

*Reiki Mysticism and the Realization of Mystic Order:
Historical Lineage and Emerging Forms of Collective Awakening*

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ABSTRACT

This article traces the development of Reiki mysticism across six historical stages—from Christian sanctification and Holiness healing to Buddhist traditions of receptivity and devotional participation, especially Pure Land (*Jōdo-shū*), together with later contemplative interpretations—culminating in its structured expression within Usui Shiki Ryōhō. Using Kees Waaijman’s ten characteristics of mystical experience as a phenomenological lens, the study examines how ethical, ritual, and experiential elements converge to form a latent mystical tradition within Reiki practice.

Particular attention is given to experiential patterns frequently reported by practitioners—such as sensing a guiding presence, experiencing energy as acting ‘through’ rather than ‘by’ the practitioner, and undergoing lasting personal transformation. These experiences correspond closely with Waaijman’s characteristics of Presence, Passivity and immediacy, and Shift of the act-center, suggesting that Reiki practice is often lived as participation in a greater-than-self healing activity rather than as the manipulation of a neutral energy.

The study further considers the role of ritual transmission and symbolic interpretation in the development of Reiki mysticism, exploring how Reiki symbols may function as vehicles through which transformative experiences become communicated, interpreted and contemplated, and collectively embodied within living Reiki traditions.

Within this process, the fourth aspect of Usui Shiki Ryōhō—Mystic Order—emerges as a potentially important framework for the structural realization of Reiki's mystical dimension. Drawing on Andrew Cohen's model of Evolutionary Enlightenment, the article finally explores whether Reiki's mysticism may function not only as a historically inherited spiritual practice but also as a possible framework for emerging forms of collective spiritual alignment and awakening.

Intermezzo. Note that the term 'mysticism' is employed here as an analytical category derived from Western religious studies, and here particularly following the framework of Waaijman. It does not represent an *emic* term used within Zen or Pure Land Buddhism nor within the Holiness Movement. For example, Heine (2008) cautions that Zen experiences such as *satori* or *kenshō* are embedded within ritual and doctrinal contexts. Likewise, Pure Land devotion and Holiness spirituality are not typically described using the Western category of 'mysticism'. The present study therefore employs mysticism as an *etic* category rather than an *emic* one. It is used as a heuristic framework for comparing reported experiences and patterns of transformation across traditions, without assuming that the traditions themselves understood or described those experiences in identical terms. Applying the term requires care to avoid projecting Western assumptions onto Japanese religious practices.

Because Reiki is practiced by a global community outside academia, the article concludes with an appendix written in accessible language for practitioners. The appendix presents the main ideas of the study in a non-technical form and can be read independently of the scholarly analysis.

A GENERAL INTRODUCTION OF REIKI

Usui Reiki Ryōhō 霊気療法, commonly known as Reiki, is a spiritual healing practice conventionally said to have emerged in 1922 and to have been 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. In the received narrative, Usui is presented as having transmitted his teaching during the years 1922–1926 to a small number of selected individuals who later became Reiki masters (that is, Reiki teachers), 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 Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) modality best known for its practice of laying on of hands and often explained as active manipulation of one's biofield.

According to Takata's narrative, Hayashi knew Mikao Usui personally. A decade later, Hayashi transmitted information not only on how to practice and teach Reiki, but also deeper concepts related to the mystical dimension of Reiki practice.

When Takata gave Reiki classes or lectures on Reiki, she mentioned Usui as single-source founder and some specific details regarding the life and work of Usui which, according to her, she had heard firsthand from Hayashi. Examples from her narrative 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 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.

In the period 2022–2025, new information came to light regarding the early history of Reiki. In Hawayo Takata's narrative, one can discern biographical elements that align closely with the life and work of Rev. Tokio Yokoi 横井時雄 (1857–1927). In Yokoi's life and work, traces can also be identified of healing-related concepts associated with the Japanese Holiness Movement. Other findings indicate that Usui, too, had significant ties with Christianity. At the time of writing, no single reconstruction can be established conclusively. Three interpretive possibilities therefore remain open: (1) Usui was both the single founder and public face of Reiki; (2) Yokoi functioned as the theological and spiritual precursor, while Usui became the public face of the emerging practice; and (3) Yokoi was more directly involved in the early formation and transmission of Reiki than has usually been assumed, including the possibility—suggested by Elizabeth Latham—that he may in some way stand behind the Usui figure in Takata's narrative (Latham 2023). For the purposes of this article, the point of departure is the second interpretation, treated as a working hypothesis on the basis of arguments developed in earlier publications (Jonker 2024, 2025a, 2025b, 2026a, 2026b).

The chapters hereafter are divided into two parts. Part I focuses on themes that can plausibly be reconstructed historically or compared phenomenologically within the study of Reiki mysticism. Part II moves toward constructive and practitioner-oriented interpretation, exploring how contemporary Reiki communities and interpretive frameworks may spiritually extend or rearticulate these structures within present-day practice.

PART I — HISTORICAL AND PHENOMENOLOGICAL RECONSTRUCTION OF REIKI MYSTICISM

The first part of this study examines themes that can plausibly be reconstructed historically or compared phenomenologically within the study of Reiki mysticism. The chapters in this section draw upon historical sources, comparative religious analysis, and phenomenological frameworks in order to explore how Reiki may have emerged

within the broader religious and psycho-spiritual environment of Meiji, Taishō, and early Shōwa Japan.

Particular attention is given to the historical plausibility of formative influences, the role of oral and memorial traditions, and the experiential structures reported within Reiki practice. Comparisons with Christian, Holiness, Zen, and Pure Land traditions are therefore employed not as claims of direct doctrinal identity, but as interpretive frameworks for understanding converging patterns of mystical experience, spiritual discipline, healing, and transmission.

1. INTRODUCTION: REIKI AS A MYSTICAL TRADITION

Reiki is commonly known as a healing technique involving the laying on of hands and the channeling of ‘universal life energy’. Less explored, however, is its profound mystical dimension. This article argues that Reiki is not just a therapeutic practice but a living mystical tradition that evolved through diverse religious and cultural influences. This article argues that Reiki is not just a therapeutic practice but a living mystical tradition that evolved through diverse religious and cultural influences. I propose a six-stage historical-spiritual timeline, substantiated through both textual analysis and empirical research.

