

# Reiki

## - the 'Alternative' CKR's

by

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## Reiki – the ‘Alternative’ CKR’s

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Over the years since Takata-sensei's passing (in 1980) numerous variations of the four Usui Reiki symbols have come into being in the West.

The reason for this is primarily due to varying levels of calligraphic/artistic skill on the part of different students attempting to reproduce the symbols they have been shown.

And particularly in the case of the DKM and HSZSN - these two 'symbols' actually being phrases written in Japanese characters - the numerous variations of these symbols we find in books, manuals, handouts, and on the internet, are pretty much all due to poor attempts at writing the original kanji characters. In the main, these 'alternative' versions of the symbols have come into being as a result of people who were not familiar with the rules of Japanese calligraphy, attempting to replicate the symbol-forms shown to them by their teachers, who in turn had often made imprecise copies of the symbols as presented by their teachers, and so on...

Though, it must be said, some individuals have made a *conscious* decision - for whatever reasons - to modify various elements of the symbols [presumably in an attempt to make them 'fit' with their own views, perceptions, and personal interpretations of the symbol's significance - interpretations which often have little if any connection with the original significance]

\* \* \* \* \*

Of the four symbols, the CKR [*choku rei*] - formed of one single continuous line - is technically the simplest to write <sup>[1]</sup>, yet it is this one that has suffered the most from *intentional* modification.

In 1936, Hawayo Takata learnt the CKR as part of her level 2 Reiki training.

In February 1938 she was certified as a Reiki Master, and over the next 42 years passed on the CKR to a great many students as part of *their* level 2.

From discussion with several of those people Takata-sensei's certified as Reiki Masters in the 1970's, and also a number of other people who received level 2 training from her, we know the CKR looked like the image shown here:

And just in case further supporting evidence is needed, we have it.

Normally Takata-sensei did not allow students to keep copies of the symbols (Partly in an attempt to ensure that the students actually made a concerted effort to learn to draw the symbols from memory) <sup>[2]</sup>

However, Virginia Samdahl, (the first of the '22' to be certified as a Reiki Master) did keep copies of all three of



the level 2 Reiki symbols actually drawn in class by Takata-sensei herself.  
[See [www.aetw.org/reiki\\_takata\\_symbols.html](http://www.aetw.org/reiki_takata_symbols.html)]

\* \* \* \* \*

Yet within a few years of Takata-sensei's passing, we began to see the first of many 'alternative' CKR's appearing.

Perhaps the most familiar of which is the reversed or 'mirror- image' CKR:

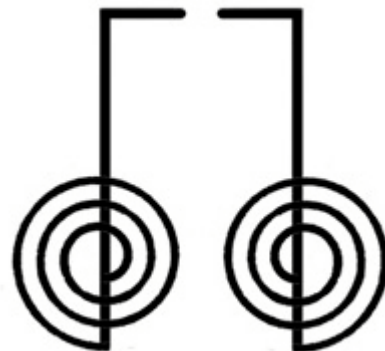
As would also happen with other symbols, several students who had no concept of the original meaning/significance of the CKR  
- and had, it seems, no inclination to bother attempting to research such things, began overlaying their own personal symbolism on the CKR  
- symbolism often drawn from disparate spiritual or esoteric traditions: European, Indian, Native American, etc, etc



Some folk seem to have decided that the CKR was a mystic spiral  
Some saw it as a 'goddess spiral'  
- or a depiction of a maze or labyrinth  
Others decided that it depicted a coiled serpent with its head raised - representing the kundalini  
Others still wanted it to be a stylised Hindu svastika  
And so on.

Some where down the line, one of these people with no real understanding of its place within the Reiki system decided that the original CKR symbol was 'unbalanced'.

And in an attempt to 'correct' this imagined imbalance, added the 'mirror image' version.  
It was not long before some began teaching that this was the newly-rediscovered other half of the 'true' CKR



- and further, that both 'halves' had to be used in tandem.

The version shown here comes from Tera Mai Reiki as taught by Kathleen Milner.

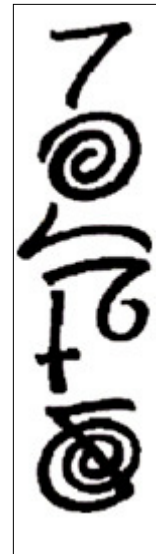
However, the first proto-version of the 'mirror image' CKR actually seems to have originated (albeit unintentionally) with one of Takata-sensei's master-level students:



Iris Ishikuro

Iris, a practitioner of Johrei Healing (- an outgrowth of the Shumei religion), had introduced a new symbol into her Reiki practice.

