

Reiki

- more concerning the symbols

by

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THE REIKI SYMBOL THAT (SUPPOSEDLY) NEVER WAS...

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Only Three Reiki Symbols?

Some time ago I remember reading an interview in one of the Reiki magazines in which either Phyllis Furumoto, or Paul Mitchell (- her co-holder of the Office of Grandmaster in the Reiki Alliance) stated that there are actually only three Reiki symbols used in Usui Shiki Ryoho (- meaning this in the sense of: *'in terms of giving Reiki treatment'*). [We know Takata-sensei taught the sole use of DKM was for attunement.]

It was only a short while after this (-and some might say it was merely a coincidence?) that Hiroshi Doi decided to reveal yet another new snippet of 'secret Gakkai information', i.e: that there were actually only *three* symbols in the Usui Reiki Ryoho system...

However, unlike the Reiki Alliance leaders, Doi's meaning was not that the DKM was solely reserved for attunement purposes. He was claiming that there were only *three* symbols. Period.

Three symbols - and the DKM was not one of them!

Doi claimed that the Gakkai doesn't use the DKM, not even for attunement purposes - and that Usui-sensei didn't use a 'master symbol' at all.

[Though, as Doi himself states, he has not reached the Shinpiden level in the Gakkai - so he is therefore not privy to the 'Mystery Teachings' of this level. The Gakkai (so Doi tells us) is a very formal organisation - strictly following rules of protocol and secrecy - so just *how* is it that he is supposedly able to say what *does or does not* feature in the attunement and other practices used by those who have reached the higher levels in the organisation ?]

Hiroshi Doi's claims have apparently also been 'validated' by certain other 'cliquish' Reiki Masters, though no one is willing (or able?) to say just how they have validated them! And soon, others started to spread the story, as usual without question...

But then again, just who would they question - Doi, so we are told, is the only one with direct access to the fabled Gakkai.

(Of course, many are currently questioning whether the Gakkai actually *really* exists or whether its 'members' are - to put it politely '*channelled*' by Doi...)

DKM - a piece of Artwork?

Hiroshi Doi would have us believe that, originally, the DKM was simply a piece of calligraphy which Usui-Sensei presented to each of his Shinpiden students. The way Doi tells it, this piece of 'brush art', was intended as a reminder that their ultimate aim in life should be the achievement of enlightenment; but that somehow, over the years, the calligraphy evolved into an actual Reiki symbol...

Interestingly, a simple online search for DKM will eventually lead to the discovery that - hanging in a place of prominence in most modern-day Ninjutsu Dojo's - one will find a scroll bearing a piece of calligraphy which reads: 'Shiken Haramitsu DAI KO MYO'

And the purpose of this scroll?

To remind the martial arts student *that their ultimate aim in life should be the achievement of enlightenment...*

So, having been informed that Usui-Sensei himself practiced a form of martial art, should we view this ninjutsu-related fact as something that 'lends weight' to Hiroshi Doi's story ?

Possibly.

But personally, I am more of the opinion that Doi's story about DKM simply being a piece of calligraphy may well have come into being *purely as a result* of Doi himself having 'googled' (literally or otherwise) the phrase DKM - in an attempt to seek out other snippets of information about its wider usage.

[And no doubt he would have also discovered the link with the *Sekai Kyusei Kyo* and their 'Scroll of Light'... or would he?]

DKM, as Doi teaches it?

So why then - if the DKM was not actually a Reiki symbol and neither the Gakkai, nor Usui-Sensei, ever even used a master symbol of any sort - does Doi himself teach the use of the DKM, *as a master symbol?*

Well apparently, Doi says that having been used and 'believed in' by so many Reiki practitioners over the years, the DKM has developed a life of its own, and has become empowered as a viable symbol in its own right.

(An interesting twist, I feel - that somehow *we*, the collective Reiki Community, rather than *Usui-Sensei* - are responsible for creating and empowering the 'master symbol' which *we* use to attune others to *Usui-sensei's* Reiki Phenomenon!)

If not Usui-Sensei, then who?

And if the DKM was not originally the Reiki 'master symbol' - if there wasn't even the *concept* of a 'master symbol' - how and when did DKM *become* the 'master symbol'? Who is responsible?

[I admit I find it really quite fascinating - the way this whole process works. It's really quite a clever 'mind-game' - you claim an accepted 'fact' (such as DKM being an original Reiki-symbol) to be untrue, but instead of even bothering to work out a clear and rational alternative scenario, you simply offer snippets of information here and there - snippets of information that will logically invite further questions - *and hey presto!* this opens up a 'creative space' into which other inquiring minds are drawn, to engage in further speculation - further 'flights of revisionist fancy' - on your behalf!]

In an attempt to 'fill in the missing links' it has been suggested that Hayashi sensei may have created the concept of a 'master symbol' exclusively for Takata-sensei (as to why he should have done this - or even felt the need to do so - well, 'flights of revisionist fancy'...).

And, as to why Hayashi-sensei - who, from what we can gather, was concerned with developing Reiki as a *therapeutic modality* (rather than a spiritual discipline) - would add to the system's 'powertools' something like the DKM - which has strongly *spiritual* overtones, intimating as it does, of the Radiant Wisdom of Deity?

Well, here is yet further opportunity for 'flights of revisionist fancy'.

It has also been suggested that *Takata-sensei* invented the master symbol herself - which means we would have to assume that Hayashi-sensei must have either given her, shown her, or at least told her about, the DKM calligraphy (supposedly only used as a piece of inspirational artwork) ['flights of...']

[It really is so easy to get drawn into this speculative 'mind-game'!]

In support of this theory that it was Takata's creation, it has been pointed out that one of Hayashi-sensei's other students, Chiyoku Yamaguchi (founder of Jikiden Reiki) didn't use or teach the DKM master symbol - she had not received it from Hayashi-sensei.

Was this because Hayashi-sensei himself did not have it to use or teach? ['flights of...']

(Or maybe Hayashi-sensei was simply experimenting with different ways of teaching what had after all by this time evolved into Hayashi Reiki Ryoho - perhaps *this* was why Chiyoko Yamaguchi didn't receive the DKM as a master symbol from him?)