The origins of Reiki can be traced back to early 20th-century Meiji and Tashō Japan, during a period of intense religious and cultural transformation. Amid the backdrop of rising nationalism, expansionism, imperialism, industrialization, Westernization, and the rise of Japanese New Religions (*shinshūkyō*), Reiki emerged not just as a healing modality but as part of a broader spiritual quest. According to me (2016), Reiki was perceived as a means to attain '*anshin ritsumei* 安心立命'—a state of inner peace and fearlessness—which has roots in both Confucian and Zen traditions. This spiritual orientation makes Reiki more than physical therapy; it positions it as a spiritual discipline centered on transformation, healing, and communion with transcendent forces.

Furthermore, the system of Reiki that spread to the West via Takata underwent significant reinterpretation. As it came to be presented in relation to Buddhist ritual idioms while earlier Christian and Holiness-related resonances receded from view, it shifted toward a more secular, personal development-oriented framework, often associated with New Age or holistic worldviews. This migration and re-contextualization of Reiki form a key narrative thread in understanding its mystical dimensions today.

This shift toward a more therapeutic and individualistic interpretation of Reiki in the West aligns with broader trends in religious transformation, where traditional doctrine gives way to personalized spirituality. Scholars such as Waaijman (2003) and Borchert (1994) have noted how mystical traditions often adapt to cultural contexts, which allows them to remain relevant across time and across different cultural contexts. In Reiki's case, the process involved the reinterpretation of traditional Buddhist and Christian mystical frameworks through the lens of 20th-century holistic healing movements.

Takata contributed to this shift by emphasizing Reiki as accessible and practical, focusing on results rather than metaphysical speculation. However, as Jonker's (2010, 2011) and Beeler & Jonker's (2020) empirical work show, many Western Reiki practitioners do in fact report profound mystical experiences, often involving intense light, warmth, visions, and a sense of transcendence. These accounts suggest that beneath the surface of therapeutic intent lies a latent mystical structure that connects Reiki with older, deeper traditions of spiritual transformation. Furthermore, Beeler's work (2015) showed that Western practitioners experience *agency* in the assumed life energy (Beeler & Jonker 2020) making it a metaphysical spiritual phenomenon and a portal to the dimension of mysticism.

2. A FRAMEWORK FOR MYSTICAL EXPERIENCE

To analyze Reiki mysticism, I refer to my earlier work (Jonker 2010, 2012) where I applied the ten characteristics of mystical experience defined by Kees Waaijman:

- 1) *Prayer*: The longing or desire for union with the Divine.
- 2) *Presence*: A sacred presence manifests, such as energy, light, or deity.
- 3) *Shift of the act-center*: A displacement of self; awareness moves beyond ego.
- 4) *Annihilation*: Ego dissolves; self is transcended.
- 5) *Passivity and immediacy*: Mystic becomes the recipient of divine action.
- 6) *Unity*: The boundary between self and other dissolves.
- 7) *Contemplation*: A form of intuitive, non-conceptual knowing.
- 8) *Indwelling of God*: The Divine enters the mystic's inner being.
- 9) *Reciprocity*: Mutual exchange between mystic and Divine.
- 10) *Ongoing impact*: Long-term transformation and healing.

Waaijman's model allows us to navigate between traditional theological mysticism and contemporary experiential spirituality. The framework is employed here as a comparative phenomenological instrument rather than as evidence of historical influence or doctrinal dependence between traditions. For example, the characteristic of *Presence* may be expressed in classical Christian mysticism as the overwhelming awareness of God's or Jesus' Love, while in Reiki it might take the form of sensing an energy field, seeing light, or encountering a spirit figure such as Usui or Mother Mary, as reported previously (Jonker 2010, 2012). Beeler (2015) states that long-term practitioners may experience the Reiki energy as having agency, that Reiki energy may be experienced not only as a neutral force but as a presence that acts or guides. This decentering of the practitioner also resonates with descriptions in Reiki practice where healing is experienced as occurring through the practitioner rather than being directed by them.

These characteristics also help to distinguish mystical experience from other forms of religious or psychological states. Waaijman's framework is not employed to identify historical influence or doctrinal dependence, but as a comparative phenomenological instrument for analyzing reported experiential structures across traditions. For instance, *Passivity and immediacy* indicates that the mystic does not will the experience into being, but rather, it happens to them—an important

distinction from meditative or trance states induced by effort or technique. In Jonker's dataset (Jonker 2010), this passivity is clearly seen in practitioners who describe their initiation or healing experiences as spontaneous, unexpected, and beyond their control.

Another striking aspect is the *Ongoing impact* of the mystical encounter. In traditional mysticism, this often takes the form of a transformed moral orientation or life purpose. In Reiki, as Beeler (2015) point out, it manifests in lifestyle changes, emotional healing, new ethical sensitivity, and a deepened sense of interconnection. Beeler labeled this as a path of *doing-becoming-being* (Beeler 2015, Beeler & Jonker 2020). These impacts align closely with Waaajman's idea that mysticism is not merely about peak experiences but is fundamentally about transformation.

3. THE SIX-STAGE HISTORICAL TIMELINE OF REIKI MYSTICISM

Stage 1: Christian Unitarianism in Meiji Japan (late 1890s–early 1920s)

Rooted in liberal Protestantism, Unitarianism emphasized moral *self-culture* and humanity's *likeness to God* (Channing 1928¹. See also Channings 1938²). In Meiji Tokyo, the American Unitarian mission promoted a comparative, non-dogmatic Christianity aimed at intellectual elites, publishing *Yunitarian*, founding the First Unitarian Church (1890), and advancing a 'sympathy of religions' approach. Japanese Christian thinkers such as Tokio Yokoi engaged this liberal climate, advocating a simple, non-sectarian Christianity—part of the milieu that later shaped his religious outlook. I realize that none of these sources assert a direct Unitarian → Reiki pipeline; the influence I theorize is contextual (intellectual-religious atmosphere) rather than documentary-causal.