Named 'White Light', this new symbol was a stylised version of a five-character piece of calligraphy sacred to Johrei and the Shumei <sup>[3]</sup>



The proto-version of the reversed CKR is simply the final character of Iris's 'new' Reiki symbol

\* \* \* \* \*

While, Kathleen Milner and others had begun teaching the use of 'obverse' and 'reverse' CKR's *in tandem*, some folk, possibly unaware of this particular invention, yet still having become aware of the existence of a 'mirror-image' CKR, began using the 'obverse' and 'reverse' symbols *independently* - claiming that one version was to be used to "put energy in" and the other, to 'draw energy out' (though, it seems there was never an absolute consensus as to *which* version of the symbol was to be used for which purpose...)

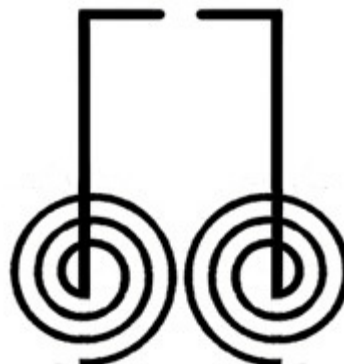
From yet other folk, there were mutterings about how, both 'obverse' and 'reverse' versions were identical in effect, though which particular version of the symbol you should use depended on where you were in the world: if you were in the Northern Hemisphere, supposedly you should use one version, if in the Southern Hemisphere, the other version (apparently it has something to do with the story about water going down the plughole in a different direction in either hemisphere...)

Then somewhere even *further* down the lineage-line someone, on hearing that originally there was only one CKR, decided to revert to traditional practice - decided

to go back to having only the original *single* CKR - but not knowing which was the *original* and which the *mirror-image*, discarded the wrong one...

As well as having promoted the use of the 'CKR tandem' as depicted above, the Tera Mai system also had a variation on this theme:

this time with each CKR having an *outward* turning spiral:



\* \* \* \* \*

And beyond the simple 'mirror image' CKR's, several other folk have made other modifications to the original symbol.

As depicted above, the original CKR as taught by Takata-sensei *had three and a quarter* turns to the spiral section.

Many folks were aware that Takata-sensei had said of CKR:

*"Choku Rei is very easy ... nothing to think about, even if you make three circles or five circles\*, it doesn't matter\*\*"*

[ \* i.e. three or five turns in the spiral. \*\*i.e. it will still have the desired effect]

And so, there were those who began to experiment with adding more turns to the spiral.

Some seemed to believe that the more turns you added, the more 'powerful' the effect, or some such notion

-and it actually got to the point where people were attempting to use CKR's with as many as 40 turns in the spiral...



\* \* \* \* \*

Other folk chose the 'less is more' route,  
and *reduced* the number of turns:

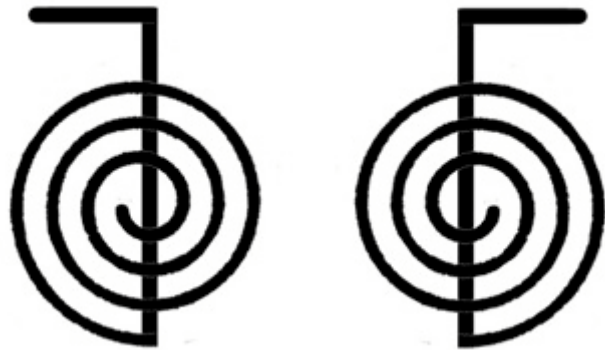


[In this category we can probably include both versions of the 'CKR tandem' used  
in Tera Mai (above), as they each have only *three* turns to the spiral]

\* \* \* \* \*

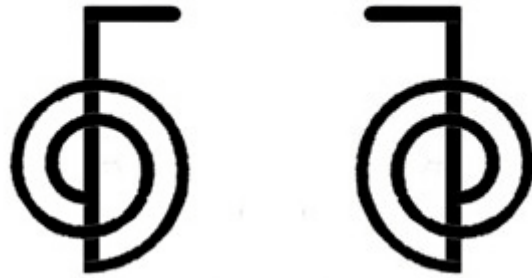
Other modifications to the CKR included simply altering the direction of the horizontal  
line at the top of the symbol:

- on both *obverse* and  
*mirror image* versions:

