

# MIKAO USUI



The following is taken from <https://www.reiki.org/faqs/what-history-reiki>

Mikao Usui, or Usui Sensei as he is called by Reiki students in Japan, was born August 15, 1865 in the village of Taniai in the Yamagata district of Gifu prefecture, which is located near present-day Nagoya, Japan.(4)

He had an avid interest in learning and worked hard at his studies. As he grew older, he traveled to Europe and China to further his education. His curriculum included medicine, psychology and religion as well as the art of divination, which Asians have long considered to be a worthy skill.(5) Usui Sensei also became a member of the Rei Jyutu Ka, a metaphysical group dedicated to developing psychic abilities.(6) He had many jobs including civil servant, company employee and journalist, and he helped rehabilitate prisoners.(7) Eventually he became the secretary to Shinpei Goto, head of the department of health and welfare who later became the mayor of Tokyo. The connections Usui Sensei made at this job helped him to also become a successful businessman.(8)

The depth and breadth of his experiences inspired him to direct his attention toward discovering the purpose of life. In his search he came across the description of a special state of consciousness that once achieved would not only provide an understanding of one's life purpose, but would also guide one to achieve it. This special state is called An-shin Ritus-mei (pronounced on sheen dit sue may). In this special state, one is always at peace regardless of what is taking place in the outer world. And it is from this place of peace that one completes one's life purpose. One of the special features of this state is that it maintains itself without any effort on the part of the individual; the experience of peace simply wells up spontaneously from within and is a type of enlightenment.

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Usui Sensei understood this concept on an intellectual level and dedicated his life to achieving it; this is considered to be an important step on Usui Sensei's spiritual path. He discovered that one path to An-shin Ritsu-mei is through the practice of Zazen meditation. So he found a Zen teacher who accepted him as a student and began to practice Zazen. After three years practice, he had not been successful and sought further guidance. His teacher suggested a more severe practice in which the student must be willing to die in order to achieve An-shin Ritsu-mei.(9, 10)

So with this in mind he prepared for death and in February, 1922, he went to Kurama yama, a sacred mountain north of Kyoto. He went to fast and meditate until he passed to the next world. It must be kept in mind that he was not looking to discover a method of healing, but was seeking to experience this special spiritual state. In addition, we know there is a small waterfall on Kurama yama where even today people go to meditate. This meditation involves standing under the waterfall and allowing the water to strike and flow over the top of the head, a practice that is said to activate the crown chakra. Japanese Reiki Masters think that Usui Sensei may have used this meditation as part of his practice. In any case, as time passed he became weaker and weaker. It was now March 1922 and at midnight of the twenty-first day, a powerful light suddenly entered his mind through the top of his head and he felt as if he had been struck by lightning; this caused him to fall unconscious.

As the sun rose, he awoke and realized that whereas before he had felt very weak and near death from his fasting, he was now filled with an extremely enjoyable state of vitality that he had never experienced before; a miraculous type of high frequency spiritual energy had displaced his normal consciousness and replaced it with an amazingly new level of awareness. He experienced himself as being the energy and consciousness of the Universe and that the special state of enlightenment he had sought had been given to him as a gift. He was overjoyed by this realization.

When this happened, he was filled with excitement and went running down the mountain to tell his Zen master of his great good fortune. On his way down he stubbed his toe on a rock and fell down. And in the same way anyone would do, he placed his hands over the toe, which was in pain. As he did this, healing energy began flowing from his hands all by itself. The pain in his toe went away and the toe was healed. Usui Sensei was amazed by this. He realized that in addition to the illuminating experience he had undergone, he had also received the gift of healing. He also understood that this was his life purpose; to be a healer and to train others.(11)

In April 1922, he moved to Tokyo and started a healing society that he named Usui Reiki Ryoho Gakkai (Usui Reiki Healing Method Society). He also opened a Reiki clinic in Harajuku, Aoyama, Tokyo. There he taught classes and gave treatments.(12)

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At first, all Usui Sensei had was the healing energy. Over time he developed his system of Reiki practice. Most of these developments came in 1923 after the Great Kanto earthquake and tsunami that did extensive damage in Tokyo and killed and injured many thousands of people. Because there were so many people in need of healing, Usui Sensei decided he needed to do something to speed up his ability to train teachers.