At the age of around 18/19, Yokoi had a mystical experience on Mt. Hanaoka where he was struck by the Light and Love of Jesus. He became a Congregational minister and experienced a personal development towards the point where he was searching for a 'new religion' suitable for the Japanese and free of dogma's (Yamaguchi 2005).

Stage 2: Holiness Movement (late 1890s–early 1930s)

The Holiness Movement brought to Japan a distinct theological emphasis on sanctification, spiritual rebirth, and divine healing. As described by Mullins (2003), the Holiness tradition promoted the idea that believers could receive a second blessing—an infilling of the Holy Spirit—after conversion, empowering them to lead

¹ William Ellery Channing's 1828 ordination sermon, "Likeness to God", which challenged Calvinist theology by emphasizing human perfectibility, the presence of divinity within humanity (immanence), and the power of human reason. It articulated a more liberal Unitarian viewpoint, providing the intellectual foundation for the American Transcendentalist movement by focusing on innate human dignity and spiritual potential, contrasting with the remote, interventionist God of Deism and the depraved view of humanity in Calvinism.

² "Self-Culture" is an essay by William Ellery Channing delivered as an introductory address to the Franklin Lectures in Boston in September 1838. The text emphasizes the importance of individuals recognizing their inner potential for growth and striving for perfection through self-reflection and the development of their higher powers.

morally transformed lives and, in some cases, experience healing through prayer and the laying on of hands. These practices were framed not as mystical in a narrow sense, but as visible signs of spiritual regeneration and God's active presence.

Previous work (Jonker 2016; Beeler and Jonker 2020, 2023) did not discuss the Japanese Holiness Movement but can retrospectively be read as supporting significant overlaps between Holiness practices and foundational elements of Reiki. In particular, the Reiki initiation ritual (*reiju*, 霊授)—through which energy is transmitted from teacher to student—echoes the Holiness rite of spiritual impartation. In both cases, power is transmitted through physical touch and spiritual intention, marking a moment of transformation and empowerment.

Tokio Yokoi, a Congregational minister influenced by liberal Protestantism and later engaged with Holiness circles, played a key role in this convergence. In 1897/8, Yokoi participated in study groups (Jonker 2024) that explored the possibility of the direct transmission of spiritual power—not merely moral strength, but a Spirit-given efficacy associated with sanctification and healing. Through practices such as *kitō* (祈祷, healing prayer or petition). This power was understood as both divine grace and a transferable force, which Yokoi helped to articulate in a Japanese ritual framework.

Intermezzo. The concept of *power* (*chikara* 力 or *seiryoku* 精力) in Yokoi's milieu drew from multiple traditions. In the Holiness Movement, it denoted the empowerment of the Holy Spirit for sanctification and healing, often phrased as receiving “power from on high” (Acts 1:8) (Mullins 2003). In Japan, however, this intersected with ritual frameworks where *power* was conceived as a transferable spiritual efficacy. *Kitō* (祈祷, healing prayer or petition) exemplified this, while analogous precedents existed in esoteric Buddhist empowerment (*kanjō* 灌頂), understood as the ritual transmission of realization or spiritual force (Heine 2008). Early Reiki initiation (*reiju* 霊授) later embodied a similar logic of spiritual empowerment, linking Holiness notions of divine power with Japanese ritual practices of transmission (Sonntag 2012).

Thus, the Holiness influence on Reiki lies not in speculative mysticism but in a theology of spiritual empowerment, moral purification, and divine healing through surrender and transmission. Reiki's early formation can be situated within this broader spiritual atmosphere, in which healing was understood not only in physical terms but also as an outward sign of inner transformation and sanctification.

Yokoi and Usui: Authenticity, Origin Narratives, and Mystical Transmission

This subsection examines how the theorized teacher–student relationship between Yokoi and Usui shaped the formation of Reiki's origin narrative and illuminates the deeper mechanisms of lineage, authority, and mystical transmission within the tradition.

Taken together, Yokoi's liberal-Christian background, his engagement with Holiness concepts of sanctification and spiritual empowerment, and his incorporation of Japanese ritual culture suggest that the environment in which he worked provided not

only a conceptual vocabulary for healing through divine power, but also a plausible framework of transmission.

A recurrent dynamic within mystical traditions is the desire to anchor spiritual practice in an “authentic origin”—a founding moment, lineage, or revelation perceived as closer to the Source. In Christian history, this dynamic appears in debates around the Council of Nicaea, the authority of canonical texts, and the modern search for an original Aramaic Lord’s Prayer, despite the fact that the oldest textual witnesses are Greek. The impulse is not primarily historical but mythic: a quest for authority grounded in imagined proximity to an unmediated beginning.

A structurally similar dynamic becomes visible in the formation of Reiki when the Yokoi–Usui relationship is taken seriously. As Takata’s narrative was transmitted orally, it appears to have preserved and recombined biographical details that align closely with Rev. Tokio Yokoi—Christian ministry, Dōshisha connections, theological study, healing prayer and divine healing, and a framework of sanctification—together with the public persona of Mikao Usui. The result is an idealized founder figure whose life appears to combine Christian, Buddhist, and contemplative qualities. Rather than being simply inaccurate, the narrative can be read as reflecting a process of origin-myth formation in which teacher and disciple were progressively drawn together into a single symbolic bearer of authority. In this reading, the memorialization of Usui in the 1927 Memorial Stone marks a later moment of public canonization and stabilization within that broader process (Jonker 2026a, -b).

Historical context strengthens this interpretation. After his stroke in 1919, Yokoi continued to receive visitors and students privately, teaching from his home until his death in 1927. Usui, during this same period, appears to have been engaged in a wider search involving healing, Christian, psychological, and Buddhist materials (Jonker 2025a, -b). In this light, a setting of private tutorship or spiritual mentorship appears more plausible than the Zen monastery sometimes imagined in later retellings. Even the linguistic ambiguity noted in Takata’s story—where the Japanese term *shi* (teacher) could easily have been rendered as “abbot”—fits this reinterpretation. It suggests that Takata was describing not the head of a monastery but a respected senior guide.

