

# Hawaii's Ancient Meditation Practices

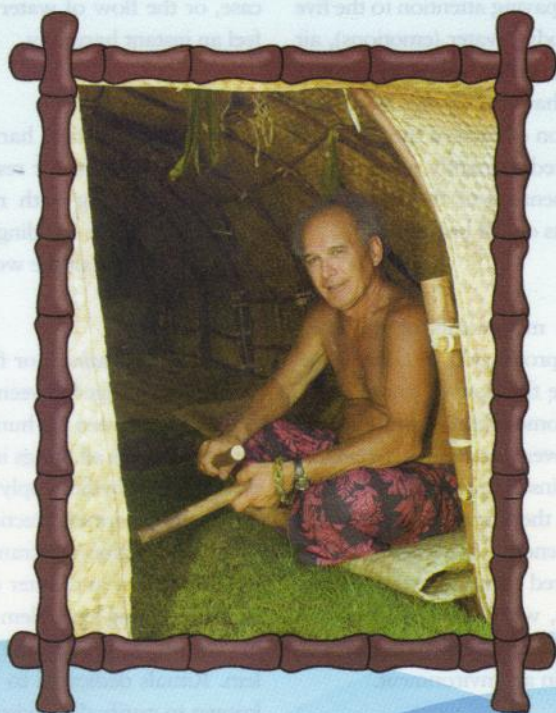
## THREE TECHNIQUES FROM THE ISLANDS

by Bekah Wright

"I'm going to share a family secret with you," I heard Maka'ala Yates (pictured), D.C., President and CEO of Mana Ola Health Organization and the Hawaiian Healing Institute of Integrated Studies announce while I was in Hawai'i, "I'm going to teach you about Hawaiian meditation." Like Yates, many *kahuna*, or Native Hawaiian teachers, have come to believe it is their *kuleana*, or responsibility, to celebrate aspects of their culture and history by sharing it with others. "If you don't practice and share these meditations, they become obsolete," says Yates.

For generations, Native Hawaiians have been using meditation for everything from farming to athletic performance. "There are endless forms of Hawaiian meditation," says Yates. "And most of the techniques are designed for specific purposes." As with many aspects from Hawaiian culture there's a duality to the meditations. Indeed, the same chant used by warriors before going into battle is also used to bring about peace.

The three meditations taught by Yates presented here should be performed one right after the other. Each technique prepares the practitioner to go deeper into a state of meditation. "The first, Alo-Ha, is to focus the attention," Yates explains. "The second, Kukulu o ke ao, is about protection and bringing harmony into the surrounding area and self. The third, Ha 'Ehiku, focuses on intention. This is where the meditation really begins."



### ALO-HA

Yates considers the Alo-Ha meditation a good base technique. "When we're born, we're very connected to our soul and our physical self," he says. "As we get into our lives we become separated further and further. Meditation can help reunite your body and your soul." The meditation is broken into two components -- "Alo" means being connected as one, "Ha" is the essence of life, where the evolutionary process unfolds. "Meditation is about focus, focus, focus and the Alo-Ha brings the meditator's attention back to focus," says Yates.

Alo-Ha can be performed anywhere, while running, hiking, walking, sitting or standing. The practitioner should naturally inhale on the Alo and exhale on the Ha. "Observe

yourself, observe your breath," says Yates. "Feel every muscle that moves from the natural movement of the breath."

### KUKULU O KE AO

The second meditation, Kukulu o ke ao, is known as the "Pillar of Light" and speaks to the Native Hawaiians' unique relationship with the earth. According to Yates, both the human and the earth's templates are the same. "Templates are blueprints of all matter," he says. "They are sound and light grids." Often, our templates are shut down, limiting our connection to the earth. Kukulu o ke ao is used to bring harmony into a disharmonic



Spring, when life is bursting forth with abundance, is a time for new projects and activities. By synchronizing our home activities with the cycles of nature, we align ourselves with the natural pulsation of life.

#### Balance:

Achieving balance of mind, body and spirit is a core aim of yogic practice. In our homes, this is achieved by paying attention to the five elements: earth (body), water (emotions), air (mind), fire (spirit), ether (*prana* or sound). Become mindful that your home has a balanced representation of each of the elements. A home that is predominantly governed by one of these elements over the others will bring its inhabitants out of balance.

#### Movement:

In yoga, certain movements of the body can stimulate the production of certain hormones, and restore the flow of *prana* in the body. Likewise, homes that incorporate aspects of sacred movement can rejuvenate the environment. For instance, in properties containing labyrinths, there is a curious absence of negative earth energy currents. Similarly, rituals such as sacred dance, like the twirling of the Sufi dances, when done with awareness and intention, can transform negative vibrational energies in an environment.

