

Following the System

What did Mikao Usui teach?

Since the 1990s Reiki has been going through some changes in many quarters. Until then everyone had assumed that the Reiki that Mikao Usui taught was the same as the Reiki that Mrs Takata had been teaching: in fact her teachings are usually referred to as “traditional” Usui Reiki. It was thought that Reiki had died out in Japan, and that the only Reiki that had survived was the system that Mrs Takata had been teaching. But the 1990s ushered in a new stage in Reiki’s development, when information started to filter through from Japan, in dribs and drabs, from different sources. Some information made sense, some seemed confusing, a lot of the information contradicted what people had believed about Reiki, and some of the information was inconsistent or contradictory.

Over time, though, we have built up more of a consistent picture of what Usui Sensei’s system was all about, what he taught and how he taught it, though you can find books that contain the earlier – now contradicted – view of what Usui’s system was all about. The main confusion arose when the Usui Reiki Ryoho Gakkai (Usui Memorial Society) was discovered. Everyone thought that this society had been founded by Usui himself and that it had continued Usui Sensei’s system in its original form, but now we know that the society was set up after his death by the Imperial Officers, who had been taught a system that was not representative of the system that Usui had been teaching to the majority of his students, and we know that the Imperial Officers changed and altered what they had been taught early on in the ‘Gakkai’s history. ‘Gakkai Reiki proved to be very different from Usui Reiki.

We discovered that Usui’s system was not called “Reiki”. In fact the system had no real name. Usui seems to have referred to his system as a ‘Method to Achieve Personal Perfection’, and some of his students seem to have called the system ‘Usui Teate’ (teate means ‘hand application’ or ‘hand healing’) or ‘Usui Do’ (way of Usui). The word Reiki appeared in the Reiki precepts, but the word 'Reiki' seems there to mean 'a system that has been arrived at through a moment of enlightenment', or 'a gift of satori'. The name 'Reiki' as a description of system came later, and may have been used first when the naval officers set up the Usui Reiki Ryoho Gakkai.

We also discovered that the purpose of Usui’s method was to achieve satori, to find one’s spiritual path, to heal oneself. Usui’s system was not really about treating others. Treating others was not emphasised; it was not focused upon; it was a side issue. This came as rather a shock to a Reiki world that saw Reiki as a hands-on treatment method first and foremost.

The Original System

The information that we have about the system that Mikao Usui taught has come mainly from a group of surviving students who are in contact with one or two people in the West. They were twelve in number when they were first discovered, though I understand that now – in 2005 – there are only a handful of them left. These are people who knew Usui, trained with him, and passed on his teachings to others in a quiet and limited fashion. Their information has helped to ‘make sense’ of the sometimes confusing and contradictory information from other sources in Japan, and they paint a picture of a simple spiritual system that is very different from the treatment-based Reiki that we see routinely in the West.

So the original Japanese form of Reiki is very different from the way that it has ended up being practised in the West. The thing that strikes me most about original Usui Reiki is the fact that it is so simple, so elegant, powerful and uncluttered. The system is not bogged down in endless mechanical techniques and complex rituals that now clutter up a lot of Western-style Reiki, with endless rules and regulations and restrictions.

The prime focus of Mikao Usui's Reiki was the personal benefits that would come through committing oneself to working with the system, in terms of self-healing and spiritual development. Reiki was a path to enlightenment. Healing others was a minor aspect of the system, not emphasised, not focused upon; it was simply something that you could do if you followed Usui's system.

Original Usui Reiki involved committing yourself to carrying out daily energy exercises, self-healings, and receiving spiritual empowerments on a regular basis. You would have received training in an open ended fashion, rather like the way that martial arts is taught in the West today: you kept turning up and slowly developing your skills, and when it was thought that you had progressed sufficiently, you were allowed to move on to the next level.

The system was rooted in Tendai Buddhism and Shintoism, with Tendai Buddhism providing spiritual teachings and Shintoism contributing methods of controlling and working with the energies. The system was based on living and practising the Reiki precepts. The vast majority of Usui's students started out as his clients – he was well known as a healer, though what he taught was not really a treatment method. He would routinely give people empowerments so that they could treat themselves in between appointments, and if they wanted to take things further then they could start formal training with him, to learn how to heal themselves.