Several fragments of her narrative preserve the structure of a teacher–student relationship: Usui approaches a senior figure for guidance, receives instruction, undertakes a demanding spiritual discipline, and later returns to report a breakthrough experience. These elements resemble personal spiritual tutorship rather than institutional (Zen) training. The doctrinal content also supports this reading. Themes such as ‘purification before healing’, transmission of spiritual power, inner light, and cross-traditional synthesis align closely with Yokoi’s documented Holiness-Christian and comparative-religious interests.

In this perspective, Usui’s retreat on Mt. Kurama can be read as the contemplative enactment of a trajectory earlier associated, in this interpretive model, with Yokoi. The

disciple then completes or extends the teacher's quest by translating themes of empowerment and sanctification into a Japanese contemplative format. This interpretive move does not diminish Usui; rather, it clarifies his role as the ritual crystallizer of a vision mediated through a predecessor. Beyond Takata's narrative, later memorialization also preserves the claim of a retreat on Mt. Kurama. At the same time, the reported duration of twenty-one days need not be read in a narrowly literal sense but may function symbolically to indicate an extended or ritually marked period of discipline. In either case, the narrative points to a *rite de passage* in which Usui emerges not only as seeker but as bearer of transmissible authority, and this may be regarded as the spiritual essence of this part of Takata's account.

The subsequent disappearance of Yokoi's name from Reiki's public memory can be explained by two Taishō-era dynamics: founders of new religious movements routinely emphasized direct revelation over lineage, and Christian associations became politically sensitive, especially after the Taishō-to-Shōwa transition, making it easier, and perhaps at times necessary, to present Reiki in Buddhist or universal terms (Jonker 2026b). The merging of identities in Takata's oral narrative thus served a practical and symbolic function, aligning Reiki with safer cultural idioms while preserving a deeper continuity of mystical intent.

Understanding Reiki in light of this teacher–student lineage supports the broader argument that Reiki is a convergence tradition: a layered transmission in which Christian sanctification, Holiness healing, Zen discipline, and Japanese ritual forms coalesce. Reiki's early formation can then be understood not as a single transparent historical event, but as a mediated process in which formative impulses plausibly moved through Yokoi, Usui, and the emerging ritual body of *reiki ryōhō*. This framing also deepens the meaning of Mystic Order, situating it within an intergenerational rhythm of spiritual transmission rather than a purely institutional structure.

With this lineage relationship brought into focus, Usui's later retreat on Mt. Kurama can be interpreted not as an isolated ascetic event, but as the contemplative continuation of a trajectory earlier mediated through his teacher. This makes the transition to Buddhist influence—particularly Zen—both more coherent and more intelligible within Reiki's evolving mystical structure.

Stage 3: Buddhist Contemplative Influences (late 19th century–1930s)

The contemplative dimension of Reiki has often been interpreted through the lens of Zen Buddhism. In particular, the story transmitted by Hawayo Takata describes Mikao Usui spending time in a Zen monastery before undertaking a twenty-one-day retreat on Mt. Kurama. Within this narrative framework, Reiki's origins are frequently presented as emerging from a Zen context in which disciplined meditation culminates in a moment of spiritual insight.

From a historical perspective, however, this interpretation must be approached with caution. The Zen monastery episode appears only in Takata's oral narrative and cannot currently be confirmed by contemporary Japanese documentation. As a result, while Zen provides an influential interpretive framework for understanding aspects of

Reiki's contemplative character, it cannot be treated as a demonstrable institutional source of the practice.

Nevertheless, Zen traditions offer useful comparative perspectives for understanding certain elements that later became associated with Reiki practice. Zen emphasizes *shugyō* (修行), the disciplined cultivation of body and mind through sustained spiritual practice. Such cultivation often takes the form of intensive retreats, extended meditation, and ascetic discipline. These practices are designed to create conditions in which habitual patterns of thought dissolve and deeper insight may arise. Descriptions of spiritual breakthrough within Zen frequently employ imagery of radical transformation. Classical Zen literature speaks of the moment of awakening as a profound reorientation of awareness, sometimes characterized as a "great death" followed by a new mode of seeing reality. While Reiki literature does not explicitly employ such terminology, the narrative structure of Usui's retreat on Mt. Kurama—culminating in a transformative realization after a period of intense discipline—bears a general resemblance to this broader pattern of contemplative practice found in several Buddhist traditions.

At the same time, it is important not to overstate these similarities. Zen training typically involves rigorous monastic discipline, structured meditation practice, and formal teacher–student transmission within established institutional frameworks. No historical evidence currently demonstrates that Usui underwent such training. The retreat described in later narratives may therefore reflect a more general pattern of ascetic or contemplative practice rather than a specifically Zen monastic formation.

In this light, Zen Buddhism can best be understood as providing a comparative model for interpreting the contemplative and disciplinary dimensions later associated with Reiki. Zen illustrates how disciplined spiritual practice may culminate in transformative realization and provides conceptual language for describing experiences of ego-transcendence and awakening. Yet the historical formation of Reiki appears to have occurred within a broader religious environment where multiple traditions—Christian, Buddhist, and new psycho-spiritual movements—interacted. Consequently, while Zen comparisons remain helpful for understanding the contemplative structure attributed to Usui's retreat narrative, they should be treated primarily as interpretive analogies rather than as direct historical explanations for the emergence of Reiki. Other Buddhist traditions, particularly those emphasizing receptive participation in a greater spiritual power, may offer equally important perspectives for interpreting the experiential dimension of Reiki practice. These possibilities become clearer when the discussion turns to the Pure Land traditions that formed an influential part of the religious landscape of modern Japan. (Heine 2008, Irons 2008).

Stage 4: Pure Land Buddhism

Intermezzo. During the Meiji and Taishō periods, Pure Land Buddhism, particularly *Jōdo Shinshū*, underwent substantial adaptation under changing political and cultural conditions. After earlier pressures associated with state restructuring and critiques of Buddhism, it rearticulated its public role in ways that could accommodate both national discourse and forms of social engagement. In a different register, comparable tensions between national

framing and practical care also reappear in the history of Reiki. The nationalist dimension is relevant to the milieu of high-ranking naval officers involved in early Reiki networks, while a social-care dimension can be seen, for example, in Hayashi's Reiki clinic.

