

Dr Mikao Usui



Usui Mikao (臼井 甕男), 15 August 1865 – 9 March 1926) is the founder of Reiki, a form of spiritual practice used as a complementary therapy for the treatment of physical, emotional, and mental diseases. Usui was the founder of the association in Japan called; Usui Shiki Reiki Ryoho. Usui had over 2000 students and had trained 21 teachers by the time of his death.

Usui Mikao was born on the 15th of August 1865 in the village of Taniai (now called Miyama cho) in the Yamagata county of the Gifu Prefecture in Japan. His first name was Mikao, and his other name he was known by is pronounced either Gyoho or Kyoho. His ancestors name was Toshitane Chiba, a famous samurai warlord from the 1500s. In 1551, Toshitane Chiba conquered the city Usui and thereafter all family members acquired that name.

Usui's father's common name was Uzaemon and his mother was from the Kawai family. In Miyama cho, on a large torii gate, Usui Mikao's name is inscribed, at the Amataka shrine nearby to where Usui's home once stood. Usui's brothers donated the stone torii in April 1923. Usui Mikao's brothers, Sanya and Kuniji, grew up to become a doctor and a policeman respectively. He also had an older sister called Tsuru. Usui was married to Sadako Suzuki, whom he had one boy and one girl by the name of Fuji and Toshiko. Fuji (1908 - 1946) went on to teach at Tokyo University and Toshiko lived a short life, dying at the age of 22 in 1935. The entire family's ashes are buried at the grave site at the Saihoji Temple in Tokyo.

Usui was taught in a temple school and continued his Buddhist education until he became a zaiko, which is a lay Tendai priest; which allowed him to remain in his own home with his family, without having to reside in a temple. From what is known, he was a talented and hard working student. As an adult he traveled to several Western countries, Europe and China as a part of his continued life long study. Of the subjects he was known to study, it included history books, medical books, Buddhist scriptures, Christian scriptures, psychology books, and Taoism.

Most of the information being taught about Usui's history in the West by most Reiki teachers is false and is derived from the misleading history that Hawayo Takata created in order to make Reiki more palatable to the west. Since the 1990s, many western teachers of Reiki have gone to Japan searching for the truth and have found it. There are many contributors in Japan who have stepped forward to clarify & verify Usui's true history. One contributor is Usui's cousin, a Tendai Buddhist nun by the name of Suzuki San (born 1895, she is still alive today). Suzuki san studied with Usui from 1915 until his death in 1926. *"Usui did not see himself as a teacher. He made no claims for what he practiced - others approached him and asked to learn. That is how he was free to do as he did."* (quoted from Chris Marsh, student of Suzuki san). According to Suzuki san, *"There was no fixed point at which he began to teach. People were drawn to him because of his charisma and wisdom, and asked him to teach them, he never placed himself in the role of teacher."* ^[1]

In the year 2000, there were still 12 students of Usui alive, some at the age of 112; this included one nun, one farmer, with the remaining being monks. It is currently unknown how many of those 12 students are still alive today, in 2009. It's understood that Suzuki san and the other 11 living students have preserved a collection of papers including the precepts, waka, meditations, and teachings.

In 1865, Japan was just beginning to open up its borders after a self-imposed exile which had left it culturally prosperous though far behind the Western world technologically and militarily. Kyoto was the capital of Japan and remained so until 1868 when the advent of the Meiji Restoration moved it to Tokyo.

Usui's ancestors were the once influential Chiba clan and were hatamoto samurai - a high level within the ranks of samurai. The hatamoto were the shogun's personal guard. Usui was raised as a samurai, a martial arts training that began in his childhood; the style of martial arts Usui learned was called aiki jutsu (later popularized by Takeda Sokaku). While Aiki jutsu teaches many physical skills, part of its focus includes "harmonizing with ki" and "can transform the lives of its participants" according to H.E. Davey, author of "Living the Japanese Arts & Ways". Due to the major social and political changes happening in Japan from the 1860s onwards, the samurai class were no longer required and were ordered to cut off their top knots (a status symbol).

The Japanese are known for drawing on many religions to cover their needs and Usui was no exception. Chris Marsh, a student of Suzuki san, states that "Usui's original teachings were mostly Mikkyo made accessible to the everyday person as Usui's teachings cover the same ground that Mikkyo does. Mikkyo is known as a secret esoteric Buddhism and is an esoteric arm of Tendai Buddhism. Tendai is based on the belief that the Lotus Sutra is Buddha's complete and perfect teaching, it includes meditations based on esoteric foundations." (quoted from The Japanese Art of Reiki, by Bronwen & Franz Steine)

Usui was also influenced by Shintoism, the traditional faith of the Japanese people prior to contact with China. Shinto is focused on the kami, which are gods in the forms of birds, animals, mountains, trees and people. An 18th century scholar, Motoori Norinaga (1730-1801) wrote: "*According to ancient usage, whatever seemed strikingly impressive, possessed the quality of excellence, or inspired a feeling of awe was called kami*". Usui was known to use jumon (jumon means spell or incantation) in his teachings, derived from Shinto & Taoism.

