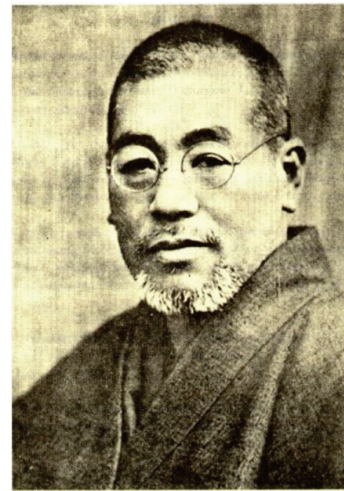


The History of Reiki

When word of mouth is used to pass on traditions and historical information, it tends to be adapted. Although Mikao Usui is credited as the founder of Reiki, it is widely thought that this form of healing has been around for centuries and that Usui rediscovered this art in the late 1800's. The account below is the story that has been passed down from Master to student. This story is now thought to have been adapted to appeal to western culture. A more detailed account follows this excerpt.



The Legend of Dr. Mikao Usui

Growing up in a family with strong beliefs in Zen Buddhism, Mikao Usui developed a fascination with Western culture and later studied allopathic medicine. Usui became ill during a cholera epidemic in Tokyo. When struggling to live, Usui had a spiritual awakening which led him to join a Zen monastery.

According to legend, during his studies Usui discovered a method of healing that had been used for centuries. Included in this method were hand positions and symbols that could be used. Although Usui was eager to begin using this method, he felt he needed more awareness to effectively use it. He then focused his attention inward and began to develop his meditation practice.

As a part of his spiritual quest, Usui took a trip up Mt. Kurama. It is told that once he reached the top of the mountain, he picked up twenty-one stones, sat down and began his meditation. As each day passed, he threw away a pebble. He spent his time in meditation and study.

At the end of the 21 days, Usui set the intention that he was open to seeing things clearly. Legend has it that a bright light flashed above and rushed towards him, beaming through his forehead. Usui saw the symbols he was studying in the Sutras and is thought to have experienced enlightenment during this time. As Usui trekked down the mountain, he hurt his foot, and instinctively placed his hand on the injured area and observed the bleeding stop and the pain diminish.

During his travels, Usui stopped in a village. He ate a complete meal without discomfort despite the fact that he had been fasting for 21 days. Usui was able to heal the girl who served him food who was experiencing pain. Usui returned to the monastery and was able to heal his superior who was in pain with arthritis.

Usui decided to use Reiki with the homeless people in the poor areas of Kyoto. Usui spent time performing Reiki with the hopes of helping the beggars heal and become productive members of society, but was disheartened when he found them returning to their old methods of begging.

Usui was reminded that healing the body, spirit and mind as a whole is essential. Usui retreated to a period of meditation again. This is when Usui received the five principles of Reiki. The remainder of Usui's life was spent practicing and teaching Reiki.

The History of Usui

This information is what was passed down from Madam Takata (more information on Takata will follow). Anything that has been disproved through research has been excluded.

Mikao Usui Usui was born on 15th August, 1865 in Taniyai-village, Yamagata- district, Cifu Prefecture. At a very early age, Usui



entered a Tendai Buddhist school near Mt. Kurama. Usui was known for his gentle character and his honest and candid mannerisms. Usui enjoyed learning and reading and explored a variety of topics including medical science, religion, divination, history and psychology. Usui travelled to Europe, America and studied in China. Usui also studied kiko, the Japanese version of qigong. Usui noted that the healing techniques he was learning depleted the energy of the practitioner and he wondered if it was possible to heal without using the energy of the practitioner.