Before I detail what Usui Sensei taught at Second Degree level, and how we can echo this system, I want to take a slight detour by describing how Second Degree is taught in ‘standard’ Western-style ‘Takata’ Reiki, as distorted and mutated as it has passed from teacher to teacher over the years.

‘Standard’ Western-style Second Degree

Western-style Reiki is very much presented as a hands-on treatment technique, with an undercurrent of spirituality and self-healing, and Second Degree is no exception. Western Second Degree involves being ‘attuned’ to three symbols and there is a widespread belief that the symbols are useless – they will not work for you – until you have been ‘attuned’ to them on the day of the live course.

Students are taught how to use these symbols when giving Reiki treatments and when carrying out distant healing, though there is no real consensus about how the symbols should be used – this differs in different lineages. There tend to be quite a few rules and dogma concerning how the symbols must, and must not, be used, and symbol use tends to be quite complicated, with mixtures of symbols and symbol ‘sandwiches’ being taught routinely (see later).

The symbols tend not to be used when self-treating.

Students are usually not shown how to experience the energy of a particular symbol, because they are taught to mix the symbols together all the time, often in an arbitrary and illogical fashion.

This contrasts greatly with Mikao Usui’s system, as passed on to us by his surviving students. What I am going to do below is to just recap briefly what Usui Sensei’s First Degree training was all about, and then I will move on to describe what was passed on at Second Degree level, and how we can echo that original approach.

Mikao Usui’s First Degree (Shoden)

Mikao Usui’s First Degree training (“Shoden”, which means ‘first teachings’) was very simple, and it seems that Usui taught hundreds of people at this level. Shoden was all about opening to the energy through receiving many Reiju empowerments (simple connection rituals), it was about cleansing and self-healing.

The student would practice different forms of self-healing, including self-healing meditations, they would chant and live the Reiki affirmations, and they would practice a couple of energy exercises.

Students would be introduced to the concept of mindfulness, they would focus on developing their awareness of their Tanden and that would, for some, lead to second-degree level.

Students would not treat others at first-degree.

Mikao Usui's Second Degree (Okuden)

We know that the precepts provided the foundation of Usui Sensei's system, so students would continue to live their lives in accordance with these principles, as well as continuing to practise mindfulness, which was emphasised more at this level. They would continue to receive regular empowerments from Usui, and indeed regular empowerments continued throughout the students' training at all levels.

So far, then, Second Degree has continued with the basic approach established at First Degree, and what was different at Okuden level was the spiritual teachings the students received, and the energy work that they carried on for an extended period of time. The energy work was carried out for the purpose of furthering the students' self-healing and spiritual development, though the energies that were worked with could also have been used to treat people.

Some treatments might have been carried out by some of Usui's students but this wasn't really emphasised, and any treatments would have been carried out simply, using intuition, and without the application of 'techniques'.

Usui's Second Degree was split into two sub-levels - Okuden Zenki and Okuden Kouki - with perhaps 70 students having reached Zenki and maybe 30 of those having reached Kouki level.

The energy work at Second Degree furthered your self-healing and spiritual development by allowing you to fully experience your physical reality and your spiritual essence, and allowing you to experience a state of oneness, a powerful process for helping to achieve balance. The energy work was carried out by the students using meditations, or chanting sacred sounds, though a few of the students used symbols.

The Spiritual teachings introduced at Second Degree level involved studying Buddhist sutras: the Lotus sutra, the Heart sutra and the Diamond sutra. The Lotus sutra is the foundation document of Tendai Buddhism, and it seems that Usui Sensei was passing on the inner teachings of Tendai Buddhism in a way that could be understood by everyone. Usui did not expect his students to have a particular religious background, though, and we do not have details of the spiritual teachings that Usui was passing on.

Zenki

In the first of the two second-degree levels (Zenki) you would practise 'becoming' the energies of earth ki and heavenly ki, two fundamental energies that are used and referred to in Taoism, Buddhism, Shinto, and in energy practices like QiGong and Tai Chi. You would do this by practising various meditations over many months, or by chanting sacred sounds and meditating on the energies that they elicited, or maybe a bit of both approaches. You

learned to 'become' these energies over an extended period of time in order to move along your path to enlightenment, and to promote self-healing. This process was not rushed, since you had to learn to 'become' the energies fully, one energy at a time. Students would have worked with each energy for perhaps 6-9 months before moving on, so it was a slow process; the two energies that were introduced at Okuden Zenki had to be fully integrated before you moved on to Okuden Kouki.

