

Reframing the Early History of Reiki: The Converging Paths of Mikao Usui and Tokio Yokoi

Author: Dr. Jojan L. Jonker.

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1. Abstract

This article reframes the early history of Reiki in light of new biographical data concerning Mikao Usui and Rev. John Tokio Yokoi, placing particular emphasis on their shared Christian backgrounds and exposure to the *Holiness Movement*, and similarities in their life events making historically plausible that they knew each other either by name or personal. I draw on a *curriculum vitae* of Usui, rediscovered in 2025, new biographical studies, and contextual research into Protestant mission activity and spiritual reform in Meiji and Taishō Japan. The study proposes that the origins of Reiki were shaped by a confluence of Western Christian mysticism and Japanese religious syncretism. A central hypothesis is explored: that Tokio Yokoi might be the original spiritual founder of Reiki, and that Mikao Usui later may have become its public proponent under sociopolitical pressures that may have led to the marginalization of figures such as Tokio Yokoi. This exploration has incorporated an analysis of the most recently discovered sources.

I continue with a general introduction of Reiki and briefly line out the account on studies concerning Reiki's history. Next, I define methodological principles for my way of working, and finally, I compare details of Reiki's founder to be found in the contemporary four authoritative sources to be introduced hereafter, holding information and analyzing whether they fit (better) in the biography of the historical Mikao Usui or of Tokio Yokoi.

2. Introduction

A GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO REIKI

Usui Reiki Ryōhō 靈氣療法, commonly known as Reiki, is a spiritual healing practice that emerged in 1922, allegedly established by Mikao Usui 臼井甕男 (1865–1926). Renowned for its non-invasive approach to healing through the gentle laying on of hands, Reiki swiftly gained recognition. Within the span of just four years, from 1922 to 1926, Usui imparted his knowledge to a few, select individuals who became Reikimasters, among whom was Chujiro Hayashi 林忠次郎 (1880–1940). Hayashi, in turn, trained a Japanese woman named Hawayo Takata (1900–1980), a resident of Hawaii and daughter of Japanese immigrants, in the late 1930s. Takata dedicated herself to disseminating Reiki teachings until her passing in 1980. By the time of her passing, she had instructed thousands of students and publicly acknowledged at least 22 Reikimasters, thereby facilitating the global proliferation of Reiki. In the West, Reiki is recognized as a CAM modality best known for its practice of laying on of hands and explained as active manipulation of one's biofield.

I assume that Hayashi knew Mikao Usui personally and that a decade later, Hayashi transmitted information about Usui's life and work to Takata that may have included conflated or already mythologized elements.

When Takata gave Reiki classes or lectures on Reiki, she mentioned some specific details regarding the life and work of Usui which, according to her, she had heard firsthand from Hayashi. Examples include that Usui travelled to the US for study, that he studied in Chicago, that he was an ordained Protestant minister, that he was Principal and teacher at Dōshisha University, that he was challenged by his students about his faith during one of his classes at Dōshisha, that he therefore resigned from Dōshisha, stayed a few years in a Zen monastery, and meditated on Mt. Kurama for 21 days until a moment of revelation, and so on. Takata died in 1980, and her trained Reikimasters have spread her teachings around the world including Takata's story on Usui as alleged founding of Reiki.

Suggested literature

- Jojan L. Jonker, 2016. "Reiki: The Transmigration of a Japanese Spiritual Healing Practice". Nijmegen, Radboud University.

A CHRONOLOGY OF STUDIES ON REIKI'S HISTORY

Until the death of Takata in 1980, not much, if any, research is done on Reiki's history due to the authority given to Takata. A groundbreaking first step is then made in 1991, when the American Reikimaster William Lee Rand asked Dōshisha if they knew the name Mikao Usui. I read in their letter to Rand that Mikao Usui did not exist in their archives. However, the question was not turned around, if there was a story about an ordained minister, head of Dōshisha, problems with his students, resignation, study in the US, etc. They would immediately have said, "Yes, Tokio Yokoi!"

Next, the Memorial Stone in Tokyo was discovered in the 1990s. Because it did not mention that Usui worked at Dōshisha, the text seemed to confirm the answer of Dōshisha affirming the incorrectness of Takata's narrative.

In 2017, Justin B. Stein completed a doctoral study about Hawayo Takata's life and work. Seemingly, he did not verify the Takata story with Dōshisha University for accuracy. As a result, Stein labeled Takata's story as, simplified in my own words, a 'fabrication'. Takata was dismissed by many as a fantasist or even a liar, for example on Wikipedia. See here the birth of an academic-stamped bias ("the story is not true") that unfortunately has been adopted by many, including us at one time.

The year 2023 became a turning point for a potential restoring of Takata's integrity. In 2023, the Australian Reikimaster Elizabeth Latham made public that she recognized Rev. John Tokio Yokoi as the person Takata speaks about in her narrative. Indeed, Yokoi has been ordained Protestant minister, was President of Dōshisha, resigned for several reasons, had studied in the West, et cetera. It was quite a challenge to integrate this fact into what was already known and assumed about Usui. In her 2023 publication *The Samurai Reiki Master*, Latham concludes that Yokoi is the founder of Reiki and spread Reiki under the pseudonym Usui. She doubted whether the person Mikao Usui ever was related to Reiki.

In 2024, the book *Tokio Yokoi. From Japanese Christianity to Universal Reiki* was published, in which I focus on the question of whether Yokoi could have acquired the necessary knowledge to develop Reiki practice. He answered confirmatively. Furthermore, he elaborates on the hypothesis that Yokoi spread Reiki under a pseudonym, but also he indicates other options like that Yokoi was the seeker and Usui the man who spread Reiki, a hypothesis further developed in this article. In other words, this hypothesis holds that two men participated in the early history of Reiki and that the history of Reiki has known two phases: before and after 1922.

Then, in 2025, Olaf Böhm's publication *Reiki - A Journey to Oneness with the Universe: Early Documents and Practices of Usui Mikao Sensei's Reiki Therapy* comes out. This concerns material later than 1922. In this book he discusses a book written by Okuna Shigejirō 奥名滋次郎 in 1928, called "*The Voice of Heaven's Flute*" *Tenrai no koe* 天籟の聲. This book offers some details about the life of Reiki's founder, allegedly Mikao Usui of which some date prior to 1922.

Finally, also in 2025, a *curriculum vitae* dated 1904 is discovered in Taiwan, believed to be handwritten by Usui for a job application in Taiwan. This CV among others records two positions held by Usui in Christian educational institutions founded by American missionaries. For the purpose of this reflection, I proceed under the provisional assumption that information on this CV is authentic and correct. In conclusion, at this moment of writing, there are four authoritative sources of information; the 1970s Takata story, the 1904 *curriculum vitae*, the 1927 Memorial Stone, and the 1928 book by Okuna.

This brief review clearly shows that, for decades, studies on the history of Reiki have focused on the person Usui, due to the alleged inaccuracy of Takata's story. Unsurprisingly, in 2023 there was strong resistance to introducing another person who may have been involved in the early history of Reiki.