It is believed that Usui practiced shugenja, also known as shugendo, in addition to his practice as a Tendai Buddhist. Shugendo is a mix of ancient beliefs and practices such as shamanism, Shintoism, Taoism and Buddhism, practitioners do most of their work up in the mountains and are known as yamabushi or shugenja. Other roles of shugendo practitioners include offering religious services such as fortune telling, divination, channelling, prayer, ritual incantations and exorcism. Shugenja was often used by family clans to heal disease or to avoid misfortune.

Suzuki san has listed Mt Hiei (hieizan), a famous Tendai mountain, as one of the mountains where old sutra copies exist with Usui's Buddhist name of Gyoho or Gytse on them. Mt Kurama (kuramayama) is the other.

Usui had various careers. According to Frank Arjava Petter, he was a private secretary to a politician called Shinpei Goto who, amongst other positions, was Governor of the Standard of Railways. In 1920 Shinpei Goto became the Mayor of Tokyo.

What Usui Mikao taught was called 'Usui do' - 'the way of Usui', and what he practiced on people would most likely have been called 'Usui teate' - meaning 'hands-on'. The teachings and tools provided were usually customized to the student, since each student learns differently. It was the Usui Reiki Ryoho Gakkai which formalized the teachings. The hand positions were added for the students who found it difficult to work intuitively. Early students had never heard of the word Reiki in relation to the entirety of Usui Mikao's teachings. It was also often used in conjunction with Usui

Mikao's teachings but not as the name of them merely in its literal form meaning 'spiritual energy'. Only once it came to the West was the word 'Reiki' turned into the name for a system.

It is believed that the aim of Usui's teachings was to provide a method for students to achieve enlightenment. Unlike religion, though, there was no belief system attached. Though enlightenment was the aim, the healing that was taking place for students was a wonderful 'side effect'. What sets Usui Mikao's teachings apart from other hands-on healing methods is his use of reiju or attunement to remind students of their spiritual connection. It seems that all students of Usui Mikao received reiju and the 5 precepts and those with a further interest in the teachings became dedicated students. There does not appear to have been a distinction between clients and students in the beginning though this changed in 1917. People began coming to Usui Mikao for different purposes - some for healing and others for the spiritual teachings.

During the early 1920s, Usui did a 21-day practice on Mt kurama yama called kushu shinren, (which is a form of shugyo, or discipline or training) according to translator, Hyakuten Inamoto. Common belief dictates that it was during these 21 days that Usui developed reiki. As hiei zan is the main Tendai complex in Japan, and is very close to Kyoto it has been surmised that Usui Mikao would also have practiced there if he was a lay priest. A Tendai meditation practice called zazen shikan taza (according to Suzuki san's students) may well have inspired him and his teachings either on hiei zan or kurama yama.

"In April of the 11th year of Taisho (1922 A.D.) he settled in Harajuku, Aoyama, Tokyo and set up the Gakkai to teach Reiki Ryoho and give treatments. Even outside of the building it was full of pairs of shoes of the visitors who had come from far and near." - translated from the memorial stone.

"In September of the 12th year (1923 A.D.) there was a great earthquake and a conflagration broke out. Everywhere there were groans of pains from the wounded. Sensei, feeling pity for them, went out every morning to go around the town, and he cured and saved an innumerable number of people. This is just a broad outline of his relief activities during such an emergency." - translated from the memorial stone.

There was a great deal of poverty in Japan at that time due to the depression. After the earthquake Usui Mikao moved his home and place of teaching to Nakano ku, outside of Tokyo, in 1925.

"Due to his respected and far-reaching reputation many people from local districts wished to invite him. Sensei, accepting the invitations, went to Kure and then to Hiroshima and Saga, and reached Fukuyama. Unexpectedly he became ill and passed away there. It was March 9 of the 15th year of Taisho (1926 A.D.), aged 62." - translated from the memorial stone.

Usui Mikao died of a stroke. Usui Mikao's Memorial Stone is located at the Saihoji temple in the Suginami district of Tokyo. Reiho Choso Usui Sensei Kudoko No Hi, in English this means: Memorial of the merits of Usui Sensei, the founder of Reiho (Reiki Ryoho). The inscription on the Usui Memorial was written in old Japanese by Mr. Okata, and Mr. Ushida. The memorial stone was erected by the Usui Reiki Ryoho Gakkai in Japan one year after Usui Mikao's death. There are two popular translations of the inscription into English, one written by the author & Reiki Master Frank Arjava Petter, the other by Japanese Reiki Master Inamoto Hyakuten.

Usui's legacy is the recognition that a person should work on what could be improved and accept what could not be changed. This would be the recipe for a happy life. The essence of this teaching is today known as the five concepts or five principles.^[2]

The secret art of inviting happiness
The miraculous medicine for all diseases

At least for today, do not be angry.
Do not worry.
Be grateful.
Work with diligence.
Be kind to people.

Every morning and evening, join your hands in meditation
and pray with your heart.
State in your mind and chant with your mouth.

For improvement of mind and body.
Usui Reiki Ryoho

The founder

Mikao Usui

(From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia)