

# What is the History of Reiki?

by [William Lee Rand](#)

## [The International Center for Reiki Training](#)



Takata photo taken June 11, 1979, Penticton, British Columbia, Canada.  
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*The following referenced history of Reiki is taken from [Reiki, The Healing Touch](#) and has been carefully researched to contain verified information from dependable sources. You have permission to [copy and paste](#) this history including the photos on to your own web site as long as you use the entire text and do not make changes to it. Copy for your website available by [clicking here](#).*

Mrs. Hawayo Takata brought Reiki from Japan to the West in 1937 and continued to practice and teach until her passing in 1980. Because of her devotion, Reiki has been passed on to millions of people all over the world, and the numbers continue to grow! And as you will see, if it wasn't for her, Reiki most likely would never have been discovered by the West and even in Japan would have been practiced secretly by only a small number of people.

Until the 1990s, the only information we had about Reiki came from Mrs. Takata. Her story of Reiki was recorded on tape, and this recording is still available along with a transcript of the contents.(1) In the past most people including many authors simply accepted Takata Sensei's interpretation of the history of Reiki as accurate without attempting to do any additional research. Because of this, Mrs. Takata's version of the story was repeated in all the earlier books written on Reiki. (Fortunately many current authors are using more recent historical information.)

In the course of researching the origins of Reiki, I learned that Mrs. Takata took liberties with the history of its development. In 1990, for example, I wrote to Doshisha University in Kyoto, Japan where Mrs. Takata reported that the founder of Reiki, Usui Sensei, had held the office of president. I had hoped to gain additional information that would help us understand who Usui Sensei really was. I also contacted the University of Chicago, from which Usui Sensei had obtained a degree according to Mrs. Takata. Neither university had ever heard of him. (Copies of the letters from both universities are available from the International Center for Reiki Training.) This disappointing discovery led me to wonder if other parts of the Takata Sensei version of Reiki were also inaccurate. In talking with several early Reiki Masters about this discovery, I was told that Mrs. Takata had westernized the story of Reiki by changing certain details and adding others to make it more appealing to Americans.

I continued to seek additional information about the history of Reiki, but attempts to secure it went slowly at first. The main reason for this is that after World War II, the U.S. government had complete control over Japan for a time and banned all Eastern healing methods in Japan and required that only Western medicine be practiced there. The members of the organization Usui Sensei started, the Usui Reiki Ryoho Gakkai, decided

they wanted to find a way to continue to practice Reiki. Some of the other healing groups such as the Acupuncturists were able to get a license to practice, but the Gakkai chose not to go through this process. In order to continue to practice Reiki, they decided to become a secret society and practice only among themselves and not talk about Reiki to anyone outside their organization.<sup>(2)</sup> This made it difficult for anyone to learn about Reiki including the Japanese. In fact, if someone in Japan wanted to learn Reiki after the war, he or she had to travel to the U.S. to learn or had to learn from a Western trained Reiki teacher who traveled to Japan. Because of this, even now most Reiki practiced in Japan is a combination of Western and Japanese Reiki.

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#### Footnotes

1 Mrs. Takata Speaks, *The History of Reiki*, CD and transcript (Southfield, MI: Vision Publications, 1979).

2 Tadao Yamaguchi, *Light on the Origins of Reiki* (Twin Lakes, WI: Lotus Press, 2007), 66.

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This is why an accurate history of Reiki took so long to unfold up to this point in time. Then in 1996, I received from Japan a copy of the Original Reiki Ideals, which were different and more expansive than what had been presented by Mrs. Takata. They include the idea that chanting and offering prayers are important to Reiki practice.<sup>(3)</sup> In 1997, Arjava Petter's book, *Reiki Fire* was published, which was the first of a series of books on Japanese Reiki. He along with his wife, Chetna Koybayashi, had made contact with the Gakkai. They had discovered the location of Usui Sensei's grave and many other facts including information on the Japanese Reiki Techniques, all of which were revealed in his books and subsequent workshops.