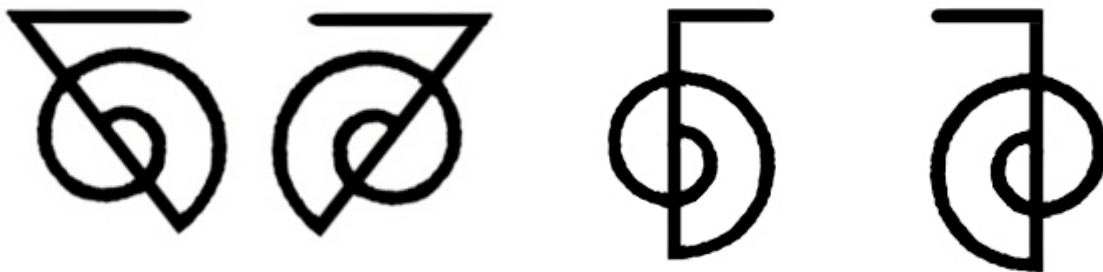


\* \* \* \* \*

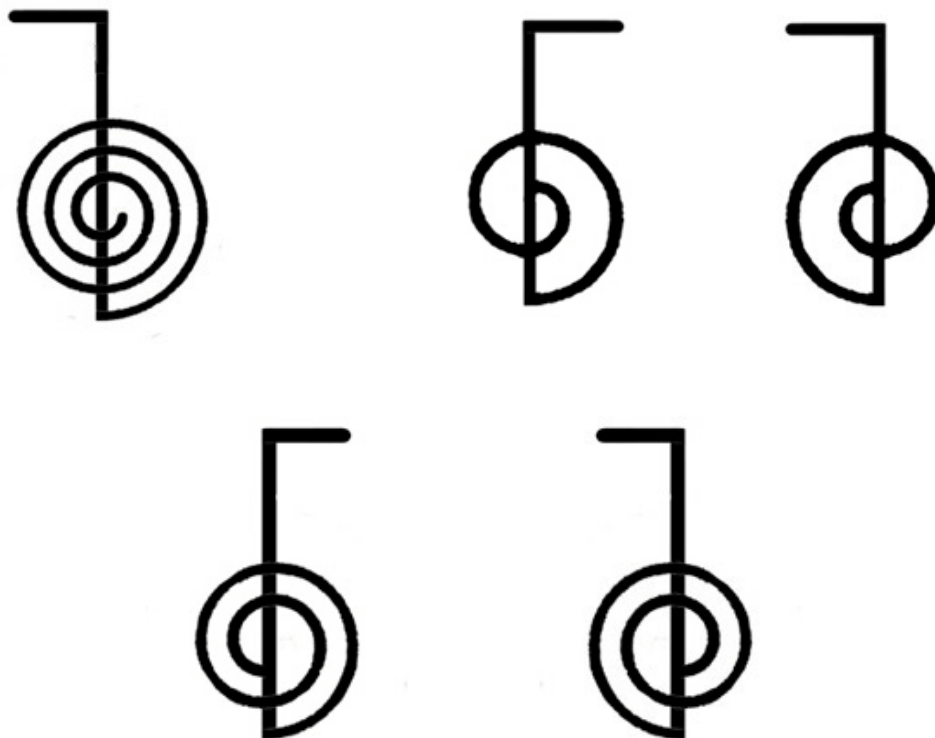
Then there were versions with both the *altered direction* of the horizontal line *and* reduced numbers of turns to the spiral element:



- again, on both obverse and mirror image versions:



Other folk preferred their CKR's with long 'necks':



\* \* \* \* \*

While the majority of these 'alternative' CKR's originated with Reiki practitioners in the US, a few had their origins in the UK, and a couple, I believe, in Germany.

By the mid/late 1990's, several of these modern 'alternative' CKR's were not only being taught and used by Reiki practitioners in West, but had also actually been imported into Japan

- either as a result of Japanese nationals, returning home having learnt Reiki while visiting or living in Europe or the US, or alternatively, as a result of a growing number of Reiki Teachers from the West teaching courses while visiting Japan.

Even today, some of these modern, Western, alternative CKR's are still being taught by a few Reiki Teachers in Japan.

Ironically, many of the students attending these Reiki courses are Westerners, who have specifically chosen to train with Japanese teachers, in order to learn authentic Japanese-style Reiki, with authentic *Japanese* Reiki Symbols....

\* \* \* \* \*

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NOTES:

[1] Takata-sensei spoke of 'writing' the symbols rather than of 'drawing' them.)

[2] It would seem that, (as is the case today), back when Takata-sensei was teaching there were a great many people who, if given the chance, rather than making the effort to learn and integrate the symbols into their consciousness, would prefer to rely on 'prompt sheets' to help them draw the symbols - even when actually treating clients. [Sometimes, I cannot help but think that many who say they no longer use the symbols - claim they have transcended the *need* for symbols - are simply attempting to mask the fact that they never actually bothered to learn them in the first place...]

[3] Interestingly, in the original calligraphy - which can be translated as: "Great Shining Light of the True Kami (/God)" - the first three kanji are the familiar "Dai Ko Myo of the Reiki master symbol

\* \* \* \* \*



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