While Zen comparisons have often been used to interpret the contemplative aspects of Reiki practice, another Buddhist framework may offer an equally—if not more—revealing phenomenological parallel: Pure Land Buddhism, particularly within the *Jōdo-shū* tradition. Unlike Zen, which emphasizes disciplined meditative insight and the practitioner's realization through contemplative effort, Pure Land traditions center on a relational and receptive spirituality grounded in reliance upon a greater salvific power.

At the heart of Pure Land thought lies the distinction between *jiriki* (self-power) and *tariki* (other-power). Rather than attaining liberation primarily through one's own effort, the practitioner entrusts themselves to the compassionate activity of Amida Buddha. Through the recitation of the *nembutsu* and the cultivation of faith, the practitioner participates in a transformative relationship with a transcendent source of grace. Liberation is thus understood less as the result of disciplined self-mastery than as the reception of a power that precedes and sustains the practitioner.

Although Reiki is not a doctrinally Pure Land practice, the experiential descriptions reported by many practitioners show notable phenomenological parallels with this logic of receptive participation. Practitioners frequently describe Reiki not simply as an energy they direct but as a presence that appears to guide the healing process, sometimes described as “working through” the practitioner rather than being controlled by them. In such accounts the practitioner's role shifts from that of an active manipulator of energy to that of a participant in a larger process that unfolds through them.

Within the framework of mystical theology used in this article, this experiential dimension corresponds closely with Waaijman's characteristic of *Presence*. Mystical experience often begins with the sense that a sacred presence manifests itself to the practitioner and initiates a transformative encounter. Reiki experiences described as light, warmth, guiding intelligence, or an active healing force can be interpreted phenomenologically as expressions of this category of *Presence*. The practitioner does not simply generate or manipulate the experience but receives and participates in it.

Closely related are Waaijman's characteristics of *Passivity and immediacy* and the *shift of the act-center*, in which the locus of agency moves away from the practitioner's ego toward a greater-than-self source of action. In Reiki practice this shift often becomes visible in descriptions where healing occurs “through” the practitioner rather than “by” them. Such descriptions resonate with the Pure Land notion that transformative power originates beyond the individual and becomes effective through receptive participation.

A historical indication that Pure Land traditions may have formed part of the broader religious environment surrounding early Reiki can also be found in the memorial context associated with Mikao Usui. The Saihōji temple in Tokyo, where Usui's memorial stone was erected in 1927, belongs to the *Jōdo-shū* tradition. While this fact alone does not prove Usui's personal affiliation with Pure Land Buddhism, it

demonstrates that the institutional and ritual setting in which his memory was preserved was embedded within a Pure Land milieu. This proximity strengthens the plausibility that elements of receptive Buddhist spirituality were part of the wider religious environment in which Reiki developed.

Taken together, these observations suggest that Pure Land Buddhism provides a particularly fruitful interpretive lens for understanding certain experiential dimensions of Reiki mysticism. Where Zen offers useful comparisons for discipline, retreat practice, and contemplative structure, the Pure Land framework highlights the receptive dimension of spiritual transformation—the experience of participating in a compassionate or guiding power greater than the practitioner themselves.

From this perspective, Reiki can be understood not merely as a technique for directing life energy but as a relational encounter with a sacred presence that acts through the practitioner. The Pure Land distinction between *jiriki* and *tariki* therefore offers a helpful phenomenological analogy: Reiki practice may be experienced less as the exertion of personal power than as participation in a healing force whose initiative ultimately lies beyond the individual practitioner.

(Dobbins 1989; Hirota 1989; Heine 2008; Beeler and Jonker 2020).

Anshin, Existential Assurance, and the Broader Vocabulary of Anshin Ritsumei in Taishō and Early Shōwa Japan

It appears that the archival materials of the Usui Reiki Ryōhō Gakkai contain no extant writings by Usui that explicitly refer to *anshin ritsumei*. This absence has led some to conclude that the concept did not form part of the practice in Usui's time. Such a conclusion, however, remains uncertain. In the broader religious and intellectual milieu of Taishō Japan, expressions denoting inner assurance and existential stabilization—whether articulated as *anjin* in Jōdo traditions or more generally as *anshin ritsumei*—circulated widely and were often presupposed rather than explicitly defined. The absence of the term in surviving documents may therefore reflect patterns of implicit usage within a shared conceptual vocabulary, rather than its absence as an experiential or conceptual element. At the same time, this possibility cannot be demonstrated on the basis of current sources and should therefore be understood as a conceptual and phenomenological parallel rather than as a directly documented doctrinal borrowing.

Within the religious and intellectual landscape of Taishō and early Shōwa Japan, the expression *anshin ritsumei* (安心立命) functioned as a widely circulating term denoting a condition of existential stabilization: a state in which one's mind is settled (*anshin*) and one's life or destiny is grounded (*ritsume*). Although the compound itself did not belong exclusively to any single Buddhist school, it formed part of a broader shared vocabulary that traversed Neo-Confucian ethics, Zen discourse, and modern spiritual-philosophical reflection. Its semantic field—inner peace combined with existential orientation—resonated strongly with religious traditions concerned with salvation, assurance, and the resolution of existential anxiety.

Within Jōdo-shū Buddhism, particularly as it was articulated in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the functional equivalent of this condition was

expressed not through the compound *anshin ritsume* itself, but through the doctrinal category of *anjin* (安心), the “settled mind” grounded in entrusting to Amida Buddha. Rooted in the teachings of Hōnen (1133–1212), *anjin* denotes the assurance of rebirth in the Pure Land through reliance on *tariki* (other-power or reliance on other-power), thereby resolving the fundamental uncertainty surrounding one’s ultimate fate. This assurance is classically framed through the doctrine of the “three minds” (*sanjin* 三心), which articulate the inner disposition of the practitioner: sincerity, deep entrusting, and the aspiration for birth in the Pure Land. By the Taishō period, these doctrinal elements were not only well established but actively transmitted through sectarian education, temple instruction, and lay-oriented publications.