Eventually Usui became the secretary to Shinpei Goto, head of the department of health and welfare who later became the Mayor of Tokyo. Usui was also a member of the Rei Jyutu Ka, a group dedicated to developing psychic abilities. In March 1922, Usui was having difficulties in his business and personal life and enrolled in Isyu Guo, a twenty-one-day training course sponsored by the Tendai Buddhist Temple located near Mt. Kurama. Fasting, meditation, chanting, and prayers were a likely part of the practice. There is a small waterfall on Mt. Kurama where people stand under to meditate. This practice is believed to activate the crown chakra. Japanese Reiki Masters think that Usui may have used this meditation as part of his practice. It was during the Isyu Guo training that Reiki energy entered Usui's crown chakra. He became aware of his ability to use this life force to heal himself and others with immediate results.

Usui wanted to share this gift with others and moved to Aoyama Harajuku, Tokyo in April, 1922 and established a centre where Reiki was taught and given to the public. Usui called his system of healing Shin-Shin Kai-Zen Usui Reiki Ryo-Ho (The Usui Reiki Treatment Method for Improvement of Body and Mind) or in its simplified form Usui Reiki Ryoho (Usui Reiki Healing Method).

In 1923, the Kanto earthquake hit Tokyo with an estimated 140,000 people dying and the city in ruins. Usui performed Reiki on



as many individuals he could and began training other Shihan (teachers). It was also at this time that he developed methods including a more formal Reiju (attunement) process.

The lowest degree of Usui's training was called Shoden (First Degree) and was divided into four levels: Loku-Tou, Go-Tou, Yon-Tou, and San-Tou. (Note that Mrs. Takata taught this level by combining all four levels into one.) The next degree was called Okuden (Inner Teaching) and had two levels: Okuden-Zen-ki (first part), and Okuden-Koe-ki (second part). The next degree was called Shinpiden (Mystery Teaching), which is what we now call Master Level. At the time, Usui used three symbols. He did not use a master symbol.

People lined up to receive Reiki and the time came when the centre could no longer accommodate the large numbers of people. Usui built a new center in Nakano just outside the city in 1925.

Usui travelled to share Reiki in places such as Kure, Hiroshima, Saga and Fukuyama. At an inn where Usui stayed while travelling, he suffered a stroke and passed away March 9th 1926. It is believed that his grave is at Saihoji Temple, in Suginami, Tokyo, although some claim that his ashes are located elsewhere. After Usui died, his students erected a memorial stone next to his gravestone. Contrary to what has been told in the West, there is no "lineage bearer" or "Grand Master" of the organization started by Usui.

It is estimated that Usui taught over 2,000 students and initiated 20 teachers, some of whom continued to teach Reiki after Usui passed away. The twenty teachers initiated by Usui include Toshihiro Eguchi, Jusaburo Guida, Iichi Taketomi, Toyoichi Wanami, Yoshiharu Watanabe, Keizo Ogawa, J. Ushida, and Chujiro Hayashi. The Japanese government issued Usui a Kun San for his honourable work.



Chujiro Hayashi

Chujiro Hayashi was a physician and retired Marine commander. Before he died, Usui asked Hayashi to open his own Reiki clinic and to expand and develop Reiki Ryoho based on his previous experience as a medical doctor in the Navy.



Hayashi opened a school and clinic called Hayashi Reiki Kenkyukai (Institute). After Usui passed away Hayashi left the Gakkai (Reiki society founded by Usui). At Hayashi's clinic, careful records were kept of all the illnesses and conditions that were addressed. He also made notes of which Reiki hand positions worked best to treat various ailments. Based on these records and notes, Hayashi wrote the Reiki Ryoho Shinshin (Guidelines for Reiki Healing Method). This guide was part of the class manual Hayashi gave to students.

Hayashi altered the way Reiki sessions were given. Rather than have the client seated in a chair and treated by one practitioner as Usui had done, Hayashi had the client lie on a treatment table and receive treatment from several practitioners at the same time. Hayashi also created a new system for giving Reiju (attunements). In addition, he developed a new method of teaching Reiki that he used when traveling. In this method, he taught both Shoden and Okuden (Reiki I&II) together in one five-day seminar. Each day included two to three hours of instruction and one Reiju (attunement).