It was at this time that he developed many of his practitioner techniques such as Gassho, Byosen scanning, Reiji-ho, Gyoshi ho, Seishin-to-itsu and so forth. He also developed a formal attunement method or Reiju kai, making it easier for others to learn Reiki and to become teachers. Prior to this, the method he used to pass on the Reiki ability was to simply hold the students hands, but this took a long time. The Reiju kai made transferring the Reiki ability much faster. Also, he had many different ways he performed the Reiju Kai, not just one.<sup>(13)</sup> During this time he also developed the Reiki symbols of which he had only three. These are the three symbols that we currently receive in Reiki II, which he called Okuden. He did not have a Master symbol. This important point was confirmed by Hiroshi Doi Sensei, a member of the Gakkai, and in discussions he had with several of the Gakkai presidents and many of the Shinpiden members.<sup>(14)</sup> This idea was also confirmed by Arjava Petter Sensei, who had contact with Shinpiden teachers from the Gakkai and with its president.<sup>(15)</sup>

These same sources also indicate that Usui Sensei also gave many attunements to each student, not just one or one set. The purpose of the student receiving the attunement over and over was that this process continually acted to refine and develop one's ability to channel Reiki energy, thus making the energy one channeled more versatile and able to heal a wider range of conditions, to heal more deeply and in a shorter time. The philosophy of Usui Sensei was that there is no limit to the quality and effectiveness of the Reiki energy available in the universe and an important purpose for all students was to continually seek to improve the quality and effectiveness of the Reiki energy one is able to channel.<sup>(16)</sup>

He called his system of healing Shin-Shin Kai-Zen Usui Reiki Ryo-Ho (The Usui Reiki Treatment Method for Improvement of Body and Mind)<sup>(17)</sup> or in its simplified form Usui Reiki Ryoho (Usui Reiki Healing Method).

The first degree of his training was called Shoden (First Degree) and was divided into four levels: Loku-Tou, Go-Tou, Yon-Tou and San-Tou. (Note that when Takata Sensei taught this level, which in the West we refer to as Reiki Level I, she combined all four levels into one. This is most likely why she did four attunements for Level I.) 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 Western Reiki calls Master level. The Shinpiden level includes, Shihan-Kaku (assistant teacher) and Shihan (venerable teacher).<sup>(18)</sup>

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Demand for Reiki became so great that Usui Sensei outgrew his clinic, so in 1925 he built a bigger one in Nakano, Tokyo. Because of this, his reputation as a healer spread all over Japan. He began to travel so he could teach and treat more people. During his travels across Japan he directly taught more than 2,000 students and initiated twenty Shihan,<sup>(19)</sup> each being given the same understanding of Reiki and approved to teach and give Reiki in the same way that he did.<sup>(20)</sup>

The Japanese government issued him a Kun San To award for doing honorable work to help others.<sup>(21)</sup> While traveling to Fukuyama to teach, he suffered a stroke and died on March 9, 1926.<sup>(22)</sup> His grave is at Saihoji Temple, in Suginami, Tokyo, although some claim that his ashes are located elsewhere.

After Usui Sensei died, his students erected a memorial stone next to his gravestone. Mr. J. Ushida, a Shihan trained by Usui Sensei, took over as president of the Usui Reiki Ryoho Gakkai and was responsible for creating and erecting the Usui Memorial stone and ensuring that the gravesite would be maintained. Mr. Ushida was followed by Mr. Iichi Taketomi, Mr. Yoshiharu Watanabe, Mr. Toyoichi Wanami and Ms. Kimiko Koyama. The current successor to Usui Sensei is Mr. Mahayoshi Kondo, who became president in 1998.

Contrary to what we have been told in the West, there is no “lineage bearer” or “Grand Master” of the organization started by Usui Sensei—only the succession of presidents listed above.<sup>(23)</sup> Among the twenty teachers initiated by Usui Sensei are Toshihiro Eguchi, Jusaburo Guida, Kan’ichi Taketomi, Toyoichi Wanami, Yoshiharu Watanabe, Keizo Ogawa, J. Ushida, and Chujiro Hayashi.<sup>(24)</sup> Contrary to one version of the Reiki story, Mr. J. Ushida, not Chujiro Hayashi, was the Gakkai’s successor to Usui Sensei. It is also important to note that the first four presidents of the Gakkai who followed Usui Sensei were Shihan who had been trained directly by Usui Sensei, and the last of these was president of the Gakkai through 1975, thus assuring that the Gakkai understanding, practice and teaching methods were the same as that of Usui Sensei.