The *Seizan* (*Nishiyama*) branch of *Jōdo-shū* is of particular relevance in this context, as it has historically been characterized as an “*anjin*-oriented” lineage. Textual traditions associated with this branch, including the *Anjin ketsujō shō*, emphasize the decisive “settling” of the practitioner’s mind through entrusting in Amida’s vow. Here, the religious goal is not the accumulation of merit through practice alone, but the existential transformation that arises when self-power is relinquished and assurance is realized. In this respect, the *Seizan* tradition provides a particularly clear example of how *anjin* functions as a lived and experiential state rather than merely a doctrinal formulation.

When situated within the broader Taishō-era psycho-spiritual milieu—often described in terms such as *seishin ryōhō* (精神療法) and *seishin shūyō* (精神修養)—the convergence becomes more apparent. Across religious and quasi-religious movements of the period, one finds a shared concern with inner transformation, moral cultivation, and the attainment of a stable existential orientation. Within this wider field, *anshin ritsume* can be understood as a general cultural expression of a goal that, within *Jōdo-shū*, was more precisely articulated as *anjin*. The difference is therefore not one of substance but of discursive register: a broadly circulating ethical-philosophical term on the one hand, and a sectarian doctrinal category on the other.

A further consideration concerns the broader cultural environment of Taishō Japan. Concepts relating to moral cultivation, existential assurance, spiritual discipline, and psychological self-development circulated widely across religious, educational, and therapeutic contexts often grouped under labels such as *seishin shūyō* and *seishin ryōhō*. From this perspective, the absence of a specific term within surviving documents does not necessarily indicate the absence of the underlying concept. Rather, such concepts may have formed part of a shared cultural repertoire that practitioners and authors could presuppose without always making them explicit. The present argument therefore concerns the circulation of a broader vocabulary of existential assurance rather than the demonstrable transmission of a single doctrinal expression.

From the perspective of mystical analysis, this distinction is significant. The state described by *anjin*—a stabilized assurance grounded in a perceived relation to ultimate reality—corresponds closely to what may be identified as a form of “mystic order”: an experiential condition in which the practitioner’s existence is reoriented and integrated within a larger, meaningful whole. While *Jōdo-shū* does not frame this in the language of mysticism in a technical sense, the phenomenological structure aligns with broader definitions of transformative religious experience. In this light,

anshin ritsumei may be understood as the culturally generalized expression of a condition that, within Jōdo-shū and especially within the Seizan lineage, is doctrinally specified and ritually actualized as *anjin*.

Direct Taishō-period sources explicitly employing the compound *anshin ritsumei* within Jōdo-shū discourse remain limited. The relationship discussed here should therefore be understood primarily as a conceptual and phenomenological parallel grounded in broader religious vocabularies of the period rather than as evidence of direct doctrinal borrowing. Further clarification may emerge through future examination of Meiji–Taishō sermons, sectarian manuals, and related archival materials.

Stage 5: Influences of Usui's important students being high-ranked Naval officers *Reiki and Bushidō: Ethical Parallels in a Military Context*

The early dissemination of Reiki was shaped in part by its adoption among naval officers and military elites in the Taishō period. Several of Mikao Usui's key students—including Ushida Juzaburō and Chujiro Hayashi (albeit retired)—held high ranks in the Imperial Japanese Navy. Their attraction to Reiki may be better understood against the backdrop of the ethical culture of Taishō-era *bushidō*, the so-called “way of the warrior” (Benesch 2011, Jonker 2016).

Paraphrasing Benesch (2011), *bushidō* in this period was not a timeless martial code but a modern moral construct that synthesized Christian notions of conscience and sacrifice, Confucian loyalty, and military virtues of discipline and self-transcendence. Thinkers like Uemura Masahisa, a Christian minister, helped articulate a vision of *bushidō* that emphasized inner purification, moral restraint, and service to a transcendent cause. This reinterpretation aligned well with Protestant and Holiness ideals of sanctification and spiritual rebirth.

In this light, Reiki's appeal to military officers may have stemmed from more than its healing effects. The practice of *reiju* (霊授), or spiritual initiation, parallels the transmission of power and responsibility found in martial and religious initiation rites. The Reiki Precepts (*Gokai*) also reflect the moral minimalism and ethical discipline prized in *bushidō* writings: “Do not anger”, “Do not worry”, “Be honest in your work”—these could easily harmonize with the daily maxims of naval officers shaped by imperial ethics.

While Usui himself did not explicitly frame Reiki as a warrior path, its ritual seriousness, emphasis on self-control, and channeling of higher energy may have resonated deeply with *bushidō*-trained minds. If, as Benesch suggests, *bushidō* during this era served as a spiritualized ethics for the modern Japanese male, then Reiki offered a complementary spiritual technique—rooted not in nationalism, but in transcendent transformation. Its apparent acceptability among men of rank suggests a degree of compatibility with dominant ethical frameworks, even as it quietly introduced a universalizing spiritual current beneath the militarized surface of the age.

Stage 6: Contemporary Reiki Mysticism (1980s–present)

As is known, Hayashi trained Takata who introduced Reiki in the West in the 1930s. It is remarkable that Takata being a Japanese woman living on Hawaii, managed to

hold Reiki during World War II and continued teaching after the war. Today, Reiki is best understood as a form of holistic spirituality, rather than strictly New Age. For example, research among Reikimasters in the Netherlands shows that mystical experiences occur regularly and conform to Waaijman's ten characteristics, especially: *Presence*, *Shift of the act-center*, and *Ongoing impact*.

The inclusion of Zen and Pure Land Buddhism in interpretive accounts of Reiki's formative layers need not be seen as wholly speculative. Jonker's thesis (2016) discusses how elements associated with Zen practice—such as silence, ritual form, and direct experience—show meaningful structural parallels with the format of Reiki initiations and treatments. The Pure Land concept of *tariki*, or reliance on other-power, likewise resonates with Reiki's emphasis on surrender to universal energy. Both traditions illuminate ways of understanding the practitioner's relation to a transcendent source, though through different symbols and soteriological frameworks.