The sacred sounds that you used to further your self-healing and spiritual development could also be used to treat others, and students might do some treatments at this level, though it was a bit of a sideline to the main thrust of the system. Treatments might be based on a few simple hand positions that were used on the head, though this was not taught to all students, and the focus was very much on intuition in terms of hand-placement and in terms of what energy – if any – you emphasised during the treatment.

The sacred sounds, called 'Kotodama' (or 'Jumon' if referred to from a Buddhist perspective), come from Shintoism, the indigenous religion of Japan. This is really ancient stuff. This takes us back to the mists of ancient Japanese history, to a time when the sound of the human voice was said to be able to stop armies, to kill, to heal and to control the weather.

The use of the Reiki Kotodama is covered on the Reiki Evolution "Deepening" course and the Reiki Master / Teacher course.

Kouki

At this second sublevel of Second Degree you would be introduced to the concept of oneness, which was one of the goals of the system, and you would learn through carrying out meditations, and/or chanting one of the Reiki Kotodama, to fully experience 'oneness'. Distance healing as practised in the West is an expression of oneness, and Usui's students would have realised that they could do this easily, though again this was a sideline to the main thrust of the system and in fact I do not think there is any evidence of the original students having carried out distant healing as we would understand it. I think that their view would have been that if all are one, if there is no me and there is no you, then working on your self is the same as working on other people.

Actually, treating other people is an expression of oneness too!

The Use of Symbols in Usui's system

Interestingly, no symbols entered into Usui's system for the majority of his students. The Reiki symbols were introduced into the system late in Usui Sensei's life, they were introduced jointly by Usui and his senior student and friend Toshihiro Eguchi, and they were introduced for the benefit of the Imperial Officers, including Dr Chujiro Hayashi. Usui was well known as a healer, though his system was not about treating others, and he had been

approached by the Japanese military who wanted Usui to teach a simple hands-on healing system that could be used by Imperial Naval officers in a navy that had woefully inadequate levels of medically-trained staff.

So Usui passed on to them a system that was focused on the treatment of others and which, instead of requiring students to meditate or chant for many, many months in order to get to grips with certain energies, utilised symbols as a quick way of representing those energies in a treatment context. The Imperial Officers simply did not have the time to get to grips with the energies in the way that the other students had, and it seems that they were not so interested in the self-healing and spiritual development aspects of the system that Usui had taught to all the other students.

Since Dr Hayashi passed his modified version of these teachings onto Mrs Takata, and Mrs Takata passed on her interpretation of these teachings in the West, we have ended up with a Reiki with a heavy 'treatment-of-others' slant, and a system based on the use of symbols when treating people at Second Degree level. The meditations and the sacred sounds that Usui taught to most of his students simply did not make the journey to the West with Mrs Takata.

But since the symbols are there to represent the energies of earth ki and heavenly ki, we can use the symbols when meditating to experience these energies, in the same way that the earlier students used sacred sounds, for example, to fully 'become' the energies of earth ki and heavenly ki. You can find out how to meditate on the symbols later in the manual.

How can we follow the teachings?

We know that the system that Mikao Usui taught to the majority of his students at Second Degree was a spiritual development and self-healing practice, based on these five areas:

1. Focusing on and living Mikao Usui's precepts
2. Practising mindfulness
3. Receiving Reiju empowerments regularly
4. Working with the energies of earth ki and heavenly ki
5. Experiencing a state of oneness

These areas can form the basis of our Reiki practice too. Now obviously we are not going to learn and practise Reiki in exactly the same way as was done in 1920s Japan. This is simply not possible since we live in the 21st Century in the West. We do not have the same history or cultural and spiritual background as Usui Sensei's students, and we do not know the precise details of everything that Mikao Usui taught.

But what we can do is to make part of our routine the basic practices of Usui Sensei's system, which was designed by him to be accessible to people from

different backgrounds. Below I have touched on the five areas, and in subsequent chapters I will go into more details about how we can follow Usui Sensei's simple system in the modern world.