[Chiyoko Yamaguchi did not *begin* her Reiki training until *after* Takata-sensei had completed *her* Master level training, which *included* the use of the DKM]

But there is also another possible explanation why Chiyoko Yamaguchi didn't receive the DKM from Hayashi-sensei:

Some time back on at least one Reiki forum, questions were raised about whether or not Chiyoko Yamaguchi ever *actually* undertook the Master Level with Hayashi-sensei.

Not long after this, it was revealed that Mrs. Yamaguchi had *actually* completed her training, not with Hayashi-sensei, but with her uncle, Wasaburo Sugano, who it seems was one of Hayashi-sensei's master-level students...

The fact that *Sugano* did not teach the DKM as the master symbol, does not necessarily mean that *Hayashi-sensei* did not.

It has also been commented that (interestingly I thought), it was only *after* her son, Tadao, had attended a 'western' style Reiki seminar that the Yamaguchi's began to talk about Mrs Yamaguchi's training with Hayashi-sensei...

Mrs. Yamaguchi claimed she used have a number of notes (apparently copied from Hayashi-Sensei's own Reiki notes), but that these were later lost in a fire during a time when she was living in Manchuria.

Her certificates seem to have also gone the same way...

But all this is beginning to lead away from the issue of Hiroshi Doi's 'mind-game' claims that originally DKM was not the 'master symbol' - not a Reiki symbol at all...

Just as well, though, because if you were expecting a nice neat conclusion to this piece, there isn't one.

Because, at this point I'd just like to introduce yet another new snippet of 'secret Gakkai information', courtesy of Hiroshi Doi.

According to Doi, the most important and powerful Reiki symbol is...

the HSZSN...

* * * * *

SOME MORE ON THE REIKI SYMBOLS...

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Which came first - symbols or kotodama?

Some versions of the 'new' history of Reiki would have us believe that the four symbols were not part of Usui-sensei's system in the early days - and that the functions within the Reiki system now ascribed to the four symbols, were originally ascribed to four mantra-like utterances derived from the practice known as *kotodama*.

But how plausible is this theory?

Let us consider, for example, the symbols HSZSN and DKM. We must remember that the *distance* and *master* symbols are not 'symbols' in the abstract sense (i.e.'glyphs'), but are rather, are actual phrases written in Japanese calligraphy, and these particular pieces of calligraphy read, respectively, as the words *hon sha ze sho nen* and *dai ko myo*.

Now in the kotodama-derived practice, which it has been claimed *predated* the introduction of the symbols, the 'phonemes' or syllables uttered with the intent of producing the effects more commonly associated with the distance and master 'calligraphy-symbols' are actually modifications of the phrases HSZSN and DKM themselves [*hon sha ze sho nen* has been 'deconstructed'/reduced to '*ho a ze ho ne*', and *dai ko myo* to '*ai ku yo*']

Thus, can we not infer from this that, the HSZSN and DKM 'symbols' *must* have come first (- in order that the phrases could *later* be modified in order to produce the forms used in the *kotodama*-style practice)?

CKR - a Buddhist Symbol?

I have heard several people asserting that the CKR is a Buddhist symbol, however I have never found any evidence to suggest that the CHR symbol has ever been used in Buddhism (yes of course, there are variations on the spiral pattern that is *part* of CKR used in Buddhist symbolism, but not the complete CKR itself)

Symbols only introduced to help people feel the 'energy'

Some other versions of the 'new' history of Reiki, would also have us believe that the four symbols were not part of Usui-sensei's system in the early days (- no mention of kotodama here!)

This time, we are asked to believe that the symbols were supposedly introduced at a later date simply as a medium through which to assist people - primarily the Naval contingent who had joined (and to all intents and purposes, taken over) Usui-sensei's dojo - who were apparently having difficulty feeling the 'energy' .
But how likely is this?

Three of the Reiki symbols are derived from Buddhist symbols.

So just how well would this have gone down with the Imperial Navy - Usui-sensei utilising a set of essentially *Buddhist* symbols to aid the Navy - an instrument of an overtly *Shinto*-centred state - to practice healing?

On *not* keeping the symbols and their mantras/names secret

The four Usui Reiki symbols are indeed considered Sacred by many of us - but sacred is not the same as secret.

And, I feel, it is important to remember that while many westerners tend to think of the Reiki 'symbols' as being four arcane, mystical 'glyphs', two of the four are simply words written in Japanese *kanji* (Chinese Characters)

There are many thousands of kanji characters - some highly obscure & only very rarely used; however every Second Grade student in Japan is expected to be familiar with the three *kanji*: *dai*, *ko* and *myo*.

So if every Second Grader is familiar with the *kanji* for 'DKM' - how can we claim DKM is secret?

And every Fourth Grade student in Japan is expected to be familiar with all the *kanji* used to write HSZSN

In a similar vein, the suggestion that the symbol's Japanese 'names' should not be spoken out loud in public is a bit like suggesting, for example, that English-speakers should not be permitted to speak the everyday words 'great bright light' (DKM). In fact, some years back the phrase 'DKM' (- a big/great bright light) was apparently used as part of an advertising slogan for a Japanese company selling Flashlights!

Further, I feel we also have to remember that the symbols/their names are not exclusively the 'property' of Reiki

For example:

It is generally accepted that the SHK symbol is essentially a poorly rendered version of the Buddhist 'seed symbol' Kiriku (pronounced somewhere between K'rik and K'lik in Japanese)

Now while Kiriku is a *Sacred* symbol (being the 'spiritual emblem' of both Amida Butsu and Senju Kannon Bosatsu) and has *secret significance* to those initiated in the Mikkyo (esoteric) traditions within Buddhism, *the symbol itself* is not secret. In fact it is to be found on public display all over Japan.

The DKM also has central significance within the religious group known as *Shumei* (founded by Mokichi Okada - originator of the healing practice called *Johrei*). As a sacred Shumei symbol, is openly on display in Shumei centres.

DKM is also of great importance in the practice of Johrei itself - particularly in relation to the *ohikari* or 'focussing pendant' used at the third level of this healing practice.