The empirical findings presented in this study reinforce this cross-traditional synthesis especially the characteristics *Presence* and *Shift of the act-center*. For instance, one Reikimaster described experiencing a complete sensory shutdown, followed by the sense of dissolving into a greater presence. Another reported seeing colored lights and feeling as though energy flowed from the crown to the hands during an initiation. These are not random anecdotes—they align systematically with the mystical characteristics identified by Waaijman.

A noteworthy example of Christian influence appears in the frequent use of language such as “divine energy,” “God's light,” or “angelic guidance” in Western Reiki communities. Although the practice itself is not dogmatically theistic, this mystical vocabulary suggests a continuing Christian-Holiness resonance rather than a simple secularization or dilution of Reiki in the West. This hybridization is not accidental; Jonker argues that Reiki evolved to accommodate both Eastern and Western spiritual archetypes, thereby becoming a bridge between traditions (Jonker 2016b).

Previous work elaborates on the ritual and symbolic dimensions of Reiki that mirror older mystical frameworks (Beeler and Jonker 2020). Earlier comparative analysis of Reiki initiation rituals had already identified *reiju* as a transformative *rite-de-passage* involving sacred transmission, purification, and continuity with an originating sacred source (Beeler, Horowitz, and Jonker 2019), themes that closely align with the phenomenological characteristics of mystical experience discussed in the present study. They identify Reiki practice as involving four layers: ritual, symbolism, extra-sensory perception, and human flourishing. These categories not only illuminate Reiki's mystical potential but also demonstrate its structural similarity to traditional mysticism in both form and function. Each Reiki initiation or healing session thereby becomes a liminal space—a moment of sacred encounter that can be situated within the broader history of human-divine interaction described in mystical traditions.

PART II — CONTEMPORARY INTERPRETIVE EXTENSIONS

The second part of this study moves from historical reconstruction and phenomenological comparison toward constructive and practitioner-oriented interpretation. The chapters in this section do not seek to establish additional historical proof regarding Reiki's origins, but instead explore how contemporary interpretive frameworks may help articulate the collective, relational, and spiritual dimensions of Reiki practice as it is experienced today.

Concepts such as Source, lineage continuity, Mystic Order, and collective awakening are therefore approached as heuristic and exploratory models rather than as documentary-historical conclusions. Within this perspective, contemporary spiritual frameworks are used to reflect on how mystical experience, ritual transmission, ethical cultivation, and shared spiritual practice may become embodied within living Reiki communities and evolving traditions.

4. SOURCE INTEGRITY AND LINEAGE: APPLYING KOENIG'S SOURCE PRINCIPLES

In contemporary Reiki communities, practitioners frequently describe their healing experiences using the language of *Source*. This term refers to the perception that healing does not originate from the individual practitioner but from a deeper, transpersonal dimension of life or consciousness. Practitioners often report that Reiki acts through them rather than being directed by them.

From a scholarly perspective, such descriptions can be interpreted using the phenomenological categories discussed earlier. Experiences described as contact with *Source*, as postulated by Peter Koenig (2010), closely correspond with several characteristics identified by Waaijman, particularly *Presence*, *Passivity* and *immediacy*, and *Shift of the act-center*. In these experiences the practitioner no longer experiences themselves as the primary agent of action; instead, healing is perceived as arising from a reality that transcends the individual self.

Within practitioner communities, the language of *Source* therefore functions as a way of articulating this experiential shift of agency. It expresses the conviction that Reiki practice involves participation in a larger field of healing activity rather than the manipulation of an impersonal force. While the terminology itself belongs to practitioner discourse rather than to classical religious traditions, the experiential pattern it describes closely parallels structures documented in the study of mysticism across multiple religious contexts.

In this sense, references to *Source* within Reiki communities can be understood as a contemporary articulation of a phenomenon widely recognized in the comparative study of mysticism: the experience that transformative action originates beyond the individual self.

Just as the Zen connection discussed earlier cannot presently be demonstrated as a direct institutional source due to the absence of primary documentation, the Yokoi–Usui relationship likewise cannot be established through direct documentary-causal evidence. The following application of Koenig's Source framework therefore makes no claim of historical causality. Rather, it functions as an interpretive and structural analogy for exploring how a formative spiritual impulse, if the Yokoi

hypothesis is accepted as historically plausible, might have been transmitted, rearticulated, and embodied within the Reiki tradition.

Although Peter Koenig's Source framework was developed outside the academic study of religion, its use here is not intended as an explanatory historical theory. Rather, it is employed as a contemporary interpretive vocabulary for reflecting on processes of spiritual continuity, transmission, and lineage formation. In this respect, Koenig's emphasis on the preservation and embodiment of a founding impulse shows broad structural parallels with themes long discussed in the sociology of religion, particularly Max Weber's analysis of charismatic authority and its routinization across generations. The framework is therefore used heuristically to explore how formative spiritual impulses may become stabilized and transmitted within living traditions rather than as evidence for historical causality.

Within the constructive and interpretive framework developed in this section, Tokio Yokoi may be viewed, in Koenig's sense, as a possible 'Source' figure: a spiritually awakened figure who received a transformative vision of divine Light and Love and translated that experience into theological and ritual frameworks influenced by Christian and Holiness-related currents. His documented engagement with spiritual healing, rituals of direct transmission such as *kitō* (祈祷), and sanctification practices situates him as a plausible formative figure in the background of what later emerged as a more structured mystical path.

Within this constructive reading, Mikao Usui may be interpreted as a secondary or delegated source: someone who appears to have received, rearticulated, and embodied spiritual foundations that, in this interpretive reconstruction, were already present in Yokoi's milieu. Usui's retreat on Mt. Kurama and his development of *Reiki Ryōhō* may then be read not as the spontaneous creation of a wholly new system, but as the ritual crystallization of formative impulses mediated through a predecessor. Koenig's theory allows for such derivative or "sub-sources", provided that they remain faithful to the founding impulse and contribute to the evolution without severing lineage continuity. Note that the Source framework does not function here as evidence for the Yokoi hypothesis. Rather, it is applied only as a possible interpretive lens through which the implications of that historical hypothesis may be explored. Whether Yokoi in fact occupied such a formative position remains a historical question that must be evaluated on the basis of documentary, biographical, and contextual evidence discussed elsewhere.