Reiju empowerments

Mikao Usui's students received empowerments from him again and again throughout their training at all levels. The training was more like martial arts style training, with ongoing and sometimes sporadic contact between student and teacher – rather than the day-courses or two-day-courses that are usual in the West (and usual in Japan now, for that matter).

But we can echo the practice of giving and receiving empowerments over an extended period as follows:

Live Reiki Courses	Reiki Home Study Courses
By receiving several Reiju empowerments from your teacher on the day of your live course	By receiving distant empowerments sent to you specifically by your teacher, during the course of your home study programme
Subsequently, by receiving distant empowerments on a weekly basis	Subsequently, by receiving distant empowerments on a weekly basis

It is simply not practical, given the distances that many people travel to attend live Reiki courses, or given the distance between many home study course students and their teacher, for the teacher and student to get together every week so that the student can receive a 'live' Reiju empowerment from the teacher.

But, since there is no difference between a 'live' Reiju empowerment and one received at a distance, we can effectively echo this original practice of empowering on a regular basis, so long as the student is prepared to commit a few minutes each week tuning into the distant empowerments which we Taggart sends out, and which can be 'tuned into' any time on a Monday.

Mikao Usui's Precepts and Mindfulness

The foundation of Usui Sensei's system was to follow a simple set of rules to live by. These 'precepts' are Buddhist or Shugendo in origin, have a very long history, and it was said that by following the precepts the student would obtain more spiritual development than was possible by carrying out any of the energy work. So the precepts – and the idea of mindfulness which is strongly linked to or suggested by the precepts – are a very important part of Mikao Usui's spiritual system and should not be glossed over.

They are the very foundation of his system. You start with the precepts.

Please go back to your First Degree manual and re-read the section that deals with the precepts and mindfulness. Read the mindfulness books that are recommended there and reaffirm your commitment to make the precepts the way that you live your life. Make mindfulness a way of life.

Working with earth ki and heavenly ki

You will already have established a regular routine of working on yourself, using Hatsurei ho and the Self-treatment meditation. Now we can modify this routine and introduce a regular practice of meditation on two Reiki symbols, to allow you to fully experience earth ki and heavenly ki, the energies of our physical reality and our spiritual essence. We do this to further our self-healing and spiritual development. These meditations, not surprisingly, focus on the Tanden, the centre of our personal universe, and you will have been focusing on your Tanden since you started your First Degree course. The symbol meditations are described later, and you will have received an audio CD containing a guided meditation that you can use to help you get to grips with this exercise.

Experiencing a state of oneness

At Second Degree we can learn to experience a state of oneness by using one of the Reiki symbols, and to cultivate this state when carrying out distant healing: a way of using oneness in practice. Oneness is a state that we can also cultivate when treating others.

Treating others at Second Degree level

In a world where Reiki is presented to the world as a sort of complementary therapy, something that you do to other people, we need to continually remind ourselves that the treatment of other people was not what Usui's system was all about. Treating others was not focused upon or emphasised. At First Degree level, Usui's students would probably have just worked on themselves. They might have treated others at Second Degree level.

But there is a world of difference between the often dogmatic, complex and 'technique-heavy' treatment approach of many Western Second Degree courses, and the simple and intuitive approach adopted by Usui Sensei and his students. We can treat more in the original way by embracing intuitive working, and you will be learning a simple method that you can use to open yourself to your intuitive side. Reiki is presented to the world as a treatment technique and this course gives you what you need to treat others confidently and successfully, moving beyond standard hand positions to go 'freestyle', gearing your treatments towards the individual energy needs of the people you are working on.

Reiki Evolution courses and their content



The logo to the left says “Shin Reiki”, which translates approximately as “Reiki Evolution”. So I suppose you could refer to the form of Reiki that you learn on this course as “Shin Reiki” but the last thing I want to do is to promote yet another version of Reiki with a different name! What I have done with all my Reiki courses is to blend the Western approach to Reiki teaching (day-courses rather than martial-arts style teaching, with a system based on the treatment of others) with simple and powerful methods that were part of the system developed by the founder, Mikao Usui, but which were never taught in the West.