I conclude that truly verified evidence concerning the history and development of Reiki is scarce. Furthermore, the presumption that this newly surfaced information from 2025 excludes any relevance to Yokoi is problematic; excluding such possibilities risks introducing a self-imposed bias that limits critical engagement and scholarly deliberation.

Suggested literature

- Walter Lubeck, Frank Arjava Petter, William Lee Rand, 2001. “The Spirit of Reiki: From Tradition to the Present Fundamental Lines of Transmission, Original Writings, Mastery, Symbols Treatments, Reiki as a Spiritual Path and Much More”, p303.
- Justin B. Stein, 2017. “Hawayo Takata and the Circular Development of Reiki in the Twentieth Century of North Pacific”, pp236-237.

METHODOLOGICAL PRINCIPLES AS POINT OF DEPARTURE

I find it necessary to examine the situation discussed above with methodological care. Given my background as scholar in Religious Studies (and after having consulted Dori-Michelle Beeler PhD in Anthropology), I affirm that certain fundamental principles guide my approach to historical inquiry into religious and spiritual traditions. Four principles are particularly relevant here. First, it is a well-established understanding that the histories of religions and spiritual practices are often constructed from a multitude of narratives, with verifiable facts constituting a minority. Wouter Haanegraaff qq Second, documents produced by practitioners or adherents—whether written or inscribed—should not be assumed to offer objective or complete accounts; rather, they often project an idealized self-representation intended for posterity. I consider the Takata story, the Memorial Stone and Okuna’s account as such. Third, as explained, the chronology of research on Reiki history itself goes back to 1991 (Rand). For decades, statements have been made and presented as facts that should have been retracted later but were never. As a result, there is a diversity of opinions in the academic discourse as well as in the discourse of practitioners, which often contradict or even exclude each other. None of this is without emotion. Sometimes "sacred cows" of both practitioners and researchers are kicked against, unleashing undesirable counterforces that threaten objective and neutral research, and in some cases it is made personal. Examples of such sacred cows that led to polarized discussion are the way of writing the *kanji* for Reiki, the translation of the five Reiki precepts into English, the interpretation of Reiki symbols, and now the question regarding the true Source of Reiki.

These methodological principles encourage a flexible and critical approach to emerging information, allowing for multiple lines of inquiry and the possibility of revising previously held assumptions. When the distinction between narrative and fact is disregarded, scholarly discussions risk becoming confused and doctrinal rather than analytic. In the specific case of Reiki's historiography, there is an unfortunate tendency among some critics to seek definitive accounts based solely on perceived facts. I believe that striving for an optimum between stories and facts will lead to the best achievable result when it comes to reconstructing the historiography of Reiki. By definition, it will never be a reconstruction based on 100 percent facts.

I elaborate a little further on the theme “facts”. The tendency to prefer “facts” is evident in reception of the new information about Usui. Since 1991 (Rand) and even more since 2016 (Stein), it was widely regarded as "fact" that the narrative presented by Hawayo Takata was largely fabricated. Following the discovery by Elizabeth Latham that aspects of Takata's story correspond with elements of Tokio Yokoi’s biography, a new "fact" emerged: that Takata had somehow incorporated aspects of Yokoi’s life into her account. Now, with the appearance of Usui’s *curriculum vitae*, yet another new “fact” is being asserted—that Takata’s references to Usui’s Christian background pertain directly to Usui himself. This sequence of shifting "facts" persistently blocking any role for Yokoi underscores the limitations of an inflexible factualism, which risks prematurely excluding figures such as

Tokio Yokoi from the historical narrative of Reiki. There appears to be an underlying imperative among some scholars and practitioners to invalidate Takata's contributions entirely, lest the emerging "facts" be called into question.

If I aim to avoid introducing new biases into my scholarship, the discovery of Usui's 1904 *curriculum vitae* and the 1928 publication by Okuna invites a broader reconsideration. It suggests that Usui and Yokoi may indeed have operated within overlapping social and religious spheres. Multiple plausible lines of investigation open from this possibility.

My position is that the historical reconstruction of Reiki's origins must proceed cautiously and with the recognition that it will always reflect a blend of narratives and verifiable data. Rather than seeking definitive accounts based on newly surfaced documents alone, scholars must remain open to the evolving and multifaceted nature of the historical record.

Based on this position, I share information about the lives and work of Mikao Usui and Tokio Yokoi, indicating that both must have influenced the development of Reiki. This part outlines a concise historical account of Reiki's early development, focusing on the roles of Mikao Usui and Tokio Yokoi based on research available in 2025. It does not provide a full biography of either figure but highlights points, relevant to Reiki's formation.

3. Converging Paths of Mikao Usui and Tokio Yokoi

WAS TAKATA REFERRING TO TOKIO YOKOI?

A central puzzle in Reiki historiography concerns whether Hawayo Takata, when describing the founder of Reiki, was actually referring not to Mikao Usui of Taniai, but to Rev. Tokio Yokoi. In her recorded lectures from the 1970s, Takata consistently stated that the founder of Reiki was a Christian minister, President of Dōshisha University in Kyoto, and a man who studied in Chicago. She also described his 21-day retreat on a mountain, during which he experienced a profound spiritual awakening, after which he went to heal the poor in the slums, veiling himself as a poor man to serve the common people.

For decades, these claims were dismissed as apocryphal, due to the lack of historical evidence connecting Mikao Usui with any Christian ordination or foreign theological education. However, the rediscovery of Usui's 1904 *curriculum vitae*, published in 2025, has reconfigured the debate. According to the CV, Usui worked for Christian missionary schools, studied in the United States, and held various roles in government, mining, and private education.

These elements provide partial confirmation of Takata's claims, yet critical gaps remain. The CV does not mention any Christian ordination, theological leadership, or affiliation with Dōshisha University. Nor does it reflect the kind of deep theological engagement, pastoral leadership, or public preaching on the miracles of Christ that Takata describes. In all these fields, Yokoi seems to have been more successful and of higher status than Usui.

This is where the life of Tokio Yokoi aligns with remarkable precision. Yokoi was an ordained Congregationalist minister, baptized and trained through the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM). He was ordained by Rev. G. Cochran, a missionary in Tokyo, and served as pastor of both the Imabari Church in Shikoku and later the Hongō Congregational Church in Tokyo. He was a core member of the Kumamoto Band, a group of early Japanese Christian converts mentored by missionary Leroy Lansing Janes. Yokoi received theological training at Dōshisha, a Congregationalist seminary founded by Joseph Hardy Neesima. In 1897, Yokoi became President of Dōshisha University—a position that virtually required formal ordination and doctrinal alignment with

Congregationalism. During his tenure, he preached sermons on Christ's miracles and resigned under theological pressure when confronted by students—exactly as Takata recounts.

Further, Yokoi studied in the US, represented Japan at the 1893 *World's Parliament of Religions* in Chicago, and later pursued theology at Yale Divinity School. He lived among the poor in Imabari and Tokyo, advocated for social justice, and deeply engaged in comparative religious philosophy—including Christianity, Confucianism, and Buddhism. These facts correspond to nearly every element of Takata's narrative, including the description of a scholar who lived humbly and devoted himself to healing and teaching.