Hayashi travelled to Hawaii in 1937 prior to the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, and was asked by the Japanese military to provide information about the location of warehouses and other military targets in Honolulu. He refused to do so and was declared a traitor. Hayashi performed seppuku (ritual suicide) in response to the disgrace that his family faced in light of his decision. Hayashi died on May 11, 1940.



Hawayo Takata

Mrs. Hawayo Takata brought Reiki from Japan to the West in 1937 and continued to practice and teach until she passed away in 1980.

This is a summary of Mrs. Hawayo Takata's version of her years leading up to her contact with Reiki at the Hayashi clinic. Takata stated that she was born on December 24th, 1900, on the island of Kauai, Hawaii. Her parents were Japanese immigrants and her father worked in the sugar cane fields. Takata married the bookkeeper (Saichi Takata) of the plantation where she was employed and they had two daughters. In October 1930 Saichi died at the age of 34. After five years of long hours of labor to support her family, Takata developed severe abdominal pain and a lung condition, and had a nervous breakdown. Soon after, one of Takata's sisters died and it was her responsibility to travel to Japan, where her parents had resettled to deliver the news. After informing her parents, Takata entered a hospital and stated that she was diagnosed with a tumor and gallstones, appendicitis and asthma. She was told to prepare for surgery but chose to visit Hayashi's clinic instead.

Mrs. Takata was unfamiliar with Reiki but was impressed that the diagnosis from the Reiki practitioners at the clinic closely matched the doctor's at the hospital. She began receiving treatments. Takata wanted to learn Reiki in order to continue treating herself and also to take it back to Hawaii to share with others. Hayashi allowed Takata to work at his clinic and also began giving her Reiki training. Takata worked one year at the clinic and eventually received the Shinpiden level (Reiki Master). Hayashi officially acknowledged this in Hawaii on February 21, 1938, and also stated that she was one of thirteen Reiki Masters trained by him.

Takata practiced Reiki in Hawaii, opened several clinics, one of which was located in Hilo on the Big Island. She gave treatments and initiated students up to Reiki II. Takata became a renowned healer and travelled to the U.S. mainland and other parts of the world teaching and giving treatments. She attributed her success to the fact that



she performed a lot of Reiki on each client. Takata would often do multiple treatments on a client, each sometimes lasting hours, and often initiated members of a client's family so they could give Reiki to the client as well.

After 1970, Takata began initiating Reiki Masters for a fee of \$10,000 for the weekend training. This high fee was not a part of the Usui system. Takata may have charged this fee as her way of creating a feeling of respect for Reiki. Takata believed that treatments and training should never be given for free. Takata also stated that one must study with one Reiki teacher and remain with that teacher the rest of one's life. In addition, Takata did not provide written instructions or allow students to take notes or to record the classes. Students were not allowed to make written copies of the Reiki symbols. Takata attributed these restrictions to the notion that Reiki was an oral tradition and that everything must be memorized. It is not certain why Takata said Reiki is an oral tradition or why she taught Reiki this way. Based on research, these rules were not a part of the way Usui or Hayashi practiced Reiki. Takata received a Reiki manual from Hayashi. In addition, Takata taught Reiki differently than how she had been taught by simplifying and standardizing the hand positions. Takata called this the "foundation treatment," with eight hand positions. Before Mrs. Takata died on December 11, 1980, she had initiated 22 Reiki Masters. These twenty-two Masters began teaching others with the promise to Takata that they would continue teaching Reiki in the same manner she had.

The exclusive nature of Reiki organizations in Japan made Reiki less accessible with individuals travelling to the US to learn it. Reiki practiced in Japan and in America is a blend of both western and Japanese Reiki. Takata is credited for helping Reiki flourish to the degree that it has in the western hemisphere.

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Over time, some of the Masters that Takata trained began lowering their course fees. This also corresponded with changes in how Reiki was taught, allowing the wisdom of Reiki to guide sessions. Reiki classes became more open with workbooks, notes and recordings. Students were encouraged to seek out more than one teacher. This shift helped Reiki to become widely taught and it is estimated that there are over one million Reiki Masters in the world today with well over four million practitioners.