Invited by Arjava Petter, Laura Gifford (now Laurelle Shanti Gaia) and I went to Japan in 1997 and with Arjava as our guide, we were taken to Usui Sensei's grave and Mt. Kurama and much of the new information was explained to us.<sup>(4)</sup>

In 1999 and 2000 I invited Arjava and Chetna to come to teach workshops on the Japanese Reiki Techniques across the United States. In addition, in November, 2001, I took Reiki I&II from Chiyoko Yamaguchi in Japan, a Shihan (Reiki Master) who received her training from Hayashi Sensei. (She passed on in 2003). In October 2002 I took Gendai Reiki training from Hiroshi Doi—who is a member of the Usui Reiki Ryoho Gakkai—and also had two detailed interviews with him.<sup>(5)</sup> It is from these sources and my continued contact with these and other Reiki researchers that my understanding of the history of Reiki along with how Usui Sensei and Hayashi Sensei taught and practiced Reiki has developed.

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#### Footnotes

3 Toshitaka Mochizuki, *Iyashi No Te* [Healing Hands] (1995), 227, ISBN 4-88481-420-7 C0011 P1400E; "The Original Reiki Ideals," *Reiki News* (Fall 1996); and page vi of this manual. To order the Original Reiki Ideals [click here](#).

4 For more information, see Appendix A, "Discovering the Roots of Reiki," and The Inscription on the Usui Memorial section below.

5 William Lee Rand, "An Interview with Hiroshi Doi," *Reiki News Magazine*, Pts. 1 and 2 (Summer 2003): 9–11; (Fall 2003): 12–14.

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## A More Accurate History of Reiki

The following is an updated history of Reiki based on accurate, verifiable information. Where possible, sources have been referenced so others can follow up on this research if desired. The history begins with a look at the inscription on the memorial stone that was erected in 1927 in memory of Mikao Usui Sensei, founder of the Reiki healing system.

### The Inscription on the Usui Memorial

The inscription on the Usui Memorial, dating from 1927, was written by Juzaburo Ushida, a Shihan who was trained by Usui Sensei and able to teach and practice Reiki the same way he did. He also succeeded Usui Sensei as president of the Usui Reiki Ryoho Gakkai. Masayuki Okata, also a member of the Usui Reiki Ryoho Gakkai, was the editor. The English translation was done by Tetsuyuki Ono and is reprinted here from the book, *Iyashino Gendai Reiki- ho*, with permission from the author Hiroshi Doi.

The large kanji at the top of the memorial stone reads: “Memorial of Usui Sensei’s Virtue.” The remainder of the inscription reads as follows:

*What you can naturally realize through cultivation and training is called “VIRTUE” and it is called “MERIT” to spread a method of leadership and relief and practice it. It is people of many merits and a good deal of virtue that can be eventually called a great founder. People who started a new learning and founded a fresh sect among sages, philosophers, geniuses etc., named from the ancient times, were all those as mentioned above. We can say that Usui-Sensei is also one of those people.*



*The Usui Memorial*

*He started newly a method to improve body and spirit based on REIKI in the universe. Hearing of the rumor, people who would like to learn the treatment and undergo the cure gathered from all quarters all at once. Really, it was very busy indeed.*

*Usui-Sensei, whose popular name is Mikao and whose pen name is Gyohan, came from Taniai-village, Yamagata- district, Cifu Prefecture, and had forefathers named Tsunetane Chiba who had played an active part as a military commander between the end of Heian Period and the beginning of Kamakura Period (1180-1230). His father’s real name is Taneuji and his popular name is Uzaemon. His mother came and got married from the family named Kawai.*

*Usui-Sensei was born on 15th August, 1865. Having learned under difficulties in his childhood, he studied hard with efforts and he was by far superior in ability to his friends.*

*After growing up, he went over to Europe and America, and also studied in China. In spite of his real ability, however, he was not always successful in life. Although he was compelled to lead an unfortunate and poor life so often, he strove much more than before to harden his body and mind without flinching from the difficulties.*

*One day, Usui-Sensei climbed Mt. Kurama, where he began to do penance while fasting. Suddenly on the twenty first day from the start, he felt a great REIKI over his head, and at the same time as he was spiritually awakened he acquired the REIKI cure. When he tried it on his own body and members’ of his family also, it brought an immediate result on them.*



*Mikao Usui  
(Usui Sensei), founder of  
the Reiki System of Healing*

*Having said “It is much better to give this power widely to a lot of people in the world and enjoy it among them than to keep it exclusively by his family members.” Usui-Sensei moved his dwelling to Aoyama Harajuku, Tokyo*