Takata's claim that the founder disguised himself as a poor man has typically been interpreted symbolically, as an expression of humility. But if the figure she described was not Usui, but Yokoi, the phrase may take on a literal or encoded meaning. It may refer to a deliberate transition of identity, in which Yokoi's healing system—emerging from a Christian-Holiness context—was reframed under the culturally neutral and spiritually syncretic name “Usui”, hence the pseudonym hypothesis. This would make the Reiki founder's biography both historically valid and spiritually inclusive at a time of increasing nationalism in Taishō Japan.

As the direct student of Chujiro Hayashi, Takata was likely the most accurately informed Reikimaster concerning the founder's life because she was an indoor student at Hayashi's place for many months. Her oral account, long dismissed as legend, aligns with striking accuracy when measured against the documented life of Tokio Yokoi. The conclusion follows: Takata's story was not false—only misattributed. The name was changed, but the man was real.

Suggested literature

- Helen J. Haberly, 1990. “Reiki: Hawayo Takata's Story”. Olmstead: Archedigm Publications.
- Jojan L. Jonker, 2024. “Tokio Yokoi: From Japanese Christianity to Universal Reiki”. Mijnbestseller.nl.
- Elizabeth M., 2023. “The Samurai Reiki Master”. 3rd ed. Sydney: Self-published. Appendix 2.
- Mark R. Mullins, ed., 2003. “Handbook of Christianity in Japan”. Leiden: Brill.
- “*Curriculum Vitae* of Mikao Usui,” rediscovered 2025, internal source confirmed in private research presentation.

HOLINESS MOVEMENT

The relationship between Tokio Yokoi and the Japanese *Holiness Movement* provides a critical lens for understanding the theological and ritual foundations of what later emerged as Reiki Ryōhō. The influence of the *Holiness Movement* becomes more visible and relevant with the newly discovered documents in mind and is recognizable several times in Reiki's history.

While Yokoi is best known as a prominent Protestant minister, theologian, and social thinker associated with the Kumamoto Band and Japanese liberal Protestantism, recent scholarship has positioned him more specifically within the stream of Holiness Christianity that emphasized Baptism with the Holy Spirit and divine healing.

In *Tokio Yokoi: From Japanese Christianity to Universal Reiki*, I identify Yokoi's theological orientation as one focused not on the full range of Pentecostal gifts (such as glossolalia or prophecy), but rather on the healing aspect of charismatic Christianity. Drawing on the typology offered by Mullins, I place Yokoi within the group of indigenous

Japanese Christian movements that, while not formally Pentecostal, emphasized the charismatic reality of healing as a manifestation of sanctification and grace.¹

This orientation places Yokoi in continuity with the Holiness tradition, which was brought to Japan by Protestant missionaries and adapted by native theologians. As Ikegami observes, Japanese Christians in the late 19th and early 20th centuries sought to experience the Holy Spirit through sanctification and healing, often interpreting this experience through indigenous lenses such as *shūyō undō* (self-cultivation movements) and esoteric rituals paralleling i.e. *kaji kitō* or *chinkon kishin*. I further suggests that Yokoi's search for a Japanese equivalent to Baptism with the Holy Spirit culminated in his creation of the *reiju* ritual—the transmission of healing energy or “spirit”—as a ritual analogue to Christian baptism by fire, particularly in light of John 20:22 and Mark 16:15–18.

The Pentecost is compared with Confucius' experience of direct enlightenment, called *lingh-chi* in which the origin of the *kanji* for Reiki is recognized. A ritual for direct transmission was found in the foundation formed out of the *Teiyū Kondankai*, discussed in the next section.

The *Holiness Movement*, emphasizing personal sanctification and divine healing, gained traction in Japan during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Tokio Yokoi was active during this period and engaged in theological discussions that intersected with *Holiness* ideals. Given Mikao Usui's interest in spiritual healing at some point in his life, it is plausible that their paths crossed within this movement's circles.

Yokoi's alignment with Holiness ideals was not merely doctrinal but deeply experiential. His biographical arc—framed by an early mystical experience of Christ's love on Mt. Hanaoka at the age of 18, his exposure to Western theology at Yale, and a culminating enlightenment on Mt. Kurama (status 2024: if it was Yokoi who climbed Mt. Kurama)—reflects what many Holiness theologians described as the “second blessing” or sanctifying baptism that granted gifts of healing and moral transformation. This can be characterized as a form of “Japanese Pentecostal-like sanctification” embedded in the theological grammar of indigenous Christianity rather than in imported church structures.³

In conclusion, Yokoi's theological evolution—shaped by both Protestant liberalism and Holiness emphasis on divine healing—created the foundation for a uniquely indigenous Japanese healing ritual, later known as Reiki. His reinterpretation of biblical healing through Japanese metaphysical and ritual systems allowed for a radical indigenization of Holiness doctrine, positioning Reiki Ryōhō as an heir to Christian charismatic spirituality contextualized within Japanese religious culture.

Suggested literature

- Mark R. Mullins, *Handbook of Christianity in Japan*, ed. Mark R. Mullins (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 157.
- Ikegami Yoshimasa, “The Holiness, Pentecostal, and Charismatic Movements in Modern Japan,” in *Handbook of Christianity in Japan*, ed. Mark R. Mullins (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 127–132.
- Jojan L. Jonker, *Tokio Yokoi: From Japanese Christianity to Universal Reiki* (Mijnbestseller.nl, 2024), esp. pp. 28–35.

HONGŌ CHURCH IN THE PROXIMITY OF TOKYO UNIVERSITY

In 1893, Usui graduated from an institution for the study of classical Chinese where he studied psychology, a new Western field of healthcare at that time.

Tokio Yokoi became involved with the Hongō Congregational Church in Tokyo after resigning from his pastoral position in Imabari in 1886. He succeeded Ebina Danjo as pastor of the Hongō Church, which was one of Tokyo's most socially active Protestant congregations during the Meiji period. Yokoi's tenure at Hongō Church placed him at the center of Tokyo's Protestant intellectual and reformist circles, where he contributed to theological discourse and supported figures like Uchimura Kanzō. His involvement with the church continued until at least 1897, when he became Principal of Dōshisha School.

This period is the first possibility that Yokoi and Usui might have met each other either in social circles around the Hongō Church and University in Tokyo, or because of a mutual interest in the philosophies of the *Holiness Movement*. Indirectly, Usui must have heard of Yokoi in either San Francisco (next section) and/or through Yokoi's publications on Christianity in Japan and/or because they were colleagues in being both commissioned by a missionary school.

1893 YOKOI REPRESENTS JAPAN DURING THE *WORLD PARLIAMENT OF RELIGIONS*

Takata states in her narrative that Usui studied in Chicago. This could not be verified. However, there is an important relation between Yokoi and Chicago.

In 1893, Yokoi represents Japan in Chicago during the *World Parliament of Religions* and stayed there for a longer period of time. Yokoi was part of the Japanese delegation and spoke about Buddhism in Japan. Yokoi's presence shows he was not just a theological student, but a recognized voice in international religious discourse.