The term Choku rei [though perhaps not the symbol *itself*] is an important concept in the beliefs of both the Byakkō Shinkōkai and the Omoto kyo spiritual groups [though the Omoto kyo primarily use the alternative 'reading' of the Choku rei kanji: Nao Hi]

And as for the HSZSN - a version of it even crops up in historical 'magical charms' used by the Ninja !

The Symbols and the Initiation process

In the initiations as used and taught by Takata-sensei, the symbols were used oh so sparingly compared to the way many people use them today.

For whatever reasons, many people - including several of the '22' - have felt the need to modify Takata-sensei's initiation process.

Many versions of initiation/attunement process now call for *all four* symbols to be used in passing *each* level of Reiki.

However Takata-sensei taught that only *certain* symbols were used at each level. Most importantly, the DKM was only *written* during the level 3 attunement. Only its *mantra* was used in passing the level 1 and 2 initiations.

I personally feel it is down to issues of insecurity on the part of several early post-Takata 'masters' (not trusting in the inherent power of each symbol and the need only to use it as Takata-sensei had taught) that we've ended up with people using all the symbols at all the levels. A case of 'Belt and Braces' gone mad!

The Symbols and different 'energies within Reiki'?

In Takata-sensei's day the symbols had very specific purposes:

There was one symbol to focus, concentrate and intensify the effect of Reiki; another, to facilitate the healing of psychological issues; yet another, to form a temporary meditative connection between Practitioner and Client at a distance; and finally, one *solely* for use in initiating Reiki Masters.

Reiki was understood as a single, unified, integrated energy. There was never any talk - never any *concept* - of the symbols either representing, or connecting the Practitioner or Client to, different '*energies* within Reiki' or - as it is sometimes expressed - different *aspects* or *qualities* of the Reiki energy.

This idea of the symbols being linked to different energies, or different aspects or qualities of the energy, was one of the many new perceptions which developed within western Reiki in the years *after* Takata-sensei's passing.

And gradually, as various forms of western Reiki were imported into Japan, this thoroughly modern, western 'New Age' perception of the symbols also found its way into the newly-evolving Japanese Reiki, and it was not long before we were being asked to believe that not only was this in fact an original Japanese perception, but that this was the primary reason why Usui-sensei had introduced the symbols into Reiki in the first place: to assist certain students in differentiating between the various different *aspects* or *qualities* - the various '*energies* within Reiki' ...!!

'Symbol 1', 'Symbol 2', etc...?

Hiroshi Doi received his initial western-style Reiki training from Mieko Mitsui (though apparently later, he 'remembered' that he had actually received *Japanese* Reiki training - albeit by a different name - from a Japanese practitioner some years prior to meeting Mitsui!)

Due to the nature of the teaching structure in the form of Reiki taught and practiced by Mieko Mitsui (variously known as Authentic Reiki, Real Reiki or The Radiance Technique), she herself was only qualified to teach levels 1 and 2 in the art. In this particular form of Reiki, at level 2 the student was taught the standard three symbols, however, unlike in the more familiar *Usui Shiki Ryoho*, at this level, the symbol's names/mantras were *not* taught (this being something reserved for a higher level in the system). Instead, the symbols which were referred to as '*cosmic patterns*' were simply identified by *numbers*. Quite probably, none of Mitsui's level 2 students (*including* Hiroshi Doi) would have even been aware that the symbols *had* names/mantras.

Is it mere coincidence then, that later, when Hiroshi Doi claimed to have made contact with the 'original' Usui Reiki Society, he also claimed (for a while at least) that in this 'secret' Reiki organisation, the symbols were referred to, not by names, but simply as 'Symbol 1', 'Symbol 2', etc...?

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REIKI SYMBOLS
- Facts, Fiction or 'Japanese Whispers'?

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Probably most people have now heard the often-repeated story of how, supposedly, in the beginning Usui-sensei did not teach the use of symbols to his students - that the symbols were something he added to the system later in it's development, in order - it is suggested - to help students feel and differentiate between certain aspects of the 'energy'.

Of course the story *could* be true. [And this would be a very short article.]

However, it has on occasion been suggested that this story is simply a modern fiction - an attempt at creating a piece of 'supporting testimony' intended to lend weight to the views held by some within the Reiki Community who would wish to eradicate use of the symbols from the discipline entirely.

Usually the thinking is expressed something along the lines of "Well, if the symbols weren't part of the *original* system they can't be *that* important - can't really be all that relevant - can they? So lets just ditch 'em!"

[- and, I feel, comments to this effect are probably often followed by the silent thought: "Afterall, I never could quite get the hang of remembering how to draw them complicated little ****ers!]

Strangely, several of those people in the pro-"ditch the symbols" camp, also claim that Reiki has its origins strongly rooted in Esoteric (*Mikkyo*) Buddhist practice. [It would seem such people are *completely* oblivious as to the essential and empowering role of symbols (to effect both 'this-worldly' and 'other-worldly' healing and transformation) within the Mikkyo traditions...!]

So, the story that the symbols were something Usui-sensei added to the system later in it's development: Truth? Fiction?

There is of course another option - that the story has its basis in some sort of fact, yet due to a mild case of 'Chinese Whispers' (or in this instance '*Japanese Whispers*' !) it has become ever so *slightly* confused on its journey down through the years to us.

What if the original story - the fact behind the whispers - rather than stating that the symbols were something only introduced to the *system* later in *it's* development, simply actually spoke of how the symbols were something only *introduced to the student* at a later stage in *their* development?

We often hear how, in Takata-sensei's day, the symbols were considered something to be kept secret. ^[1]

However, it may be more correct to say that rather than it being just a matter of simply not letting non Level 2 Reiki folk *see* the symbols - it was a case that even the very fact that there *were* symbols *at all* was to be kept secret.

Not only were the symbols not *shown to*, or even *discussed with*, Level 1 students, the very existence of symbols was not even mentioned.

While the symbols were obviously used by Takata-sensei as part of the Reiki initiations (though, of course, not *all* symbols were used in *every* level initiation), it was not until Level 2 that the symbols, their form and usage, were introduced to the *student* as part of their training.

It may well be that the primary reason for wanting to keep the symbols (/their very existence), secret from those doing Level 1 training, was to keep the student's focus 'in the present moment'; rather than fueling their curiosity, imagination, and impatience to move on to 'higher' things - when they had not yet even learnt and integrated the basics of what the system had to offer at the earliest stages of training

Likewise, the Level 2 student, having been introduced to the three symbols at that level, was not informed about the *fourth* symbol.

It was only on being accepted as a level 3 ^[2] student that the existence of this final symbol was revealed.

Jump back now to the 1920's...

From several different sources, there have been several somewhat different accounts as to the level-structure within Usui-sensei's system in the early years.

However, we know from the Question and Answer section of *the Usui Reiki Ryoho Hikkei*, that Usui-sensei divided training into three (main ^[3]) tiers or levels: Shoden, Okuden, and Shinpiden

And while some of the developmental and therapeutic practices taught at each of these levels may not have survived intact - essentially, this training structure was very similar to the "Level 1, Level 2, Master Level" structure most of us in the West are familiar with via Takata-sensei's teachings.

It is said that Usui-sensei's students numbered somewhere in the region of two thousand, with the greater majority of these being Shoden level.

Far fewer would have received training at Okuden; and we are told, less than 20 received Shinpiden level - i.e. became Teachers.

As we have seen, in Takata-sensei's day, even the very *existence* of the symbols was kept secret from Level 1 students; and it is fair to assume that it would have been no different with Usui-sensei's Shoden level students.

In discussing their training and practice amongst themselves, or - should the be tempted to - in sharing information about the system with family, friends or even outsiders, there would be no knowledge of symbols - only mindfulness in applying 'hands that bring healing'.

As far as these Shoden level students would be aware, there were *no* symbols used in this therapeutic art.

Likewise, those students who had reached the next stage in their development - the Okuden level - would only be aware of there being *three* symbols - would not have even *heard* of there being a fourth.

Which leads to the question - the sources who claim that "*originally there were no symbols in Reiki*"

- is it simply that their information comes (however indirectly) from students who never progressed beyond Shoden level training?

And for that matter - the sources who more recently have begun to claim that "*there were only ever three symbols in Reiki, not four*"

- is it simply that *their* information comes (however indirectly) from students who never progressed beyond Okuden level training?

NOTES:

[1]

While the four Usui symbols are considered by many of us to be *Sacred* (or at least, *of sacred significance*), ever since two of the symbols were first revealed in a Reiki book: 'The Challenge To Teach Reiki' by A.J. MacKenzie Clay, (published in 1992), the belief in the need to keep them secret is no longer generally considered relevant.

[2]

Or as Takata-sensei had called it [on the certificates she issued] the 'Advanced' level.

[3]

Though it would seem that these levels may have themselves been divided into a number of subsections at different periods over the short few years during which Usui-sensei taught his system

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THE REIKI SYMBOLS: (IN)FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Is it best to learn Reiki with a Japanese master or at least a Westerner who is a master of Japanese Reiki? I want to learn Reiki like Usui and Hayashi taught it, not with all the add-ons, changes and confusion I'm told exists in western Reiki.

Well, IMO, the only way for you to be absolutely certain you are learning Reiki "like Usui and Hayashi taught it"; would be for you to invent a time machine, travel back in time and study with them directly.

And as for "add-ons, changes and confusion", contrary to what many would have us believe, this is not something unique to styles of Reiki originating in the West.

On closer inspection of 'Japanese' Reiki, we can see that all is not exactly as authentic, add-on free, and brimming with clarity as the hype would have us believe.

To begin with, even today, probably the greater majority of Reiki masters in Japan practice and teach styles of Reiki which originated in the west at a time *after* Takata-sensei's passing, or alternatively, practice and teach styles which are *derived* from (or at very least are *heavily influenced by*) modern, western, Reiki styles.

Many Japanese Reiki Masters teach Karuna Reiki, or Seichim, or other Western styles which are only loosely based on Usui Shiki Ryoho. And even those who do teach Reiki under the name 'Usui Shiki Ryoho', generally tend to teach the *modern-day version* as commonly taught in the west (Something which, with all its talk of chakras, and crystals, and Reiki Guides and 21-day cleansing periods, etc.,etc., Takata-sensei herself might have a hard time recognising as Usui Shiki Ryoho...)

Although, Takata-sensei tells us that she taught Usui Shiki Ryoho classes in Japan in the mid 1970's *, it was not until the mid 1980's that the first classes in a *modified* form of Reiki (devised by one of Takata-sensei's students) were taught in Japan and as a result, Reiki (in this modified form) gradually began to become known on the Japanese 'New Age' scene.

At least a couple of 'home grown' Japanese Reiki styles have evolved out of this particular modern Western Reiki style (though these Western influences are usually played down, with much being made of formative influences apparently having been drawn from obscure Japanese sources...)

And it is fair to say that, just as in the west, in Japan you will also find Reiki practitioners who are not averse to creating new symbols, adding new practices, and otherwise modifying and embellishing things to suit their personal views and beliefs... And of those who claim to teach 'traditional' Japanese Reiki, well it seems there is more than a little confusion and misunderstanding as to what actually constitute the 'traditional' teachings.

Take the Reiki symbols for example:

First we were told that originally there weren't any symbols used in Reiki, that they were something added - almost as an afterthought, it seems - supposedly as a

means of helping people with poor levels of sensitivity to feel the 'energy' - that they were of no real importance (though if this was the case, just how drawing some unimportant 'squiggles' would help improve sensitivity, was never explained...)

Then it was claimed that the four symbols (referred to as '*shirushi*'[1]) were no longer taught as part of 'Japanese' Reiki, yet that they were still shown to students out of historical interest.[2]

Apparently the symbols did not have names; they were simply referred to as Symbol 1, Symbol, Symbol 3, and Symbol 4.

However, later, we were told the symbols did indeed have names. Oh, and there were only *three*, not *four*...

Yet at least one of those Japanese practitioners who claim there were only *three* symbols, actually teach and use *four* symbols themselves...

And then, apparently - whereas in Usui Shiki Ryoho (as originally taught by Takata-sensei) the *names* of the symbols were also *mantras* used in conjunction with the drawn symbols – well it seems in 'Japanese' Reiki the symbol names were *not* mantras; we were asked to believe that the symbols had separate mantras, in *addition* to the names (which er, they apparently didn't have, or...?!)

And while for a time at least, we were told that the phrases we in the west knew as the name/mantras accompanying each symbol were indeed the symbol *mantras* (but not their names), apparently some great mystical occurrence took place outside the range of our awareness, as, suddenly the phrases we in the west knew as the name/mantras accompanying each symbol, which had indeed been the symbol mantras (but not their names), were now no longer – had never been - the symbol mantras (*or* their names...)

According to one Japanese practitioner, the name for what, in Usui Shiki Ryoho, had been referred to as the 'power symbol', was not 'Choku rei', but Zui-un[3]

However, according to another, the name was Kumo[4]

Yet another teaches that the name is/was Un[4]

Some Japanese Practitioners draw the actual 'power symbol' itself very similarly to the way in which Takata-sensei was taught to draw it by Hayashi-sensei; though somewhat disconcertingly, the version used and taught by a couple of prominent Japanese practitioners is suspiciously similar to a modern alternative version of the power symbol, created in the late 1980's by an 'independent' Reiki master of Austrian(?) origin.

Some teach the 'power symbol' at level 2, as Takata-sensei was taught to do by Hayashi-sensei, yet others teach their version of this symbol at level 1.

Some teach the 'power symbol' as a means of intensifying the Reiki-flow; others, merely as a way of increasing byosen sensitivity.

As to the accompanying mantras (which, may - or may not - have originally been referred to as 'jumon'[5] in Japanese):

Well, some claimed that the 'power symbol' - this Zui-un, or Kumo, or Un - didn't actually have an associated jumon.[6]

However, according to others it did.

One claims the jumon was... 'Un'.

Though this 'Un' used as the jumon or mantra apparently *isn't* the same 'Un' as the 'Un' used by others as the *name* of the symbol (depending, that is, on who you ask)... It seems that in a desperate case of 'clutching at straws', certain Japanese Reiki practitioners had been attempting to manufacture a link between the Reiki symbols and symbols used by the Kurama Kokyo sect (based at the temple on mount Kurama since 1949).

The Kurama Kokyo worship a triune deity: Sonten - the three aspects of which are represented by the deities Mao-son, Bishamon-ten, and Senju-Kannon.

Now, in this trinity, Mao-son is seen as representing 'the power of Sonten'. Mao-son's emblem is the Sanscrit character 'hum'. In Japan this is pronounced 'Un'.

And as Mao-son is seen as the 'power', it would seem it was only a short (if uncreative and misguided) jump to the conclusion that the emblem of Mao-son was most likely associated with the Reiki 'power symbol'.

Hence, the jumon associated with the 'power symbol' must have obviously have been 'Un' all along...

Some, went further than this, claiming that not only was the word 'Un' the jumon of the 'power symbol' but that the visual depiction of this Sanscrit character 'Hum'/'Un' was actually the original *form* of the 'power symbol'; and that two further Sanscrit characters - representing Senju-Kannon and Bishamon-ten - were respectively the original forms of the 'mental/emotional' and 'distance' symbols...

Of course, it seems others had created different 'truths'...

Some claim that the 'mental/emotional' symbol (which didn't have a name?) was apparently originally called Muryou-ju,[7] or depending on who you ask: *Mugen* Muryou-ju [7]

Some claim its jumon is Fukuju[8]; though others claim Fukuju is its *name*, not its jumon...

Though yet others have said the jumon is actually a 'modified' version of the more familiar 'Seiheki'.

And some say the 'mental/emotional' symbol does not have a jumon.

While some use the 'mental/emotional' symbol in conjunction with recitation of the Gokai ('Reiki Principles').

Some Japanese Practitioners draw the actual 'mental/emotional' symbol itself very similarly to the way in which Takata-sensei was taught to draw it by Hayashi-sensei; however, others use what can only be described as a partial/incomplete version of the symbol; and yet others still, use a modified form of this latter incomplete version.

As to what is referred to as the 'Distance symbol' in Usui Shiki Ryoho:
Well, most Japanese Practitioners, it seems, draw the actual 'distance symbol' symbol itself very similarly to the way in which Takata-sensei was taught to draw it by Hayashi-sensei, with minor variation in the number of strokes used (some use 21, some 22).

According to some Japanese Practitioners, the jumon is pronounced Hon Ja Ze Sho Nen (the Ja is another 'reading' of the kanji pronounced as Sha in the more familiar form: Hon Sha Ze Sho Nen).

Others do not consider the symbol to actually be a 'symbol' as such - claiming rather that drawing/writing the visual aspect of what we deem the 'distant symbol' constitutes part of reciting a jumon...

Some claim the vocalised element (i.e. the *jumon*-proper) should be pronounced Hon Ja Ze Sei Nen (the Sei is another 'reading' of the kanji pronounced as Sho in the more familiar form: Hon Sha Ze Sho Nen).

As for the 'master symbol':

Some Japanese practitioners would have us believe that the 'master symbol' was not traditionally part of Reiki at all (but rather an add-on, originating several years after Usui-sensei's passing!!)...

However, of those Japanese practitioners who *do* use and teach the 'master' symbol (and this group actually *includes* some of those who claim the 'master' symbol is not a original Reiki symbol !!), most, it seems, draw the symbol in its regular three-*kanji* form.

And, just as happened in the west after Takata-sensei's passing - where many and varied new uses were dreamed up for the 'master symbol' - so too in Japan the symbol is widely used far beyond its sole original purpose[9]

While most also tend to use 'Dai Ko Myo' as the jumon, some apparently vocalise 'Dai Mitsu Mei' instead. [Simply for the sake of being different, perhaps?].

(Mitsu is simply another 'reading' of the kanji pronounced as Ko in the more familiar form: Dai Ko Myo, and Mei is another 'reading' of the kanji pronounced as Myo).

And as is the case with the 'distance symbol', no doubt there will also be some who claim that the 'master symbol' is not a 'symbol' at all - that drawing/writing the visual aspect (i.e. the three kanji) merely constitutes part of reciting a jumon...

Notes

[* See: http://www.aetw.org/reiki_in_japan.htm]

[1] Shirushi - a sign, symbol, 'glyph' or graphic visual representation; also a mark made with a stamp or seal.

[2] Interesting, as at that time many western practitioners were also no longer using the symbols...

[3] Zui-un translates as 'Auspicious Cloud' (– a good omen). It is also the name of a brand of Aloeswood Incense!

[4] Kumo and Un are two alternative 'readings' of, i.e. ways of pronouncing, the same kanji character meaning 'cloud'

[5] Jumon - an incantation; a spell, a charm; a magic word, 'words of power'/ 'words

filled with spirit'.

[6] or at least, they themselves had not been *taught* its jumon

[7] Muryo-ju = 'Infinite Felicitation' or 'Uncountable Blessing' - also the name of a specific manifestation of Amida Butsu.

Mugen = Infinity, Infinite Compassion, Infinite Wisdom, Unconditional Light

[8] Fuku ju means something like "a long and prosperous life" (used as a toast, it is much like saying "Cheers!").[It is also the name of a popular brand of sake]

[9] i.e. as part of the initiation process

What can you tell me about the symbol "tamarasha"? I heard it is a fifth symbol of reiki used for grounding someone?

Tamarasha is part of Reiki as practiced by SOME people, but it was not part of any style of Reiki prior to the mid 1980's.

You will find that people incorporate all manner of symbols, beliefs, practices from totally unrelated healing disciplines, spiritual beliefs and other 'New Age' interests into their personal Reiki practice - unfortunately many folk also present these 'add-ons' as actually being part of the system as devised and taught by Usui-sensei.

Tamarasha is actually the central symbol in a modern system of symbol-healing called Kofutu.

The symbol was 'channeled' by Kofutu's founder, Frank Homan.

According to Frank, Tamarasha is the name of an 'Ascended Master' he works with.

Is it true that Mrs Takata taught different versions of the symbols to different students?

Actually there is very little evidence to support this (to all intents and purposes it is something that falls in the category of 'Reiki Myth')

At the first meeting of the majority of Reiki masters - in Hawaii in April 1982 - it emerged that Takata-Sensei had taught each master somewhat differently (- i.e. she had adapted her *approach* slightly with each student, as any good teacher would)

It also emerged that a couple of the students were 'writing' the symbols ever-so-slightly differently from most of the others [Takata-sensei frequently spoke of 'writing' rather than 'drawing' symbols]

As a result, some folks later claimed that Takata-sensei had shown different students *very* different versions of the symbols.

However, it is generally accepted that the *minor* differences which actually existed were primarily due to mis-rememberings on the part of the *students* (generally, Takata-sensei did not allow students to keep copies of the symbols) .

While later, *endless* different versions of the original symbols began to appear, [due to students *intentionally* modifying symbols and their meanings/significance as taught by Takata-sensei, to suit their *own* purposes], originally, the *primary* differences seemed to be in the way a couple of the students wrote HSZSN (which is of course for many folk the most difficult symbol to master)

It also emerged that there were what *seemed* to be two or three slightly different versions of the DKM.

However, it must be remembered that these two 'symbols' DKM and HSZSN are in fact phrases written in Japanese kanji and just as there are several ways of writing words/phrases in the 'roman' (English) alphabet, eg: Block Capital and lower-case letters of numerous different 'font' styles, and also cursive /handwriting script - with most individuals having their *own* style - so too with Japanese writing.

Essentially there are four main Japanese writing styles, and if anything, the 'different' versions of the DKM are due to nothing more than the phrase being written in a couple of different styles....

Since I received my attunements, my Reiki master has begun to use a new symbol in place of one of the symbols I was attuned with, and has requested that we all use the new symbol when attuning students of our own. Do I need to get re-attuned with the new symbol in order to be able to use it?

Personally, I feel that you have to have experienced a symbol (via attunement) before you can *really* use it effectively - and especially so, if you wish to use it to attune others. It doesn't matter even if the new symbol is only slightly different to the one you were actually attuned with, the differences may be very subtle, but there will be a difference.

I have been taught that each Reiki symbol has its own colour and should be visualised in that colour?

While several people *do* teach that each of the four symbols has its *own* colour, in my research I have not found any suggestion that, originally, the symbols were ever associated *individually* with specific colours.

This supposed colour-association seems to be yet another addition to the never-ending list of Western, New-Age 'add-ons' - elements which have been adopted-in to Reiki since the passing of Takata-sensei. (So much of what is today presented as Usui Shiki Ryoho was in fact never taught by Takata-sensei herself.)

To make matters worse, such adulterated forms of Reiki healing practice have also been imported into Japan, and many of these western add-ons have managed to find their way into various forms of 'Japanese' Reiki, where they are being passed on to students as though they had always been part of native Japanese practice.

In many instances where people currently allot colours to the symbols, it has a connection with the 'non-traditional' meanings/associations these people (or *their* teachers) have overlaid on the symbols - e.g. the erroneous belief that CKR is somehow connected with the Earth/the elemental earth energy, often leads folk to connect it with the colour green; and so on.

In traditional Japanese practice (whether Buddhist, Shinto or Omyodo[Taoist]-influenced), symbols the kind used in Usui Reiki Ryoho would normally *all* be visualised in either gold or pure, colourless, bright light.

In specific cases, such symbols might be visualised in silver, or for 'talismanic' purposes, in red (many protective and healing amulets are written in red ink on yellow paper, and at a certain level, the Usui Reiki symbols can be placed on a par with such protective devices). It would be rare for such symbols to have their own *individual* colours.

Should we use all three second-degree symbols together when doing treatments, or just use certain ones?

Well (IMO) that would depend on two things: 1, which form of Reiki you have been attuned/trained in; & 2, what you happen to be doing at the time.

For example in 'pure' Usui Shiki Ryoho:

if you are giving a distance Reiki treatment, then you use the HSZSN to connect to the person, followed by the CKR (you would also use SHK if doing a 'habit' treatment)

If you are not working at a distance you don't use the HSZSN. Period.

If you are treating an ache, a very minor cut, or other 'simple' physical injury, while you may use the CKR, you probably wouldn't need the SHK

SHK can come into the equation when there is psychological-emotional shock/trauma (however minor) connected with the physical injury etc. (though perhaps there may actually be some level of emotional shock/trauma accompanying 'simple' physical injuries - a paper cut for example!)

If the client has had a fall, been in an accident, etc, etc, then they would almost certainly be suffering from associated emotional shock/trauma (as well as from the physiological shock /trauma), so you could use SHK as well as the CKR.

This would also help prevent the build-up of what is often referred to as 'emotional body-armour' around the area of injury, and will contribute greatly to the self-healing process. SHK can also be used to release-clear pre-existent 'emotional body-armour' associated with old injuries which although technically healed, are still causing the client discomfort or other problems.

Also, if you are treating a purely stress-related problem of any kind where there is no physical injury, etc. you would use SHK.

You would use SHK and CKR together in behavioural modification treatments - be it Takata sensei's version of the technique or the 'Japanese' version: *Seiheki chiryo-ho*

Is it true some Japanese warriors used the Reiki DKM as a sign of protection when entering unfamiliar buildings, and some modern-day Japanese businessmen still do this when going to important business deals?

Yes - and no.

There is indeed a common practice [handed down from the warriors of old] in which one uses 'Dai Ko Myo' as a form of protection, not *just* on entering buildings, but in any situation where you feel you need protection or an advantage (including in tactical military situations or even business negotiations).

However, this use of 'Dai Ko Myo' has *no* direct Reiki connection.

'Dai Ko Myo' in this context (as used as a sign of protection) should not be confused with the *symbol* DKM as used in Reiki Ryoho.

It predates the origination of Usui-sensei's system by several centuries.

As mentioned elsewhere in this site, 'Dai Ko Myo', as *distinct from* its significance as a Reiki 'symbol', has symbolic importance in Japanese Buddhism. It can be seen to represent great 'Enlightened Nature' - Spiritual Radiance - and by extension, is considered by many to be a strong protective force, manifesting as 'great bright light' (or 'great shining light')*

The practice employed by various warriors and others, involved the use of the *phrase* 'dai ko myo' – *not* in the sense of the Reiki *symbol*, but rather in the sense of a broader, more *commonly used meaning* of these words.

This protective practice involves visualising yourself surrounded by an intense protective aura of 'great bright light' ['Dai Ko Myo'] (- or often 'White Light': *Hakko* - so the practice could also be spoken of as visualising the 'dai hakko myo' rather than the 'dai ko myo').

There is of course a similar practice commonly to be found in western spiritual/psychic traditions.

The term Dai Ko Myo has also often been used by the 'warrior priests' known as Yamabushi (or Yamafushi), to refer to yet another, far more esoteric, Buddhist symbol - one of great importance - though again, *not* one with Reiki-significance: Dai Ko Myo or the 'Great Ko Myo' is another name for the 'Komyo Shingon**' - the 'Mantra of Light' (or, Enlightenment Mantra) - which, chanted or visualised, is considered to be a powerful charm of protection as it is believed to encompass the entire power of the Supreme Buddha Dainichi.

Yamabushi (and many others) have used the visualisation of the complex *written form* of this mantra as a form of protection, and illumination.

However, it must be understood that, while the *name* dai ko-myo can be applied to the Mantra of Light - the *written form* of this Mantra is *not* the three kanji familiar to Reiki practitioners as the Reiki DKM.

The Mantra itself *does not* even include the words 'dai ko myo'.

*In general usage, the Japanese words 'dai', 'ko', and 'myo' simply mean a great or intensely bright light - *any* bright light. (The phrase Dai Ko Myo has often appeared on advertizing for Flashlights!)

**Shingon in this context does not refer to the Shingon sect of Buddhism, but simply means 'true word'(i.e mantra)

Sometimes the Ko-myo Shingon is also referred to by the name Dai Ko-myo Shingon (Great Mantra of 'Light')

In Diane Stein's book Essential Reiki she teaches something called the non-traditional dai ko mio symbol. Where does this come from?

This 'non-traditional' symbol is actually a version of a symbol known as Dumo, which has been modified to look more like the 'mystic spiral' found in western 'neo-pagan' traditions.

The symbol Dumo (aka: the Tibetan Master Symbol) comes from Raku Kei - a Reiki style created by Arthur Robertson who claimed (though there has never been any proof) that Reiki originated in Tibet.

Why should we have to learn to say the symbol names or mantras in Japanese? Why not just use the English translation? Same question about the actual distant and master symbols - aren't they just the names drawn in Japanese writing? So why not just write the English words instead. It would be much easier.

Well, for a start, learning how to pronounce the Japanese phrases, and draw the stylised *kanji* that make up these two symbols, is a basic sign of *commitment* on the student's part - it shows a willingness to *make an effort* to learn...

It is also a useful exercise in Mindfulness: focussing the attention

Then there is a matter of showing respect, and gratitude:

- taking the time to learn (and it really doesn't take that long) the correct form of the symbols and the pronunciation of their names/*jumon* is one of the many ways in which we honour the Gift that is Reiki.

And while we certainly know the English translation of the *kanji* used as symbols 3 and 4 - perhaps it says something about the inherent *spiritual* importance of symbols *per se*, that, on bringing Reiki to an *English*-speaking society, Takata-sensei translated *everything* concerning Reiki into English - except for the word 'Reiki' itself, and the Symbols: their *forms* and *names*.

I was taught [Ishikuro/Robertson lineage] that if you use the master symbol on a client during treatment this 'implies you accept full responsibility for their healing'?" Why is this?

If I recall correctly, the original thinking was that the Master symbol was considered purely as an initiatorial symbol, so in attempting to use it on a 'client' in a healing context, you would in fact be 'passing attunement' to them.

From the Tibetan teachings brought in by Arthur Robertson who (- with input from Iris Ishikuro) created Raku Kei Reiki, came the understanding of the Teacher's karmic responsibility for their student (which, in using the DKM on them, the 'client' had now - albeit unintentionally - become).

In just about every initiatorial tradition I am aware of, it is a very serious matter for a teacher to take on a student. A student is said to be (for want of a better term) 'tied' to the teacher/master - through a karmic bond.