*in April, 1922 and established an institute, where the REIKI cure was instructed openly to the public and the treatment was given, too. People came there from far and near to ask for his guidance and cure, and they overflowed outside, making a long line.*

*Tokyo had a very big fire caused by a great earthquake in Kanto district in September, 1923, when the injured and sick persons suffered from pains everywhere. Usui-sensei felt a deep anxiety about that, and he was engaged in a cure, going around inside the city every day. We can hardly calculate how many persons were saved from death with his devotion. His activities of relief, in which he extended his hands of love over to those suffering people against this emergent situation, can be outlined as noted above.*

*Thereafter, his training center became too small to receive the visitors, so he built a new house in Nakano outside the city in February 1925 and transferred there. As his reputation got higher and higher, it was so often when he received an offer of engagement from everywhere throughout the nation. In accordance with these requests he traveled to Kure and Hiroshima, then entered Saga and reached Fukuyama. It was at the inn at which he stayed on his way that he caught a disease abruptly, and he passed away at the age of sixty-two.*

*His wife got married, coming from the Suzuki family, and she is named Sadako and has a son and a daughter. The son's name is Fuji, and he succeeds to the Usui family.*

*Usui-Sensei's natural character was gentle and prudent, and he did not keep up appearances. His body was big and sturdy, and his face was always beaming with a smile. But when he faced the difficulties he went ahead with a definite will and yet persevered well, keeping extremely careful. He was a man of versatile talents and also a book lover, knowing well in the wide range from history, biography, medical science, canons of Christianity and Buddhism and psychology up to magic of fairyland, art of curse, science of divination and physiognomy.*

*In my opinion, it is evident to everybody that Usui-Sensei's cultivation & training were based on his career of art and science, and the cultivation & training became a clue to create the REIKI cure.*

*Reviewing the fact, I understand what the REIKI cure is aiming at is not only to heal the diseases but also to correct the mind by virtue of a God-sent spiritual ability, keep the body healthy and enjoy a welfare of life. In teaching the persons, therefore, we are supposed to first let them realize the last instructions of the Emperor Meiji, and chant the 5 admonitions morning and evening to keep them in mind.*

*The 5 admonitions in question are:*

- 1. Don't get angry today.*
- 2. Don't be grievous.*
- 3. Express your thanks.*
- 4. Be diligent in your business.*
- 5. Be kind to others.*

*These are really the important precepts for a cultivation, just the same as those by which the ancient sages admonished themselves. Usui-Sensei emphasized that 'This is surely a secret process to bring a good fortune and also a miraculous medicine to remedy all kinds of diseases.' by which he made his purpose of teaching clear and accurate. Furthermore, he tried to aim at making his way of guidance as easy and simple as possible, so nothing is difficult to understand therein. Every time when you sit quietly and join your hands to pray and*

*chant morning and evening, you can develop a pure and sound mind, and there is just an essence in making the most of that for your daily life. This is the reason why the REIKI cure can very easily spread over anybody.*

*The phase of life is very changeable in these days, and people's thoughts are apt to change, too. Could we fortunately succeed in spreading the REIKI cure everywhere, we feel sure that it would have to be very helpful in order to prevent people from disordering their moral sense. It never extends people nothing but the benefits of healing long term illness, chronic disease and bad habit.*

*The number of pupils who learned from Usui-sensei amounts to more than 2000 persons. Some leading pupils living in Tokyo among them gather at the training center and take over his work, while other pupils in the country also do everything to popularize the REIKI cure. Although our teacher already passed away, we have to do the very best to hand the REIKI cure down to the public forever and spread it much more. Ah! What a great thing he did; to have unsparingly given people what he had felt and realized by himself!*

*As a result of our pupils' recent meeting and discussion, we decided to erect a stone monument at the graveyard in his family temple so that we may bring his virtuous deed to light and transmit it to posterity; so, I was requested to arrange an epitaph for the monument. As I was much impressed by his great meritorious deed and also struck by our pupils' warm hearts of making much of the bond between master and pupil, I dared not refuse the request, but described the outline.*

*Therefore, I do expect heartily that people in the future generations would not forget to look up at the monument in open-eyed wonder.*

— Usuida, in February, 1927. Edited by Masayuki Okada, The Junior 3rd Rank, the 3rd Order of Merit, Doctor of Literature. Written by Juzaburo Usuhida, The Junior 4th Class of Services, Rear Admiral.

