for the bodywork taught by Kahu Abraham Kawaii. He had his own name for his style and his students and students students have given names to their practice and or teachings. When Aloha International first offered classes in this bodywork in the early 90's, it was given the name Lomilomi Nui.

2. Can you show evidence of the historical family and kumu lines through which Lomilomi Nui (temple style lomi) was passed on?

When I first studied with Abraham in 1987, he talked about having studied with 3 Kahuna. He may have told us their names, but being new to the Hawaiian culture and language, they did not stick in my mind. There is a delicate line when learning from Hawaiian teachers regarding asking questions. Initiative was valued, yet attentiveness and patience were also valued. I never asked more because what mattered to me was the kind of teacher Abraham was and what he taught.

This summer (2007), after 14 years of studying with him, Kumu Hula Kawaikapuokalani Hewett told me that Kahu Abraham had studied with his Grandaunty's son. This puts the kuleana for this lomi tradition (temple style) with the family of Kawaikapuokalani. I have no idea what evidence may exist beyond the word of my kumu, his word is all I need.

3. Was Lomi originally only practiced in the temple, the Heiau?

No. Letting go of tension, mental and physical, was a very important part of Hawaiian tradition. Massage was a very developed method of releasing tension. It was done on oneself, on family and extended family and some skilled ones were sought out for their expertise. I was taught that Ali'i, (chiefs) required the most skillful of experts (Kahuna) to perform this task, and that it was done in sacred, high energy places or Heiau. The training of such a Kahuna could last for 20 years.

4. Can you explain why others, who were also educated by Kahu Abraham, work differently than we do with Lomilomi Nui? What is the difference between their work and yours?

I would have to have studied with these other teachers to answer this one and I have not. I do know I have kept the essentials of Abrahams work even as I have added to that from Hula and Huna traditions. These reinforce his teachings. So other teachers may be doing something similar.

5. There are offers for “Temple Style Lomi” which include tantric and sexual massage techniques. Were these people also your students? Do you consider these techniques a part of the TempleStyle/Lomilomi Nui massage?

I don't know who makes these offers so I don't know if they are students of mine. I wasn't taught these techniques as part of temple lomi, I don't teach these techniques, and yet I wasn't around in the old days of Hawaii. Who was? So who knows for sure what they did? At most we have their words. I never asked my teacher what he was told about this topic so I can't even pass that on. We do know from stories that sexuality was a very natural part of life. Removing deep layers of tension could help modern day people release limiting concepts around sexuality, if they wanted to. But including sexual techniques in a workshop, I feel, could lead to complicating issues rather than resolving them.

6. Are the clients and the practitioners (both) sometimes naked during the sessions?

No. Never the practitioner. The clients are naked, but covered by a sheet or pareo over their genitals at all times.

7. How do lomilomi nui practitioners bring ke akua (the spiritual forces) into the work.

By our intention to invite them and often that invitation is done by chanting, if appropriate.

8. What is your influence and what goes back to Kahu Abraham?

I try to keep the back stroke and rotations of joints as I learned them, as well as the steps to the dance around the table and the concepts that supported the work, like attentiveness, commitment and motion. I have added Hula (sacred Hawaiian dance) as a way to develop balance and flexibility and to practice the skills of focus, patience, non-judgment, persistence, and releasing tension. I've added chanting to increase energy, the sunrise ritual to connect to the universe, talking circles where we pass the kala'au wala'au (talking stick) where we all share our present moment, ask questions and inspire each other with our observations and Kalana Hula to harmonize with the environment. I also teach the Kahili tradition of Huna, an ancient wisdom from Hawaii that speeds up the process of self mastery, that I learned from Serge Kahili King.

9. Did Kahu Abraham also work with plenty of oil and the naked client upon the uncovered massage table?

Yes, he used plenty of oil, it allowed him to be precisely where the client needed him to be at the right timing and pressure. The client being naked depended on the situation. I have received many sessions in which I was naked, covered by a sheet on an uncovered massage table but I have also witnessed demonstrations in locations which have laws about draping a client, where the table was covered and the client wore underpants. We were taught that the client's comfort was important, so if a client or a student feels too shy we keep them covered and let them wear what they must.

10. What was your training with Kahu Abraham like? When were you trained?

Very Situational. His trainings were designed to develop life skills, which also could be applied to massage. For example, we had no set times for anything. We had to be attentive to know what and when things happened. And if 'nothing' happened, we had to adjust our concepts to appreciate the nothingness, or we would experience the result of our judgments. In 1987-1988.

11. Why is Hula part of Lomilomi Nui?

Movement is key to all life. Staying in motion for a practitioner keeps the practitioner filled with abundant energy which allows for a more total commitment to the receiver. I teach Hula to help students develop a grace in motion because Hula separates upper and lower body movements (hip movements are generating energy while not disturbing the movement of arms and hands.) Because the sessions could/can be very long, the continuous energy generation becomes very important.

12. What are 'the roots' of the chant that we learn for Lomilomi Nui (Auhea na Aumakua); where does it originate?

Serge helped me put my intentions into Hawaiian words.

13. Why do you consider Huna to be a part of Lomilomi Nui?

As in answer #8, I teach the Huna I learned from Serge because I have had a much powerful time in my life as a practitioner, a teacher, a student, a human etc. because I have had these ideas to remind me of my capabilities and responsibilities. The better a practitioner feels physically, emotionally and mentally the better the effects for the client. I wish this self empowerment and even more for my students and their families and clients. These Hawaiian concepts work!

14. What are the differences between Huna philosophy and the contemporary lifestyle of the native people of Hawaii? Why are they not familiar with Huna?

Huna ideas were once a part of living, a way of looking at life that was passed down from generation to generation. These ideas were passed to Serge King's father and

later to Serge by a Kaua'i family that adopted them (a process called hanai). Serge organized those ideas in a way that they would be easy to teach, learn and remember, and thereby, use. Many natives of Hawai'i recognize the concepts and like the organization (Aloha International is often getting feedback), some may recognize the concepts and perhaps don't like non-native input and some may not recognize them at all because they were raised in a more modern way. There was actually a state law until the late 70's that punished anyone claiming to be or practicing as a kahuna, so it was practical not to talk too much about the old ways.

15. What is the intention of a Lomilomi Nui massage?

If you mean what is possible in a Lomilomi Nui session, nothing less than total transformation. Enlightenment. Remembering one's Divinity. If you mean what is the intention of the practitioner, commitment to the client. The practitioner is a facilitator in the process of transformation of the client.

16. What effect has the flow/flowing motions in this massage? And what effect the backstroke and rotations?

Tension release and circulation of motion of cells.

17. Why is there no attention to anatomy, physiology and pathology in your teaching?

Because the body will direct an attentive practitioner to the places and in what manner (speed and pressure) it will unravel tension the best. Listening to the body (attentiveness) is then the best skill to master. Information about the body can be useful if it doesn't interfere with one's ability to listen.

18 What is your personal vision of the future of Lomilomi Nui and Lomi in general?

Human beings have learned how to live with (endure) states of great tension in our bodies. Perhaps this is a good thing, considering our busy lives, but it does take heavy tolls in the form of chronic and acute illnesses. People of Old Hawaii had stressful lives too, but the process of releasing that tension on a regular basis was stronger. Temple style lomilomi, as it releases years and even lifetimes of habitual tension, can open doors for the possibility of new healthier patterns. My vision is for a healthier, happier humanity and I see this as one powerful way to speed up the process.