Whether in Tibetan Vajra tradition, or in the Mikkyo traditions of Shingon and Tendai, the teacher/master (Mikkyo: *Ajari*) is *karmically responsible* for the student *until* the student becomes a 'master' in their own right and takes on the responsibility for the 'karma' in relation to the teachings they are being empowered with/into.

Being karmically responsible for the student ('client') would also include responsibility for their healing.

Do the symbols have to be imprinted in the chakras for the practitioner to be able to use them to intensify the healing produced by the Reiki energy?

The whole concept of chakras is really alien to Japanese healing practices (one -or more - of Takata sensei's students, it seems, introduced the chakra system into Reiki probably in the late 70's as a frame of reference for New-Age oriented westerners).

"...use them to intensify the healing produced by the Reiki energy?"

Perhaps we in the west think too much about Reiki in terms of 'energy' (something that we have re-imported back into Japan)

Reiki is - to my mind - more 'Spiritual Phenomenon' than 'Energy'.

Rather than seeing it that healing is 'intensified' by the symbols - it might be better to say that the symbols bring focus (-mindfulness) to the whole 'Process of Sharing' that is the Reiki Experience.

To infer that symbols are 'used to intensify the healing produced', seems to me to suggest that healing is something that the practitioner 'does' to the client.

When a Reiki Practitioner and a Client enter into the Sharing Process that is the Reiki Experience, the Practitioner is simply the Facilitator for the Experience, Reiki is the Catalyst, the Client themselves is the Healer....

I was shown an attunement where the Reiki Master drew symbols on the student's middle fingers. Is this a standard practice?

It is currently believed by many researchers that Reiki was strongly influenced by elements of Mikkyo (esoteric) Japanese Buddhist practice.

Mikkyo speaks of a Buddhist elemental system known as 'godai': the 'Five Elements' (-not to be confused with the Chinese Five Elements system).

Everything in the universe is perceived to be a manifestation of five great elemental 'building blocks' - referred to as: Earth, Water, Fire, Wind/Air, and Void/Sky/Ether.

Earth gives substance; Water holds things together; Fire heats or transforms; Wind/Air is responsible for movement; & Void/Sky/Ether connects with the creative source.

In the godai system, the middle finger is seen to be directly connected with 'ka' - elemental Fire - and in particular, with heat in the body

Picking up on this point, *some* Reiki practitioners believe that attuning the middle finger directly will help increase 'ka' - the fire element, and with, it increase the 'hot hands' sensation which is considered the sure sign that you have actually 'got' the attunement.

However godai is all about a *balanced* interplay of all 5 elements - too much Fire can increase the passions - but also increases aggression and anger...

(so ideally, if people are working with finger-tip attunements, they should attune all the fingers [and thumb] to maintain the dynamic balance)

I am looking to make Buddhist connection to Reiki. In your opinion do the Reiki symbols link to these Buddhas: CKR for Dei Seichi Bosatsu, SHK for Monju Bosatsu, HSZSN for Ashuku Nyorai, DKM for Amida Nyorai ?

Why do you feel the need to link the Reiki symbols to individual Buddhist Deities?

CHR is *not* a Buddhist Symbol - it is possibly of Shinto origin. On one level, it may be seen an invocation of the Blessings of the Kami [- *choku rei* = 'Spirit Direct from God']

SHK is the *only* Reiki Symbol with any *direct* connection to an *emblem* of a particular Buddha. SHK is based on the *shuji* symbol "kiriku".

Kiriku is used in Japanese Buddhism to symbolise Amida Butsu - Buddha of Compassion. (and also to symbolise the bodhisattva, Senju Kanzeon).

To draw the kiriku is - for followers of either of these two Deities - to invoke their power/Blessing.

But, this does *not* mean that, *in Reiki symbolism*, SHK necessarily has any *direct* connection with *either* Amida or Senju Kanzeon.

HSZSN is not a 'symbol' per se - it is actually a *mantra* reminding us of the need for Mindfulness in ones undertakings - not a symbol of a *specific* Buddhist Deity (though 'Mindfulness' is the 7th step in the Noble 8-Fold Path of Buddhism.)

And as for DKM, in a Buddhist sense, it signifies the great Komyo –'Enlightened Nature' or 'the Radiant Light of Wisdom' - the Radiance of a Deity - not of one *specific* Deity, but *any* expression of deity - be it in the form of a Buddha, Bodhisattva, 'Vidyaraja', etc. (-even a Shinto *kami* for that matter)

My Reiki master taught me that the CKR power symbol should be drawn clockwise to focus the energy, but now I have been told by another teacher that this is a mirror image of the original CKR symbol - and also that one version is for putting energy in and the other for drawing energy out?

Over the years since Takata-sensei's passing there have been many new meanings and associations added to the four Usui Reiki symbols (and also, it seems, elements of the original meanings have often been removed or obscured - albeit unwittingly). In addition to this, several people have made changes to the actual *forms* of the symbols themselves [presumably in an attempt to make them 'fit' with their own personal views & perceptions]

It was not till the 1980's (after the death of Takata-sensei) that mirror-image versions of the *choku rei* started appearing.

Up to this time there was only *one* choku rei - and it was always drawn (from the top): from *left* to right, then the vertical line down, and then an ANTIclockwise spiral inwards to the centre.

There was no concept of drawing *choku rei* one way to 'put in' energy and drawing a reversed or mirror-image version to 'draw out energy' (for the simple reason that this was not what the symbol was about)

The first proto-version of the 'reversed' *choku rei* actually seems to have originated (albeit unintentionally) with one of Takata-sensei's master-level students: Iris Ishikuro.

Iris was a follower of *Johrei* Healing (- an outgrowth of the *Shumei* religion) and introduced a new symbol into her Reiki practice. Named 'White Light', this symbol was a stylised version of a piece of calligraphy sacred to *Johrei* and the *Shumei*.

The proto-version of the reversed *choku rei* is actually part of Iris's 'new' Reiki symbol

It is in the lineages coming down via Iris that the reversed *choku rei* in its 'proper' form seems to have originated, first truly becoming popularised by Kathleen Milner as part of her Tera Mai system.

* * * * *

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