## **Mikao Usui**

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.(6)

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.(7) Usui Sensei also became a member of the Rei Jyutu Ka, a metaphysical group dedicated to developing psychic abilities.(8) He had many jobs including civil servant, company employee and journalist, and helped rehabilitate prisoners.(9) 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.(10)

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 a special state of mind that once achieved would not only provide an understanding of this concept, but would also create the conditions necessary for one to achieve one's life purpose. This special state is called An-shin Ritus-mei (pronounced on sheen dit sue may). This is a state of mind in which one is always at peace regardless of what is taking place in the outer world and it is from this state of peace that one receives the guidance necessary to achieve one's life purpose. One of the special features of this state is that once achieved, it maintains itself; the experience of peace simply wells up spontaneously from within and is a type of enlightenment.

Usui Sensei accepted this idea 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. The next step is to actually achieve this state and 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. After three years he was not successful and sought further guidance. His teacher suggested a more severe practice in which a person experiences death.(11)

With this in mind, he prepared for death and in February, 1922, he went to Kurama yama to fast and meditate. 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 is 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 been very weak, he was now filled with an extremely enjoyable state of vitality that he had never experienced before; a miraculous type of high frequency Reiki energy had displaced his normal consciousness and replaced it with a 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.

#### Footnotes

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6 Inscription on Usui Memorial, Saihoji Temple, Suginami, Tokyo, Japan.

7 Inscription on Usui Memorial.

8 Mochizuki, *Iyashi No Te*. See note 3.

9 Yamaguchi, *Light on the Origins of Reiki*, 61.

10 Shiomi Takai, "Searching the Roots of Reiki," *The Twilight Zone* (April 1986): 140–143. This article can be viewed on the web at <http://www.pwpm.com/threshold/origins2.html>. (Note that this Japanese magazine is no longer in business.)

11 In an alternate version of this story it is said that Usui Sensei's personal life and business had failed and that he had gone to Kurama yama to meditate to gain clarity on what to do to solve his problems: Shiomi Takai, "Searching the Roots of Reiki," *The Twilight Zone* (April 1986): 140–143.

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When this happened, he was filled with excitement and went running down the mountain. 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 received, he had also received the gift of healing.(12)

Usui Sensei practiced this new ability with his family and developed his healing system through experimentation and by using skills and information based on his previous study of religious practices, philosophy, and spiritual disciplines. 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) or in its simplified form Usui Reiki Ryoho (Usui Reiki Healing Method).

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.(13)

The lowest 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 Mrs. Takata 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 we call master level. The Shinpiden level includes, Shihan-Kaku (assistant teacher) and Shihan (venerable teacher).(14)

Contrary to previous understanding, Usui Sensei had only three symbols, the same three we use in the West in Reiki II. He did not use a master symbol. This fact has been verified by Hiroshi Doi and by research done by Hyakuten Inamoto, Arjava Petter and Tadao Yamaguchi.

In 1923, the great Kanto earthquake devastated Tokyo. More than 140,000 people died and over half of the houses and buildings were shaken down or burned. An overwhelming number of people were left homeless, injured, sick and grieving.(15) Usui Sensei felt great compassion for the people and began treating as many as he could with Reiki. This was a tremendous amount of work, and it was at this time that he began training other Shihan (teachers) so that they could help him more quickly train others to be Reiki practitioners and help the sick and injured.(16) It was also at this time that he developed methods including a more formal Reiju (attunement) process.

Demand for Reiki became so great that he 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,(17) each being given the same understanding of Reiki and approved to teach and give Reiju in the same way he did.(18)

The Japanese government issued him a Kun San To award for doing honorable work to help others.(19) While traveling to Fukuyama to teach, he suffered a stroke and died March 9, 1926.(20) His grave is at Saihoji Temple, in Suginami, Tokyo, although some claim that his ashes are located elsewhere.

There were many hands-on healing schools in Japan at the time Usui Sensei started his school. These other schools were not part of Usui Reiki.(21) There may have been some connection between Reiki and MahiKari and Johrei as these two Japanese religions have a Reiju like (attunement) process and offer people healing through the hands.(22)

After Usui Sensei died, his students erected a memorial stone next to his gravestone. (This is the memorial stone pictured on page 14.) Mr. J. Ushida, a Shihan trained by Usui 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 grave site would be maintained. Mr. Ushida was followed by Mr. Ichi Taketomi, Mr. Yoshiharu Watanabe, Mr. Toyochi Wanami, and Ms. Kimiko Koyama. The current successor to Usui Sensei is Mr. 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.(23) The twenty teachers initiated by Usui Sensei include Toshihiro Eguchi, Jusaburo Guida, Ichi Taketomi, Toyochi Wanami, Yoshiharu Watanabe, Keizo Ogawa, J. Ushida, and Chujiro Hayashi.(24) Contrary to one version of the Reiki story, Chujiro Hayashi was not the successor to Usui Sensei, but rather Mr. J. Ushida as previously mentioned. It is also important to note that the four presidents of the Gakkai that followed Usui Sensei, were Shihan who had been trained directly by Usui Sensei, thus assuring that the Gakkai understanding, practice and teaching methods were the same as that of Usui Sensei.

#### Footnotes

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12 Doi, *Iyashino Gendai Reiki-ho, Modern Reiki Method of Healing*, 48. This story has been passed down within the Usui Reiki Ryoho Gakkai. According to Doi, it is also written in 'Kaiin no tame no Reiki Ryoho no Shiori' (Guide of Reiki Ryoho for the

members), September 1, 1974.

13 Yamaguchi, *Light on the Origins of Reiki*, 63–64..

14 Walter Lubeck, Frank Arjava Petter, William Lee Rand, *The Spirit of Reiki* (Twin Lakes, WI: Lotus Press, 2003), 15.

15 “Earthquakes Tokyo-Yokohama,” *Encyclopedia Britannica* (1997), CD-ROM.

16 Frank Arjava Petter, *Reiki Darma Newsletter* Number 31, January 1, 2011.

17 *Reiki News Magazine* (Spring 2011): 18 for a photo of Usui Sensei and the twenty Shihan.

18 Yamaguchi, *Light on the Origins of Reiki*, 63–64.

19 Takai, *The Twilight Zone*, 140–143.

20 Inscription on Usui Memorial.

21 According to Toshitaka Mochizuki, *Iyashi No Te*, Taireido was started by Tanaka Monihei. Tenohira-Ryouchi-Kenkyuka, which means “The Association for The Study of Palm Treatments,” was started by Toshihiro Eguchi, who learned healing from Usui Sensei before founding his own group. Eguchi also wrote books on healing, which are now hard to find. Jintai-Radium-Gakkai, which means “The Human Body Radium Society,” was founded by Matumoto Chiwake, and Shinnoukyou-Honin was a religious group founded by Nishimura Taikan, whose method was called ShinnouKyouSyokusyu-Shikou Ryoho, meaning “Violet Light Healing Method.”

22 Winston Davis, *Dojo, Magic and Exorcism in Modern Japan* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1980).

23 Frank Arjava Petter, *Reiki Fire*, (Twin Lakes, WI: Lotus Light, 1997), 26. ISBN 0-914955-50-0.

24 This list comes from the research of Frank Arjava Petter.

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## **Chujiro Hayashi**

Before his passing, Usui Sensei had asked Hayashi Sensei 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. Motivated by this request, Hayashi Sensei started a school and clinic called Hayashi Reiki Kenkyukai (Institute). After Usui Sensei’s passing he also left the Gakkai.

At his clinic he kept careful records of all the illnesses and conditions patients who came to see him had. He also kept records of which Reiki hand positions worked best to treat each patient. Based on these records he created the Reiki Ryoho Shinshin (Guidelines for Reiki Healing Method).(25) This healing guide was part of a class manual he gave to his students. Many of his students received their Reiki training in return for working in his clinic.(26)

Hayashi Sensei also changed the way Reiki sessions are given. Rather than have the client seated in a chair and treated by one practitioner as Usui Sensei had done, Hayashi Sensei had the client lie on a treatment table and receive treatment from several practitioners at a time. He also created a new more effective system for giving Reiju (attunements).(27) In addition, he developed a new method of teaching Reiki that he used when he traveled. 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.(28)