#### Sound:

Nada Yoga means union through sound. It is the ancient spiritual art and science of inner transformation through sound and tone. Russill Paul, author of *The Yoga of Sound*, states, "Through Nada Yoga, we can fine-tune our bodies and our minds to resonate with the harmony in all of creation, from atoms and cells to flowers and planets." Throughout the world, temples have employed sound to vibrate heaven into the sacred meridians of the Earth.

The Vedas state that *mantra* (sacred syllables) chanted continually have the power to purify and rejuvenate the environment. When we offer sound as vibrational medicine for our homes, the result is a harmonizing of our environment with that "music of the spheres."

#### Form:

The *asanas* (postures) of yoga were first devised to mirror forms in nature to allow our bodies and minds to tune with that natural order. The same is true of architecture that mimics the patterns of harmonics found in nature. Nature does not have straight angles, it flows in curves and spirals, and so when we see examples of spirals, like a winding staircase, or the flow of water in a waterfall, we feel an instant harmony.

#### Nature:

Certain mathematical harmonics attuned to Nature achieve similar results. The architectural harmonizing with nature has been a main focus in the building of cathedrals and temples throughout the world.

#### Ceremony:

In yoga, the *yajnas*, or fire sacrifices, are a ceremonial bridge between the inner and outer worlds, between the human and the divine. Fire transforms all things into their most subtle essence. Whether applying *tapas*, the purifying fire of spiritual practice or the actual fire of a candle flame, fire transmutes and refines both our inner and outer environments. The ritual of placing a problem at the fire of a candle each night relieves the mind of the problem. Rituals dedicated to the divine fire, are known to purify the environment on physical as well as subtle levels.

When we make our homes our temples, the sacred vibrations radiate out to heal our families and communities. While our modern times have created more complex problems, they have also created different solutions to the same age-old quest: creating sacred space on Earth. By harmonizing the vibrations of our space, and creating sacredness among the mundane, we can transform our homes into sanctuaries of harmony.

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*Christan Hummel is the creator of the Do It Yourself Space Clearing Kit and an international lecturer and workshop leader based in San Diego. earthtransitions.com or chbaba@cox.net*



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environment. "Our body is programmable by language and thoughts," says Yates. "Every thought we have affects our body and creates a frequency, or combination of density and light. Most of us are stuck in density, unable to access the higher light frequency of our being."

During the meditation, visualize a teardrop. "Many symbols were envisioned by *kahunas* and passed down through the generations in secret," says Yates. "The teardrop represents the energetic fields or 'encasement' for our higher bodies, which is linked to our higher level of consciousness." The meditator visualizes a multi-dimensional teardrop moving with the exhale breath like a mo'o, or lizard, from the mind's eye, or pineal gland, along the spine, then down to the sacrum, or 'core of the earth.' The earth's *piko*, or *chakra*, has a pale silver color," says Yates. "This color is brought into the teardrop."

Next, the teardrop is brought about 12 inches below the meditator's feet, or seat if sitting, with a cord that is pale silver and connected to the earth's core. From here the prac-

titioner "opens" their template that is about four feet in diameter. The cord is expanded to match the diameter of the template, then lifted up and around the body and into the universe. The teardrop is then taken through the spine up to three feet above the head, then expanded into the earth's atmosphere.

## HA 'EHIKU

The third and final meditation of the series is Ha 'Ehiku, which enables healing. Here, "Ha" means the essence of life from which the evolutionary process unfolds. "'Ehiku" means seven, the number of times the meditation is to be repeated. Breathing is key. Whether the meditator breathes through their nose or mouth is inconsequential, although Yates advises closing the throat a bit to control the breath.

On an inhalation of seven seconds the practitioner is to focus on their desired result or goal through a stated thought such as "I am healthy." The next step is to hold the breath for seven seconds. During a seven-second ex-

hale, thanks is given through a stated thought, such as: "Thank you." "Your thoughts create many things," Yates says of the power behind this meditation. "You're responsible for directing your personal energies."

Equipped with the knowledge of these three meditations, practitioners should be invigorated and ready to seize the day. "There are secrets in our chants that have all the information you really need to be successful in life, healthy in life and to be on a path," says Yates. "It's not that Hawaiians have all the answers, but we have part of the puzzle."

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*Dr. Maka'ala Yates, founded the Hawaiian Healing Academy, Mana Ola healing centers, Ahabui Ho'ola Hawai'i (Hawaiian Healing Association), and the Pacific Island Healer's Council.*


*Bekah Wright is a journalist who, when not at her home in Sherman Oaks, has meditated in Hawai'i and in exotic locales around the world. [Bekahwright.com](http://Bekahwright.com)*


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