Yokoi encountered Swami Vivekananda, who spoke of divine energy and inner realization. It would have been typical for such a conference that he also met Anagarika Dharmapala or became familiar with his teachings, who linked Buddhism with spiritual healing. And, because he was part of the Japanese delegation, through Shintō and Buddhist Japanese delegates, he may have deepened his appreciation for native traditions. This aligns closely with the spiritual syncretism and healing orientation that would later emerge in Reiki.

POTENTIAL ORIGIN OF REIKI'S RITUALS AND SYMBOLS

In 1897, Yokoi co-founded the *Teiyū Kondankai* (丁酉懇談会), a study group dedicated to the comparative study of religions. This initiative was part of a broader movement in Meiji-era Japan to explore and understand various religious traditions, both domestic and foreign. Some notable figures were instrumental in developing the academic study of religion in Japan.

The *Teiyū Kondankai* aimed to analyze and compare religious beliefs and practices, fostering a scholarly environment for discussing the nature and role of religion in society. One of the purposes of the *Teiyū Kondankai* was to eliminate superstitious thought found within Buddhism and Christianity in order to establish an ethical faith that could be seen as a kind of “new faith and religion” and a “movement of religious reform”.

Out of this Gakkai, a foundation came forth that more specifically studied rituals for ‘direct transmission’ such as *kishin*. I (Jonker 2016) had already suggested that Reiki's initiation was related to *chinkon kishin*. Reiki's initiation ritual *reiju* seems to have based on indigenous Japanese Buddhist and Shintō rituals that were studied in this foundation (Jonker 2024). Perhaps also indigenous symbols were studied that may have been the source for the Reiki symbols.

In her narrative, Hawayo Takata recounts that Usui once visited various Buddhist centers in search of a ritual capable of facilitating a direct spiritual transmission. This detail may correspond to historical activities associated with the *Teiyū Kondankai* and its subsequent developments. At the time, it is unlikely that such esoteric practices were cataloged or readily accessible; thus, Usui—or perhaps Yokoi—would have been compelled to undertake a personal quest, visiting temples and inquiring firsthand about the existence of such transformative rites.

Suggested literature

- Yamanaka Hiroshi, 2018. “Religious Studies in Japan”. Volume 4: pp1-2.
- Jojan L. Jonker, 2024. “Tokio Yokoi. From Japanese Christianity to Universal Reiki”. Mijnbestseller.nl.

THE *HOLINESS MOVEMENT* IN SAN FRANCISCO

In the period 1897–1898, Usui worked in San Francisco, USA.

It is known that the Japanese community in San Francisco was active during this period. The Japanese Consulate in San Francisco, established in 1870, played a central role in diplomatic and community events. In either case, obviously, he also had social contacts.

During the late 1890s, the *Holiness Movement* had a notable presence in San Francisco, particularly through the Peniel Mission, founded by Theodore Pollock Ferguson and Manie Payne Ferguson in Los Angeles in 1886. By the 1890s, the mission had expanded into San Francisco, where it contributed to the city’s religious landscape by promoting personal sanctification, divine healing, and social outreach. Figures like Franklin Rhoda, though not formally part of the mission, were influenced by similar perfectionist and revivalist ideals.

USUI COMMISSIONED BY A MISSIONARY SCHOOL IN ASAKUSA

In the period 1899–1901, Usui established and supervised a night middle school in North Asakusa, Tokyo, run by the Women’s Foreign Missionary Society for the Methodist Episcopal Church.

Yokoi resigned from Dōshisha in 1899/1900. This were both engaged with Christian Missionary schools at almost the same time. Given the social status of Yokoi and the attention Yokoi’s resignation received, it is highly likely that Usui at least must have heard of Yokoi in this context.

USUI COMMISSIONED BY MISSIONARY SCHOOL IN FUKAGAWA

From 1899–1903, Usui is commissioned by the Women’s Foreign Missionary Society for the Methodist Episcopal Church, to establish a charity school and an elementary school in Fukagawa, where he served as supervisor. At that time, Fukagawa was a district within Tokyo city.

It was the denomination WFMS of the Methodist Protestant Church established in 1879. and focused on Asia, especially China and Japan. Unfortunately, the archives of these Churches do not hold the name Usui (email conversation with the archivist).

A closer look at the educational context of Meiji-era Japan reveals a significant detail often overlooked in discussions about Mikao Usui's background. According to Mullins (2003) in the *Handbook of Christianity in Japan*, many Protestant mission schools—especially those founded during the Meiji period—required their faculty to be committed Christians. This mandate stemmed from the schools' foundational aim to provide not only academic education but also Christian moral and spiritual formation. In this light, it is plausible that baptism and active Christian commitment were formal or informal prerequisites for employment.

Usui's 1904 *curriculum vitae* indicates that he was not merely a teacher but held the position of "supervisor" at such a school. As noted in the same literature, the term "supervisor" in this context was functionally equivalent to "principal." If principals were held to the same, if not higher, standards of Christian affiliation, then it becomes increasingly likely that Usui was required to be—at minimum—a baptized Christian. This insight calls for a reevaluation of Usui's religious identity and challenges the prevailing view of him as a figure outside the framework of institutional Christianity.

REMARKABLE TIMING OF USUI'S JOBS AT THE MISSIONARY SCHOOLS

In 1899–1900, both Tokio Yokoi and Mikao Usui appear to shift away from religious institutions toward more secular careers. Yokoi resigned from his position at Dōshisha University to pursue politics and journalism, while Usui transitioned from employment at Christian schools (from 1899) to working in a mining company in 1904 and later applied for a government post in Taiwan.

This synchrony may reflect broader socio-political pressures stemming from the 1899 Yamagata Religion Bill (宗教法案, *shūkyō hōan*), which aimed to increase state control over religious institutions. Though ultimately rejected, it marked the beginning of a policy trend that subjected Christian schools, such as Dōshisha, to heightened scrutiny under State Shintō ideology (Thomas 2016; Abe 1970).

Further restrictions followed. In July 1899, new treaties subjected Westerners in Japan to Japanese law. In August, the Education Ministry's Order No. 12 banned religious instruction in accredited schools—public and private—while the Private Schools Act pressured Christian mission schools to secularize in order to receive state recognition (Mullins 2003, 328–329). Mission schools thus faced a dilemma: compromise their Christian mission or forgo accreditation.

Simultaneously, nationalists like Inoue Tetsujirō argued that Christianity, as a foreign faith promoting allegiance to a universal God, undermined Japan's imperial order, which demanded loyalty to the Emperor as a moral and spiritual authority (Cary 1909, 243).

Within this historical context, questions naturally arise regarding Usui's role at the missionary school beginning in 1899. Was his appointment merely administrative, or did it reflect a deeper ideological alignment—perhaps even a form of state oversight within the increasingly tense landscape of Meiji-era religious education? The timing is suggestive: as Japan's nationalist sentiment grew in response to both internal modernization and international pressures, figures working within Christian institutions may have been expected to align, at least nominally, with the prevailing national ethos.

Usui's subsequent employment with the colonial administration in Taiwan (discussed in the next section) strengthens this interpretation. His transition from religious-affiliated education to government service implies a degree of ideological compatibility with emerging imperial interests. Rather than viewing Usui as operating

solely within a spiritual or esoteric framework, this trajectory suggests he may also have been shaped by—and participated in—the broader political currents of his time.

Suggested literature

- Mark R. Mullins. *Christianity Made in Japan: A Study of Indigenous Movements*. University of Hawai‘i Press, 2003, pp. 328–329.
- Otis, Cary. *A History of Christianity in Japan*. Fleming H. Revell, 1909, p. 243.
- Thomas, Jolyon Baraka. “Varieties of Religious Freedom in Japanese Buddhist Responses to the 1899 Religions Bill.” *Asian Journal of Law and Society*, vol. 3, 2016.
- Abe, Yoshiya. “Religious Freedom under the Meiji Constitution.” *Contemporary Religions in Japan*, vol. 11, no. 1–2, 1970.

PROXIMITY YOKOI AND USUI THROUGH TAIWAN

Between 1904 and 1911, Usui served on a research committee under the *Minseikyoku* (Civil Affairs Bureau) of the Japanese colonial government in Taiwan. Part of this committee was to investigate traditional Taiwanese customs (臨時台湾旧慣調査会). I consider Taoism, Chinese medicine, and energetic healing practices based on *chi* as such customs. This bureau was led by Gotō Shinpei, whose administrative reforms shaped the island’s modernization. Usui’s CV notes his work for “missionary schools” and later the Taiwan Government, suggesting involvement in ethnographic and educational policy under Gotō’s leadership.

In parallel, Yokoi, then a member of the Japanese House of Representatives, was convicted in 1909 for accepting bribes related to the Taiwan Sugar Company—a corporation closely regulated and subsidized by the *Minseikyoku*. His involvement implies direct entanglement with the same bureaucratic sphere in which Usui worked.

While no document directly links Yokoi and Usui, both were active within the orbit of Gotō Shinpei’s Taiwan policy apparatus, one as a colonial researcher, the other as a politician engaged in Taiwan-linked economic lobbying. Their concurrent engagement with the *Minseikyoku* during a formative period in colonial administration suggests geographic and institutional proximity.

Suggested literature

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- Usui Mikao CV (rediscovered 2025, Taiwanese Reiki archives).
- Gotō Shinpei and Taiwan – see “Taiwan under Japanese Colonial Rule, 1895–1945: History, Culture, Memory”, 2006, edited by Liao Ping-hui and David Der-wei Wang, Columbia University Press.

UNTIL 1919: BOTH USUI AND YOKOI HAD SECULAR JOBS

Both Yokoi and Usui were through secular means less constrained by religious regulation and this may explain their shifts in career. A strategic distancing from religious labels in a

nationalistic, imperialist climate where spiritual heterodoxy could draw suspicion. Usui's career seems a realignment with economic and colonial opportunities, particularly during the Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905) and Japan's expansion into Taiwan and Korea. Yokoi on the other hand became a politician and reporter.

For the purpose of this article, it suffices to continue in 1919.

POSTWAR DISILLUSIONMENT AND THE SPIRITUAL LANDSCAPE OF 1919–1922

The years immediately following World War I, particularly the period from 1919 to 1922, marked a profound turning point in Japan's religious and cultural atmosphere. The global crisis of meaning that erupted after the armistice extended beyond the Western world, striking Japan with equal force. The spiritual and moral exhaustion induced by rapid industrialization and the psychological toll of war, combined with the humiliation Japan faced at the Paris Peace Conference—where its call for racial equality was rebuffed—generated widespread disillusionment and a crisis of national identity. Yokoi was a part of the Japanese delegation and experienced this first-hand. This was further compounded by economic instability, including the rice riots of 1918, postwar inflation, and growing labor unrest.

In response to these multifaceted pressures, Japanese society entered what would later be termed the *Taishō spiritual boom*, characterized by a rising public interest in esotericism, folk religion, healing modalities, and universalist spirituality. Emerging religious movements such as Ōmoto-kyō gained visibility by offering holistic alternatives to both traditional sectarian institutions and the ideology of State Shintō. For educated individuals who had previously distanced themselves from organized religion—among them Mikao Usui—this moment represented fertile ground for renewed, non-institutional spiritual engagement.

By contrast, Tokio Yokoi's trajectory during this period took a more tragic turn. In 1919, he was expected to accept a diplomatic post at the Japanese embassy in the United States. However, due to a sudden and severe illness, Yokoi became bedridden and remained in declining health for the rest of his life. This personal misfortune likely intensified his interest in healing practices, particularly those that promised spiritual and physical restoration. Also, the question arises whether he physically would be capable of enduring a 21-day retreat.

Little is known about Usui's activities between 1911 and the early 1920s. This historical lacuna coincides strikingly with the years of national unrest and spiritual searching, suggesting the possibility that Usui, like many of his contemporaries, was engaged in a period of introspective transformation shaped by the shifting religious landscape of postwar Japan.

Suggested literature

- Andrew Gordon, *A Modern History of Japan: From Tokugawa Times to the Present*, 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 176–180.
- Helen Hardacre, *Shintō and the State, 1868–1988* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 156–160.
- Jojan L. Jonker, *Tokio Yokoi: From Japanese Christianity to Universal Reiki* (Mijnbestseller, 2023), p183.

WHO CLIMBED MT. KURAMA AFTER AN INTENSIVE RETREAT AT A ZEN CENTER?

Both the Takata narrative and the 1928 publication by Okuna Shigejirō describe the founder of Reiki spending time (Okuna states three years) in a Zen monastery prior to a 21-day retreat on Mt. Kurama. While this formative spiritual experience has traditionally been attributed to Mikao Usui, there are plausible historical and spiritual grounds to consider whether Rev. Tokio Yokoi may have been the original seeker. The broader question, however, is why either man would have chosen a Zen center as the site of preparation.

In the religious climate of early Taishō-period Japan (1912–1926), Zen centers—particularly those within the Sōtō school—offered a distinctive environment for spiritual retreat. These institutions emphasized practices of inner cultivation (*shugyō*) through silent meditation (*zazen*), bodily discipline, and moral clarity. They were also relatively open to lay practitioners and intellectuals who, like Usui or Yokoi, may have been seeking spiritual renewal outside of sectarian or institutional religion. In this context, Sōtō Zen monasteries functioned as socially acceptable spaces for private spiritual transformation, offering a disciplined and culturally familiar setting for experiential inquiry.

Notably, there are significant conceptual and functional parallels between Sōtō Zen and the Holiness Movement, particularly in the role of the body, sanctification, and direct experience. The Holiness tradition emphasized *entire sanctification* as a post-conversion spiritual rebirth, often accompanied by outward signs of healing, moral purity, and divine presence (Mullins 2003). Similarly, Sōtō Zen framed awakening not as doctrinal assent but as an embodied state of presence and harmony achieved through rigorous spiritual training. As Dōgen, the founder of Japanese Sōtō Zen, emphasized, practice and awakening were one and the same—mirroring Holiness theology’s insistence on the visible manifestation of inner grace (Heine 2008). In both traditions, the purity and spiritual condition of the practitioner were viewed as essential for effective transmission, whether of the Dharma or divine healing. This conceptual proximity helps explain how either Usui and/or Yokoi might have found in Zen a compatible terrain for seeking transformation—rooted in discipline, spiritual illumination, and healing.

If Yokoi was the one who retreated into a Zen monastery following his disillusionment at the 1919 Paris Peace Conference, the choice would have reflected both theological and personal motivations. As a former Congregationalist minister steeped in Holiness revivalism and international diplomacy, Yokoi likely faced a profound crisis of faith after Japan’s racial equality clause was rejected by the Western powers. Turning to Zen could have represented a symbolic return to a Japanese mode of spirituality while continuing his quest for direct divine experience. The monastery would have offered a quiet, apolitical space in which to reconfigure his understanding of sanctification—perhaps now as *reikan* (靈感), a Japanese term for spiritual inspiration that is theologically analogous to the “second blessing” or Spirit-baptism in Holiness theology (Jonker 2024). The case for Usui also remains viable. Little is known about his activities between 1911 and 1922, a period coinciding with national disillusionment, spiritual searching, and the rise of new healing movements. According to the 1904 CV, Usui had a background in psychology, Chinese medicine, Christian scripture, and divination—suggesting openness to cross-traditional spiritual influences. His lack of institutional affiliation gave him freedom to engage in syncretic practices without doctrinal constraints. A Zen retreat would have offered him not only a method of spiritual purification but a structure for solitary realization. If Usui did not himself originate the practice of Reiki, it is conceivable that he received or adapted it from a more theologically mature figure—possibly Yokoi.

It is also reasonable to consider that Yokoi may have served as a teacher or spiritual mentor to Usui. Yokoi was significantly older, more educated, and widely known in both religious and political circles. He had served as president of Dōshisha University, held office in the Japanese Diet, studied theology at Yale, and preached on the miracles of Jesus.

By contrast, Usui's CV, while confirming his work at Christian schools and in the United States, does not reflect equivalent theological depth or social stature. If Yokoi had experienced spiritual awakening during his own crisis, it is plausible that he encouraged Usui to undertake a similar path of discipline and contemplation—perhaps even guiding him toward Mt. Kurama. In this view, Usui's retreat becomes the continuation of a spiritual tradition already cultivated by Yokoi.

The identity of the person who climbed Mt. Kurama may ultimately remain uncertain. Yet from a scholarly perspective, the convergence of historical, conceptual, and biographical elements allows for a dual hypothesis: Yokoi as the originator, retreating into silence; Usui as the transmitter, emerging into public view. For purposes of neutrality, I refer to the retreatant simply as *the seeker*—the individual who underwent a period of ascetic purification and reemerged bearing what would become known as Reiki.

Suggested literature

- Steven Heine, 2008. "Did Dōgen Go to China? What He Wrote and When He Wrote It". Oxford University Press.
- Jojan L. Jonker, 2024. "Tokio Yokoi: From Japanese Christianity to Universal Reiki". Mijnbestseller.nl.
- Mark R. Mullins, ed., 2003. "Handbook of Christianity in Japan". Leiden: Brill, esp. pp157-160 (*Holiness Movement*) and pp284-285 (Indigenous Christian Movements).
- Yamada, Shoji, 2009. "Shots in the Dark: Japan, Zen, and the West". University of Chicago Press, (for insight into Zen practice and its appeal to lay intellectuals in modern Japan).

1922 – MOMENT OF ENLIGHTENMENT ON MT. KURAMA - *REIKAN*

The description that the seeker received "vision-light" (Takata) or "*Reikan*" (靈感) (Okuna)—often translated as "spiritual inspiration", "divine illumination", or "spiritual intuition"—does align conceptually with the theology of the *Holiness Movement*, particularly in its late 19th and early 20th century form, which emphasized direct spiritual experience, sanctification, and divine guidance.

Here is how the concepts connect:

Reikan (靈感) in Japanese Context

- *Reikan* refers to a sudden experience of spiritual insight or divine revelation. It can be associated with mystical awakening, inner vision, or a sense of being spiritually "moved" or directed.
- In Shintō and Buddhism, *Reikan* sometimes denotes an intuitive connection with *kami* (spirits) or the dharma.
- In modern usage, it can also overlap with the idea of *reiju* or spiritual initiation/attunement, common in Reiki.

Holiness Movement Concepts

The *Holiness Movement*, especially in its Wesleyan and American revivalist branches, emphasized:

- Sanctification as a second blessing: a post-conversion spiritual purification or awakening.

- Divine leading or "inner witness": believers were encouraged to seek and expect direct experiences of the Holy Spirit, often resulting in transformation, healing, or spiritual gifts.
- Testimonies of illumination or divine vision: common in Peniel Mission circles and holiness revivals were reports of believers "receiving light," hearing divine messages, or being overcome by grace.
- Spiritual intuition: sometimes described as being "prompted by the Spirit" or "walking in the light."

Theological and Experiential Parallels

Concept	Holiness Movement	Reikan Description
Spiritual illumination	Descent of the Spirit, inner light	Sudden divine insight or awakening
Mystical experience	Entire sanctification or divine encounter	Vision or sense of spiritual contact
Personal transformation	Moral cleansing, holy living	Moral/spiritual renewal post- <i>Reikan</i>
Divine guidance	"Led by the Spirit" or "moved by God"	Inspired action or insight attributed to divine source

Therefore, I conclude that the account that the seeker received *Reikan* closely mirrors the *Holiness Movement's* idea of sanctifying grace or divine encounter. Both Yokoi and Usui can be placed in an environment where Holiness ideas were circulating—such as through missionary schools or associations—then interpreting *Reikan* through a Holiness lens becomes not only plausible but historically grounded.

THE FOUNDING OF THE USUI GAKKAI AND THE POSSIBLE ROLE OF TOKIO YOKOI

The Usui Gakkai was established in 1922, traditionally attributed to Mikao Usui as its founder. However, the absence of a formal founding document bearing Usui's signature opens the possibility that the organization was not solely his initiative. A more plausible scenario is that the Gakkai was founded *for* Usui, likely in collaboration with the influential figure Tokio Yokoi.

Yokoi, a former Christian minister, intellectual, and political figure, held a senior position in Japanese society compared to Usui and was significantly older than Usui. It is conceivable that he facilitated the Gakkai's institutional foundation by leveraging his existing connections with high-ranking officers in the Imperial Navy. Whether through direct acquaintance or by reputation, Yokoi would have been known to such individuals, and his involvement would have lent the emerging Gakkai an air of credibility and alignment with elite circles. This hypothesis offers a compelling explanation for the rapid legitimization and military patronage the Gakkai received in its early years.

According to Hawayo Takata's account, a pivotal moment occurs in 1922 when Usui is said to have "disguised himself"—a phrase that has intrigued many interpreters of Reiki's origin story. In 1993, Reiki historian Elizabeth Latham reported experiencing a mystical dream in which a man identifying himself as "Usui" appeared to her. When she later recognized the face as that of Tokio Yokoi, she interpreted the vision to mean that Yokoi had adopted the pseudonym "Usui," effectively suggesting that the two were the same person. For Latham, Yokoi and Usui were not separate individuals but one and the same.

However, a more metaphorical reading of the dream opens the possibility for a dual identity. The statement "I am Usui" might be understood as "I am the originator of what is now known as Reiki, associated with the name Usui", or as "I am Usui in Takata's account". This interpretation allows for a collaborative scenario, in which Yokoi was the true originator of the practice and Usui its public face and disseminator. In this view, the identity of "Usui" becomes symbolic—a vessel for a transmission shaped by two intertwined lives.

It can be reasoned that in the period 1922-1926, Mikao Usui takes over Yokoi's work.

By the early 20th century, State Shintō and nationalism were on the rise. Public figures with Christian affiliations were often suppressed or concealed themselves to avoid suspicion or marginalization.

Being a Reverend with name and fame throughout the entire Japanese Empire, I consider that Yokoi was too famous to spread the completely indigenous Japanese developed Reiki anonymously. In fact, that Yokoi was a Reverend was in itself reason enough that he could not spread Reiki. There is the possibility that Yokoi and Usui decided that Usui would take it over. Hence, Yokoi transmits all knowledge to Usui and takes a step back in the anonymity.

Later, during the erection of the Memorial Stone, it is decided that all traces of Christianity had to be eliminated given the *Zeitgeist*. This partly succeeds. In written text either on paper or in stone like the Memorial Stone, no references to Yokoi or Christianity can be found. However, in the oral traditions, stories about the life and work of Yokoi survive and merge with those of Mikao Usui, especially in the case of Miss Takata who was not influenced by the contemporary Japanese *Zeitgeist*; she could speak freely. Even more, it is not only plausible but historically consistent that Christian traces would be deliberately removed from written records like Usui's Memorial Stone, while being preserved in oral traditions such as Hawayo Takata's narrative. As already discussed, after the 1899 *Religion Bill* (*shūkyō hōan*), Christianity in Japan came under tighter state scrutiny. Plus, by the early 20th century, State Shintō and nationalism were on the rise. Public figures with Christian affiliations often suppressed or concealed them to avoid suspicion or marginalization.

This also may explain why in the Usui narrative it is never made clear where and how Usui got his inspiration for developing a healing system. The omission of Universal Christian mysticism as held by the *Holiness Movement* created a vacuum in the narrative regarding the history of Reiki. Later on, people tried to fill this vacuum with alleged Buddhist roots inspired by the indigenous Japanese *reiju* and symbols, plus the fact that Usui is portrayed in Buddhist clothing.

All this helps suggest that information concerning facts and events after 1922, allegedly contributed to Mikao Usui, indeed concerns the historical Mikao Usui.

In 1927, the Usui Memorial Stone is erected with a text composed by some of Usui's students. Since the discovery of Usui's CV in 2025 (covering his career till 1904), it has become clear that the text is not complete and not entirely correct. A study psychology is mentioned but his three-year work at two Christian schools had to be left out given the Tashō *Zeitgeist* where Christian elements had to be concealed.

I analyze this part of the text of the Memorial Stone.

He engaged himself in history books, medical books, Buddhist scriptures, Christian scriptures and was well versed in psychology, Taoism, even in the art of divination, incantation, and physiognomy. Presumably sensei's background in the arts and sciences afforded him nourishment for his cultivation and discipline, and it was very obvious that it was this cultivation and discipline that became the key to the creation of Reiho (Reiki Ryoho).

This text can be interpreted as compatible with inspiration from the *Holiness Movement*, though it does not directly cite it. Here is why such an interpretation is plausible. The part, *He engaged himself in history books, medical books, Buddhist scriptures, Christian scriptures and was well versed in psychology, Taoism, even in the art of divination, incantation, and physiognomy...*

describes a person as having a broad and eclectic spiritual and intellectual background, combining:

- Christian scriptures — specifically notable, as the *Holiness Movement* is a Christian revivalist movement that emphasized personal sanctification, spiritual experience, and even healing through divine grace.
- Psychology and medical texts — aligning with the *Holiness Movement's* concern for inner transformation and moral therapy, often seen in their advocacy for spiritual healing.
- Disciplines like Taoism, divination, and Buddhist scriptures — indicate syncretism, which was not uncommon in Japanese spirituality, and would naturally blend with Christian mystical elements if encountered.

This could refer to Usui if more details were known about his whereabouts during his life despite the discovered *curriculum vitae*. However, it is also possible that the Stone refers to Yokoi's life when comparing the Stone's text with Yokoi's known biography. Or did the biographies of Yokoi and Usui blend into one narrative?

As mentioned earlier, the *Holiness Movement*, which influenced Japanese Christian circles from the 1880s onward (especially via Methodist missionaries and the Peniel Mission), taught:

- Entire sanctification as a second blessing.
- Healing by faith as a manifestation of sanctified living.
- Mystical experiences including surrender, divine union, and visions.
- Personal discipline and spiritual cultivation.

Now consider this phrase from the text:

...it was this cultivation and discipline that became the key to the creation of Reiho (Reiki Ryoho).

This language resonates with *Holiness Movement* terminology, especially the emphasis on inner sanctity leading to spiritual power, including the power to heal — a central tenet of Holiness theology.

Therefore, it is reasonable and historically supportable to interpret the text as showing influence or inspiration drawn from *Holiness Movement* concepts, particularly as they circulated in late Meiji and Taisho-era Japan.

The issue is further compounded by the Memorial Stone (Usui's memorial), which for many years served as one of the few tangible sources of information about Usui's life. Over time, this inscription achieved an almost mythological status among Reiki practitioners, solidifying a sense of historical authority. However, critical analysis reveals that the stone omits any mention of Usui's involvement with Christian missionary schools as his CV shows—an omission that, for academic scholars, is not unexpected but may challenge the assumptions of practitioners who have invested authority in the text. In fact, a translation of the text by Hyakuten Inamoto states:

He had no regular job to make a living, but led a free and easy life. He liked to study and tried hard to learn things in his youth, and traveled to several countries in Europe and America to study. He was not successful in business, and often faced adversity, but he always endeavored to improve himself through training.

The Memorial Stone does not match the professional life presented in the 1904 CV nor the detail in Okuna's work who states that Usui had eleven jobs. In fact, it seems to deliberately omit or obscure parts of Usui's Christian and institutional past, favoring a more Zen- or seeker-like persona consistent with early 20th-century Japanese syncretism and the Tashō *Zeitgeist*. More generally speaking, the tone and purpose of the Memorial Stone is memorial, reverential, and Buddhist framing while that of the CV is bureaucratic and factual. Therefore, because they represent distinct genres, the Stone is not meant to be an objective resume.