Because of his trip to Hawaii in 1937–38 prior to the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, he 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. This caused him to lose face, which meant he and his

family would be disgraced and would be ostracized from Japanese society. The only solution was seppuku (ritual suicide), which he carried out. He died honorably on May 11, 1940.(29)

## **Hawayo Takata**

The following is a summary of Mrs. Hawayo Takata's version of her early years leading up to her contact with Reiki at the Hayashi clinic:

*She 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. She eventually married the bookkeeper of the plantation where she was employed. His name was Saichi Takata and they had two daughters. In October 1930 Saichi died at the age of 34, leaving Mrs. Takata to raise their two children.*

*In order to provide for her family, she had to work very hard with little rest. After five years she developed severe abdominal pain and a lung condition, and she had a nervous breakdown. Soon after this one of her sisters died and it was Mrs. Takata's responsibility to travel to Japan, where her parents had resettled to deliver the news. She also felt she could receive help for her health in Japan.*

*After informing her parents, she entered a hospital and stated that she was diagnosed with a tumor, gallstones, appendicitis and asthma.(30) She was told to prepare for an operation but opted to visit Hayashi Sensei's clinic instead.*

*Mrs. Takata was unfamiliar with Reiki but was impressed that the diagnosis of Reiki practitioners at the clinic closely matched the doctor's at the hospital. She began receiving treatments. Two Reiki practitioners would treat her each day. The heat from their hands was so strong, she said, that she thought they were secretly using some kind of equipment. Seeing the large sleeves of the Japanese kimono worn by one, she thought she had found the secret place of concealment. Grabbing his sleeves one day she startled the practitioner, but, of course, found nothing. When she explained what she was doing, he began to laugh and then told her about Reiki and how it worked.*

*Mrs. Takata got progressively better and in four months was completely healed. She wanted to learn Reiki for herself. In the spring of 1936 she received First Degree Reiki from Dr. Hayashi. She then worked with him for a year and received Second Degree Reiki. Mrs. Takata returned to Hawaii in 1937, followed shortly thereafter by Hayashi Sensei and his daughter who came to help establish Reiki there. In February of 1938 Hayashi Sensei initiated Hawayo Takata as a Reiki Master.*

To summarize Takata Sensei's Reiki background, she traveled from Hawaii to Japan to tell her parents about the death of her sister. Having been diagnosed with several ailments, the main one being asthma, she was guided to Hayashi Sensei's clinic in Tokyo and after receiving four months of Reiki treatments was completely cured.(31) She wanted to learn Reiki in order to continue treating herself and also to take it back to Hawaii to share with others. Hayashi Sensei allowed her to work at his clinic and also began giving her Reiki training. She worked one year at the clinic and eventually received the Shinpiden level (Reiki Master). Hayashi Sensei officially acknowledged this in Hawaii on February 21, 1938, and also stated that she was one of thirteen Reiki Masters trained by him.(32)

## **Footnotes**

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25 A translation of this healing guide can be found on page 63.

26 Frank Arjava Petter interviewing Tsutomu Oishi, a member of Usui Reiki Ryoho Gakkai.

27 Rand, "An Interview with Hiroshi Doi, Part 1." 13.

28 Yamaguchi, *Light on the Origins of Reiki*, 28.

29 Ibid., 69.

30 Vera Graham, "Mrs. Takata Opens Minds to Reiki," *The (San Mateo) Times*, May 17, 1975.

31 Patsy Matsura, "Mrs. Takata and Reiki Power," *Honolulu Advertiser*, Feb. 25, 1974.

32 This information was recorded on Mrs. Takata's Reiki certificate and in Mrs. Takata's handwritten notes dated May 1936. A copy of her Reiki certificate is included in the article [How Hayayo Takata Practiced and Taught Reiki](#).

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Takata Sensei practiced Reiki in Hawaii, establishing several clinics, one of which was located in Hilo on the Big Island. She gave treatments and initiated students up to Reiki II. She became a well-known healer and traveled to the U.S. mainland and other parts of the world teaching and giving treatments. She was a powerful healer who attributed her success to the fact that she did a lot of Reiki on each client. She would often do multiple treatments, each sometimes lasting hours, and she often initiated members of a client's family so they could give Reiki to the client as well.

