

# The Mysterious

By Lois Taylor,

In the darkened Waikiki apartment of David M. Bray, six people formed a semi-circle around a koa table and stared at a small object on it.

It was in a small calabash placed on ti leaves. It rested on folds of red satin and was circled by leis of lima and maile. A pair of red candles burned on either side of the calabash that held Kukapihe, the sacred stone of Kuamoo, the master kahuna and a son of Kamehameha I.

Bray refused to have the stone photographed, "not because of superstition, but because I know it should not be photographed."

Before he would touch the stone or permit anyone to move it from the calabash, he gathered the visitors in a circle around Kukapihe and offered a chant to lift the kapu (taboo).

"FREE THE KAPU of my ancestors," he said in Hawaiian. With a small ti leaf whisk he sprayed drops of water from a smaller calabash to which red alae salt and turmeric had been added.

Around the table with Bray stood archaeologist Kenneth Emory and anthropologist Peter Chapman from the Bishop Museum, geologist Maury E. Morgenstein, Hawaiiana researcher Pauline King Joerger and amateur historian Dr. Robert M. Gibson.

Earlier in the week, the stone had been brought from Kauai by Bray's brother, Harry Lono Bray, in the hope of finally determining something about its composition and origin. The brothers came into possession of the stone when it was brought to them by their father, the kahuna David K. "Daddy" Bray, shortly before he died in 1969. The stone has been in the Bray family since it was given to them by Kuamoo.

The Brays believe that the stone dates from the 12th century, and is the actual war god Kukailimoku, brought by canoe to Hawaii from Tahiti.

About the size of a husked coconut, the stone has a

chalky white surface that appears to have been inlaid in random areas with a half-inch-thick black and brown ceramic glaze. These shinier portions seem to have a pattern incised in them.

David Bray had invited his guests to see the stone, Kukapihe, and to discuss its history.

IN THE ANCIENT Hawaiian tradition, the stone was never called Kukailimoku, in the same manner that Kamehameha was always addressed as "Ke Alii" and never by name, Bray explained. Because Kukailimoku was the god of war, the stone was named Kukapihe, which means "he who causes mourners to gather."

"The name was transferred to the stone by the many who had gathered to mourn the loss of the ali warriors during Kamehameha's battles.

"The claim is that the stone is actually the war god, and the source of Kamehameha's victories," Bray said. "Kukapihe was kept in a temple and a feather god was made to carry on to the battlefield. The spirit of Kukailimoku was prayed by the kahuna into the feather god.

"Dad believed that the pattern on the stone is a map, and that if you knew how to read it, it would tell you how the first Hawaiians came here. But there's no one I know who can read it."

Bray's audience listened with fascination and awe, and the touch of skepticism discernable earlier seemed to have vanished. Then Bray picked up the stone respectfully, but not reverently. "My father said that you do not worship the stone," he explained. He handed it first to Kenneth Emory, who held it in cupped hands.

"Was it said to have been in a heiau?" he asked Bray.

"Yes, but not which one," Bray replied. "We understand that it was kept closely guarded in a temple."

According to Bray's father's study of the kahuna

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# Stone of Kuamoo

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religion, Kuamoo, the master kahuna, was born about 1806 in Kohala near the temple of Aukukini. His mother was a priestess named Maunakilika of the Holoae family of priests.

As a very old man, Kuamoo moved to Honolulu near to where the Bray family lived. It was then that the young David K. Bray heard the stories of the great warrior Kamehameha and of the special gifts of the old kahuna.

EMORY STUDIED the stone silently, passed it to his museum colleague Peter Chapman, and it was then briefly examined by everyone in the room. The last and most thorough scrutiny was made by the geologist Maury Morgenstein.

"I have never seen anything like it," Morgenstein said.

"There is said to be a second stone, a sister stone, to this one," Bray said. "There is the story that two powerful kahunas from Kauai went to Hawaii. Kuamoo told them, 'I know why you are here, for the stone.'

"We have the wahine stone on Kauai,' they told Kuamoo, and they wanted to take his stone back to join theirs. They challenged Kuamoo to a chanting contest, and Kuamoo overpowered them, so they left. The wahine stone must still be on Kauai, but no one knows where. We think it must be similar to this one."

While Bray was talking, Morgenstein hefted the stone from one hand to the other to judge its weight, and ran his fingers carefully over both the chalky sections and the raised glossy parts.

He made a few guesses — that the stone weighed about eight pounds, that the brown and black shiny area is a combination of the minerals goethite and hematite that are probably layered like an onion.

"ONE LITTLE scratch, and I could tell you a lot more," Morgenstein told Bray, who was reluctant to permit this. "I need no more than will fit under my thumbnail," Morgenstein continued, and Bray agreed. The geologist took a small knife from his pocket and scraped a tiny amount of the chalk-like substance into a fold of paper.

There seemed nothing else to be done, so the group gathered again around the table, Bray replaced the stone in the calabash and chanted once more to remove the kapu. Everyone left quietly, and looked both ways twice before crossing the street in front of the Brays' apartment.

Earlier this week, Morgenstein reported on his findings from the scrapings.

"I am perplexed," he said. "Mana has the scientist perplexed. X-rays show that there are many compounds in the makeup of the stone. One is a volcanic clay called montmorillonite, and the second, of which there is a greater proportion, is newbergite.

"I am unsure if the rock is sedimentary. The spherical shape could be caused by the weathering of a volcanic product. The goethite was precipitated on top of the other two minerals, but I have no idea of where the stone was formed."

He added that the spheroidal process is most common in a volcanic location, "but from one small sample we aren't going to learn anything more."

Morgenstein repeated that he had never seen anything like the stone before. "It is quite mysterious. I don't know where it is from or why it is formed that way. If we could borrow it for a while, I could make a more accurate analysis, but I think it is better to leave it as it is."

So the sacred stone Kukapihe sleeps in its koa calabash, and Bray dreams of the day when it might somehow be reunited with its missing sister.



*A pair of red candles burned on either side of the calabash that held Kukapihe, the sacred stone of Kuamoo, the master kahuna and a son of Kamehameha I. 'Free the kapu of my ancestors,' said David Bray (right) in Hawaiian, as Peter Chapman, Maury E. Morgenstein, Dr. Kenneth Emory, Pauline King Joerger and Dr. Robert Gibson watch.—Photo by Bob Young.*