So, who's life is summarized on this Memorial Stone? Yokoi's under the pseudonym Usui or the historical figure Mikao Usui? Given the hypothesis that is expanded in this article—Yokoi is the originator and Usui the evangelist—it is the historical Mikao Usui, making clear that Usui was inspired by the philosophy of the *Holiness Movement*, and making it highly likely that Usui must have been a Christian. This is substantiated by the resemblance of certain concepts as mentioned on the Memorial Stone and the *Holiness Movement* (discussed in the next section). If you prefer Yokoi than explore a lengthy discussion of this hypothesis in Jonker 2023, *Tokio Yokoi. From Japanese Christianity to Universal Reiki*.

CONCEPTS MEMORIAL STONE CONVERGES WITH CONCEPTS OF THE *HOLINESS MOVEMENT*

The Usui Memorial Stone mentions elements such as Chinese medicine, Buddhist scriptures, Christian scriptures, psychology, and divination—suggesting a complex matrix of religious and therapeutic influences. This section explores conceptual and cultural convergences between three traditions present in the intellectual and religious environment of late Meiji and Taishō Japan: physiognomy and Taoist medicine, Holiness revivalism and divine healing, and early 20th-century Japanese spiritual healing movements. The analysis draws on academic literature to establish plausible lines of influence, particularly regarding figures such as Tokio Yokoi or Mikao Usui.

1. The *Holiness Movement*: Healing as Moral Transformation

The *Holiness Movement* emphasized that sanctification must manifest outwardly. As Mullins notes, it often regarded bodily health as a visible sign of inner spiritual purity, and conversely, illness was frequently interpreted as evidence of moral failure or lack of faith. Public comportment, appearance, and even facial expression were thought to reflect one's

sanctified condition. While the movement did not doctrinally endorse physiognomy, its rhetoric and praxis often implied it—particularly in revival accounts describing the “shining faces” or radiant eyes of sanctified believers. This reflects a wider 19th-century Protestant culture in which moral character was interpreted through physical cues, dress, and demeanor.

Faith healing was central. Influential Holiness figures such as A.B. Simpson, Carrie Judd Montgomery, and John Alexander Dowie integrated scriptural mandates like James 5:14–16 (“anoint the sick with oil”) into ritual practices of laying on hands and spiritual diagnosis. They often founded alternative institutions—healing homes, missions, and hospitals—that paralleled conventional medicine but were grounded in divine power.

2. Taoist Medicine and Physiognomy in Traditional Chinese Healing

Physiognomy (*xiangfa*, 相法), as practiced within Taoist-informed Chinese medicine, was a recognized diagnostic method with a lineage traceable to the *Huangdi Neijing* (Yellow Emperor’s Inner Canon) and later Han–Tang commentarial literature. Physicians read facial features, complexion, tongue, and eyes to diagnose imbalances in *qi* (氣), *yin-yang*, and the five elements (*wuxing*, 五行). This was not folklore but structured theory, part of a broader effort to read the internal state of the person through the visible and tactile body.

As Kuriyama has demonstrated, classical Chinese medicine was never strictly dualistic; it understood the body as an integrated expression of the spiritual and cosmological forces that pervade the world. Thus, a Taoist physician would examine the patient’s face and pulse not only to assess physical health but to interpret the condition of their life force and alignment with cosmic rhythms.

3. Conceptual Convergence and the Emergence of Syncretic Healing

While Taoist medicine emphasized diagnosing energetic imbalance and restoring harmony through bodily manipulation (acupuncture, breathwork, energy flow), Holiness healing diagnosed spiritual blockage and sought physical transformation through prayer, repentance, and sanctification. Both systems rested on the principle that the healer’s own spiritual or energetic condition was crucial to effective healing. In this sense, the logic of practitioner purity and embodied presence is shared.

Taoist-Physiognomic Medicine

Reads *qi* through physical signs
 Diagnoses imbalance via visible cues
 Healing via energy flow (e.g., *ki*)
 Practitioner must be energetically balanced

Holiness-Divine Healing

Reads sanctity through external behavior
 Diagnoses moral failure as root of illness
 Healing via prayer and sanctification
 Practitioner must be morally sanctified

It is within this framework that Reiki may be situated as a syncretic response to multiple traditions of healing. As observed in *The Handbook of Christianity in Japan*, Japanese Christian leaders—including figures like Tokio Yokoi—were exposed to Holiness theology and divine healing during their time abroad. Yokoi’s contact with Holiness revivalism, particularly in the US, likely introduced him to doctrines of sanctified healing and spiritual embodiment. Meanwhile, as the Usui Memorial Stone suggests, Mikao Usui was familiar with Chinese medicine, psychology, and divination—components resonant with Taoist and traditional East Asian metaphysics.

Conclusion: Reiki as a Spiritualized Healing Synthesis

While Taoist medicine used the body to diagnose spiritual or energetic states, Holiness theology used the spirit to transform the condition of the body. Both traditions were

holistic, relational, and centered on the healer's moral-spiritual state. Reiki emerges plausibly at the intersection of these two systems, incorporating physiognomic sensitivity, energetic manipulation, and moral cultivation. In light of these converging traditions—confirmed in both East Asian medical texts and Protestant healing theology—Reiki can be interpreted not simply as an esoteric invention, but as a spiritualized medicine deeply informed by global religious currents at the turn of the twentieth century.

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4. Conclusion

This article has proposed a reframing of the early history of Reiki by examining the overlapping biographies of Mikao Usui and Rev. Tokio Yokoi in light of newly rediscovered documents, including Usui's 1904 *curriculum vitae*. Through comparative analysis of four primary sources—the Takata narrative, the Usui Memorial Stone, the 1904 CV, and the Okuna 1928 account—an alternative lineage has emerged in which Yokoi appears not merely as a theological influence but as a plausible originator of the spiritual healing system later known publicly as Reiki.

Rather than displacing Usui, this study situates him within a broader religious and cultural context shaped by late Meiji and Taishō spiritual movements, including i.e. Protestant revivalism, Taoist medicine, and Japanese Buddhist reform. Yokoi, with his Christian pastoral background, engagement with the *Holiness Movement*, and possible retreat into Buddhist or syncretic practice after 1919, embodies a confluence of spiritual streams that may have crystallized into what Usui would later teach. Usui's subsequent public dissemination of Reiki from 1922 onward can thus be interpreted not as an isolated act of innovation, but as the continuation, reinterpretation, or systematization of an earlier spiritual legacy.

This hypothesis—while necessarily speculative in some respects—aligns with newly verified archival materials and provides a coherent narrative to explain discrepancies in existing accounts. It invites further historical and textual inquiry, particularly into the Christian networks, Zen centers, and spiritual reform circles of the early 20th century. Also, to verify and substantiate the life and work of Usui, more information is needed from official archives such as the National Diet Library (NDL). As new evidence continues to

emerge, this approach encourages a historiography of Reiki that is both critical and integrative, honoring its complexity and cross-cultural origins.

Ultimately, whether Usui and Yokoi worked in tandem, or whether their identities merged in oral transmission, the reframing proposed here calls for a more nuanced understanding of Reiki's foundation—not as the vision of a single founder, but as the fruit of a spiritual dialogue between East and West, embodied in the lives of two men shaped by both.