It was not until after 1970 that Takata Sensei began initiating Reiki Masters. She charged a fee of \$10,000 for Mastership even though the training took only a weekend.(33) This high fee was not part of the Usui system, and she may have charged this fee as her way of creating a feeling of respect for Reiki. She said that one should never do treatments or provide training for free, but should always charge a fee or get something in return. She also said that one must study with just one Reiki teacher and stay with that teacher the rest of one's life.(34) In addition, she did not provide written instruction or allow her students to take notes or to tape record the classes and students were not allowed to make any written copies of the Reiki symbols. She said that Reiki is an oral tradition and that everything had to be memorized.(35) While this is generally true, she didn't always teach the same way and in at least one class she allowed her students to take notes and gave them handouts.(36)

It is not certain why she said Reiki is an oral tradition or why she taught Reiki this way. What we do know from our research in Japan and the research of others is that these rules are not part of the way Usui Sensei or Hayashi Sensei practiced Reiki. In fact, Takata Sensei received a Reiki manual from Hayashi Sensei indicating that the oral tradition was not how Hayashi Sensei taught.(37) In addition, Takata Sensei taught Reiki differently than how she had been taught. She simplified and standardized the hand positions so that every treatment would be the same. She called this the "foundation treatment," containing just eight hand positions.(38) She also eliminated the Japanese Reiki Techniques.

Before Mrs. Takata made her transition on December 11, 1980, she had initiated twenty-two Reiki Masters.(39) These twenty-two Masters began teaching others. However, Mrs. Takata had made each one take a sacred oath to teach Reiki exactly as she had taught. This made it difficult for most of them to change, even though some of her rules made it more difficult to learn, which seemed to go against the nature of Reiki.

This version of the history of Reiki from Usui Sensei to Mrs. Takata relies on verifiable information that has taken a long time to reach the West. In addition to the reasons for this mentioned earlier, there are a number of others. After Hayashi Sensei died and World War II ended, Takata Sensei stated that all the other Reiki Masters in Japan had died during the war and that she was the only Reiki Master in the world.(40) Therefore, most people refrained from researching the history of Reiki, thinking she was the only authority. Many of the Masters she initiated also discouraged people from doing such research, stating that it was not needed, as their knowledge of Reiki was complete. Add to all this the fact that the Gakkai had become a secret society along with the linguistic, cultural, and geographic barriers that separated the United States from Japan, and it is easy to see why most authors simply accepted her story as true without seeking verification. Most did not realize that the organization started by Usui Sensei still existed in Japan and that contact with them, while difficult, was still possible.

## Footnotes

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33 Bethel Phaigh, "Journey into Consciousness," 130. Other Masters initiated by Mrs. Takata have confirmed that she gave Reiki Master training in a weekend.

34 We know that Keizo Ogawa took Reiki Master training from Usui Sensei and Ichi Taketomi, so it is not likely this rule came from Usui Sensei.

35 "Mrs. Takata Speaks," audiotape. This was also explained to me by Bethel Phaigh in 1981 when I took Reiki I from her.

36 William Lee Rand, "Takata's Handouts," *Reiki News Magazine* (Summer 2009): 58. This article contains the handouts and notes taken during one of her classes.

37 A translation of this manual is in [\*Reiki, The Healing Touch\*](#) on page 63.

38 John Harvey Gray and Lourdes Gray with Steven McFadden and Elisabeth Clark, Hand to Hand, *The Longest-Practicing Reiki Master Tells His Story* (Gray, 2002), 93.

39 Before she died, Takata Sensei created a list of the twenty-two Masters she had initiated. They are: George Araki, Dorothy Baba (deceased), Ursula Baylow (deceased), Rick Bockner, Barbara Brown, Fran Brown (deceased), Patricia Ewing, Phyllis Lei Furumoto, Beth Gray (deceased), John Gray (deceased), Iris Ishikura (deceased), Harry Kuboi, Ethel Lombardi, Barbara McCullough, Mary McFadyen, Paul Mitchell, Bethel Phaigh (deceased), Barbara Weber Ray, Shinobu Saito, Kay Yamashita (Mrs. Takata's sister), Virginia Samdahl (deceased), and Wanja Twan.