Reiki was modified and changed a great deal during its journey to the West, through Dr Chujiro Hayashi and Mrs Hawayo Takata, and then changed again as it passed through the New Age movement and from teacher to teacher in the West. What I have tried to do is to complete the circle by bringing my teaching more in line with what seems to have been intended by Mikao Usui. I have kept the Western teaching format (day courses) but I have added a home study element to the live courses so that the student has the opportunity for the information to sink in and to carry out some simple energy work over - usually - several weeks, depending on the interval between receiving their booking and the date of their live course. Home study students follow a course that is perhaps more in line with the teaching approach that Mikao Usui used, by following a course of study and energy work over at least a six week period. I have also made sure that the courses are in sympathy with the ‘treatment’ emphasis of most Reiki courses.

I have adapted and changed my Reiki by, as far as I can, bringing it into line with the system that Usui set down in the early part of last century, but presenting it to you in the Western teaching format, and in a way that is compatible with other people’s Reiki Second Degree courses.

The information in this manual is partly based on the traditions of Western Reiki, as taught to me by a variety of Western Masters, partly based on some of the teachings of the Usui Reiki Ryoho Gakkai in Japan (Mikao Usui’s Reiki Association) which have come to us through Frank Arjava Petter and Hiroshi Doi, but mainly based on information coming from a group of Usui’s surviving students, through Chris Marsh. This last source takes us the closest to Usui Sensei’s original form.

Reiju

In your First Degree manual you can read all about Reiju empowerments, what they are, where they come from, how they were used by Mikao Usui and how they differ from 'attunements'. You can read about the effectiveness of distant connections and the benefits that accrue through receiving distant empowerments regularly. Perhaps you would like to start by quickly re-reading that section of the Shoden manual to refresh your memory.

Now, you know that, at First Degree, empowerments can be seen as a way of 'connecting' you to the energy, or a way of allowing you to recognise something that is within. At Second Degree, of course, you are already 'connected' to or channelling Reiki, and have been for some time, so the empowerments that you receive on this course – or the distant empowerments that you receive during your home study course – are not so much about 'connecting' you, but are more about helping to reinforce that connection. People often notice that after receiving their Second Degree empowerments the energy seems to flow more strongly, and this is frequently noticeable to the people that you have been treating.

The Second Degree empowerments 'flag up' to your energy system certain energies or states that are going to be helpful to you in terms of your self-healing and spiritual development, energies which you can continue to work with by meditating on and using the Reiki symbols, or using the Reiki Kotodama which you will learn on the Reiki Deepening course or the Master / Teacher course. The symbols act as 'triggers' that allow you to access the energies that have been strongly flagged up to your system by the empowerments you receive as part of this course.

Most people within the world of Reiki will have not received Reiju empowerments but will have received a series of 'attunements'. Many people believe that the Reiki symbols will not work for a student until they have been 'attuned' to them (by the Reiki teacher visualising that the symbols are placed into the student in some way during the attunement ritual). For most of Reiki's history, all Reiki connection rituals involved putting symbols into the student in some way, so no-one knew how to attune without using symbols, to see whether you really needed to be 'attuned' to the symbols for them to work for you.

But from Japan came Reiju, a connection ritual that does not involve the use of symbols, and we now know that you do not need to be 'attuned' to a symbol for it to work for you: you just need to be 'connected' to Reiki, and now we can achieve that without using symbols, by using Reiju. In fact once you have been attuned to Reiki then any symbol will push the energy in a particular direction without you having to have been 'attuned' to it (whatever that means).

Mikao Usui didn't attune anyone to anything.

At Second Degree you will receive three empowerments on your live course or home study course, and these empowerments tie in with the three symbols that you learn, transferring the 'essence' of the energy or state that each symbol represents. Sometimes people find that the empowerment they receive for the first symbol, for example, gives them sensations and experiences that echo the sensations and experiences they have subsequently when meditating on that symbol/energy. When they receive the empowerment that floods the student with the energy represented by the second symbol, they may have some experiences that echo the experiences they will have when they move on to meditate on that symbol/energy.

The three empowerments that you receive serve to flood you with earth ki, with heavenly ki, and to induce a state of oneness for a short while, and the empowerments are carried out in that order: earth ki, heavenly ki, oneness.