40 Graham, "Mrs. Takata Opens Minds to Reiki." This is also stated on her Reiki flyers dated July 1975 and June 1976.

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## Reiki Since Mrs. Takata

Reiki energy is very flexible and creative, treating each unique situation with a unique response and working freely with all other forms of healing. The Reiki energy itself provides a wonderful model for the practice of Reiki. This began to be acknowledged gradually after Takata Sensei passed on. In the mid-1980s, Iris Ishikura, one of Takata's Masters, trained two Reiki Masters at a more reasonable fee and made them promise they would also charge a reasonable fee. The Masters trained by Ishikura at this lower fee began training many other Masters in turn. Out of this group, many were open to change and began allowing the wisdom of the Reiki energy to guide them in the way they should practice and teach Reiki. Because of this, restrictive rules began to fall away. Reiki classes became more open and more supportive of the learning process. Workbooks were created, notes and tape recordings were allowed, reasonable fees were charged, and many began studying with more than one teacher. All this generated greater respect for Reiki. It also increased people's understanding of Reiki and improved their healing skills. With lower fees, the practice of Reiki began to grow quickly and spread all over the world. It is estimated that there are at least 1,000,000 Reiki Masters in the world today with well over 4,000,000 practitioners, and the numbers continue to grow!

I learned Reiki I on the Big Island of Hawaii in 1981 from Bethel Phaigh, who had learned from Mrs. Takata. In 1982, I received Reiki II from Bethel. I loved Reiki and started a Reiki practice. Because of the high fee for Reiki Master training and other restrictive rules, I did not think that becoming a Reiki Master was part of my spiritual path. However, Reiki has a way of guiding us in the way we should go, and through a number of coincidences and fortunate circumstances I met Diane McCumber in 1989. She was a Reiki Master of the Ishikura lineage and was charging a very reasonable fee to train Reiki Masters. I took her training and began to teach.

I chose to allow the Reiki energy to guide how I would teach. Rather than adhere strictly to the rules set by Takata Sensei, I wanted to do everything I could to help my students learn Reiki and use it in a way that was right for them. If they wanted to start a Reiki practice or to teach, then I wanted them to be as successful as possible.

To further this purpose, I took everything I had learned about Reiki to that point, organized the information and placed it in a class workbook that included drawings of the Reiki hand positions, which I then gave to my Reiki students. I have continued to expand and update the workbook until it evolved into the workbook you are reading now.

From the beginning, I encouraged students to take notes and to tape record my classes; I openly answered all questions and actively encouraged my students to do well. I taught the value of developing one's intuition and having confidence in one's experience and personal decision-making abilities. Knowing that one can always learn more, I continued to study Reiki from others and eventually took the Master Training from four additional Masters including two from Japan. This added to my understanding of Reiki, as each teacher had gained many unique insights about how Reiki works and how to practice it. I make it a point to acknowledge the value of other teachers and practitioners. In my travels, I continue to exchange Reiki information with them, looking for new information to use and pass on to others.

Because I based my Reiki practice on the process of working in harmony with the qualities and values apparent in Reiki energy and following Reiki's guidance in carrying out my plans, my classes were filled with students right from the beginning.

A newsletter was started in 1990 that continued to grow in size and readership and in 2002 became the [Reiki News Magazine](#).

Wanting to maintain high standards for Reiki, I started a teacher certification program (now called our Center Licensed Teachers program) that required additional training and takes about three years to complete.

In 1995 a website was started ([www.reiki.org](http://www.reiki.org)) that offers over 300 free articles on Reiki and lots of resources for those wanting to practice or teach Reiki. We also have a web store, which offers class workbooks, Reiki tables, and other products helpful to Reiki practitioners and teachers. ([www.reikiwebstore.com](http://www.reikiwebstore.com))

We began the Center for Reiki Research in 2009 ([www.centerforreikiresearch.org](http://www.centerforreikiresearch.org)). Staffed by seven Ph.D qualified researchers, it contains references and summaries of all Reiki research studies published in peer-reviewed journals, a list of 70 hospital Reiki programs, and many useful articles and other features to help those interested in promoting an evidence-based understanding of Reiki. We've also started our own research study on pain in orthopedic patients due to be completed in 2012.

In 2010, we created a professional Reiki Membership Association ([www.reikimembership.com](http://www.reikimembership.com)). The current membership of over 1300 Reiki practitioners and teachers offers Reiki sessions and classes across the U.S. and in some foreign countries.

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