Within this interpretive framework, the same principles may also provide a way of reflecting on later patterns of Reiki transmission of Reiki through high-ranking naval officers such as Ushida and Hayashi, whose military ethics may have resonated with the moral integrity and discipline implicit in the original Source impulse. Koenig emphasizes the need for boundary management—the ability of the Source or its keepers to distinguish between authentic extensions and divergent appropriations. In this light, the moral and contemplative alignment of early Reiki adherents with the founding vision lends support to the argument for coherent transmission.

In the global phase of Reiki (Stage 6), where new lineages emerged—most notably through Hawayo Takata in the West—Koenig's model mentioned above provides tools for assessing legitimacy. According to his principles, each offshoot must either consciously align with the original Source or recognize itself as a new initiative

with its own internal Source logic. When Reiki practices in the West maintain the mystical characteristics and ethical orientation identified in earlier stages, they may, within this framework, be understood as coherent developments rather than complete ruptures.

Thus, Koenig's Source Principles offer more than a theory of organizational dynamics—they provide a framework for understanding spiritual lineage, mysticism, and the transmission of sacred experience. By identifying the role of the Source—here interpreted as Tokio Yokoi within Koenig's analytical framework—and tracing how its impulse is preserved, adapted, or diluted across generations, we gain deeper insight into how Reiki may have maintained a recognizable mystical continuity while expanding across cultures.

5. MYSTICISM IN *USUI SHIKI RYŌHŌ*: INSPIRING THE FOURTH ASPECT, MYSTIC ORDER

This section focuses on *Usui Shiki Ryōhō*, the form of Reiki articulated by Phyllis Lei Furumoto through its Four Aspects and Nine Elements, in order to explore how the historical development of Reiki mysticism may serve as inspiration for realizing its fourth and least-developed aspect: Mystic Order.

The Four Aspects of *Usui Shiki Ryōhō* are³: Healing Practice, Personal Development, Spiritual Discipline, Mystic Order.

The first three aspects are well established through the lived experience of Reiki as a healing art, a tool for growth, and a daily discipline. The fourth, Mystic Order, points toward a deeper and more communal realization of the system—a subtle spiritual order characterized by shared rhythm, spiritual transmission, and a conscious fidelity to the founding impulse of the practice. It remains, to a substantial extent, an open invitation.

The Nine Elements of *Usui Shiki Ryōhō* are⁴: Form of Teaching, History, Initiation, Money, Oral Tradition, Precepts, Spiritual Lineage, Symbols, and Treatment.

These elements serve as the structural and pedagogical foundation of *Usui Shiki Ryōhō*. Each is an essential vehicle for the preservation and transmission of the system's inner content. However, the potential of these elements to coalesce into a sustained mystical rhythm—into *Mystic Order*—has not yet been fully realized.

The present study has traced the development of Reiki mysticism through six historical stages, from Christian inspiration and Holiness healing to Pure Land / *Jōdo-shū* forms of receptive spirituality, later contemplative comparisons with Zen, and contemporary global expressions. This timeline reveals not only the layering of spiritual influences but also a recurring continuity of mystical orientation. What emerges is a latent mystical tradition embedded in the Reiki system, particularly as practiced within *Usui Shiki Ryōhō*.

At the experiential level, this tradition can be illuminated using Kees Waaijman's ten characteristics of mystical experience, especially where Reiki is encountered as

³ See: <https://www.usuishikiryohoreiki.com/usui-shiki-ryoho/four-aspects/> visited March 2026.

⁴ See: <https://www.usuishikiryohoreiki.com/usui-shiki-ryoho/nine-elements/> visited March 2026.

Presence, as a *Shift of the act-center*, and as participation in a greater-than-self healing agency. States such as *Presence*, *Shift of the act-center*, and *Ongoing impact* regularly appear within Reiki practice—especially during *reiju*, symbol invocation, ethical reflection, and treatments. These characteristics, however, often arise informally or individually. To serve as the foundation for Mystic Order, they must become part of a consciously cultivated collective field.

The nine elements provide the form; Waaijman’s characteristics reveal the mystical content of that form. When practiced together, they create a coherent and repeatable structure in which mysticism is not only possible but accessible, transmissible, and sustained.

Realizing the fourth aspect—Mystic Order—requires a subtle shift: from viewing the elements as tools or features to engaging them as portals into a deeper shared experience. In this reframed understanding, Usui Shiki Ryōhō is no longer simply a healing system but the vessel of an emergent spiritual order—one grounded in ritual practice, spiritual lineage, oral transmission, and fidelity to a founding impulse, echoing Peter Koenig’s notion of the Source that animates and sustains a living tradition.

One important vehicle through which this shared mystical content may become articulated and transmitted is the symbolic dimension of Reiki itself. If mystical experience is to become collectively embodied within a living tradition, it must in some way be communicated, remembered, and re-enacted across generations.

6. FROM RITUAL TOOL TO SYMBOLIC CONTEMPLATION: THE WESTERN RECEPTION OF REIKI SYMBOLS

Within Reiki communities, it is often assumed that Usui communicated something of his transformative experience on Mt. Kurama to his students, including Hayashi⁵. How such communication may have taken place remains unknown, but one possibility is that written forms played a role in conveying experiences that are difficult to express verbally.

In Japanese, written *kanji* frequently provide a level of precision that spoken language alone cannot always convey. Japanese speakers may therefore resort to writing a character when explaining a concept whose meaning remains ambiguous in speech. For example, if Usui spoke of *ki*, a listener might naturally ask, *Kanji de dō kakimasu ka?* (“How is it written in *kanji*?”), since the sound *ki* itself does not specify which character or nuance is intended. Writing the character can immediately clarify meaning and association.

Against this background, it is possible that visual forms or written characters functioned as vehicles through which aspects of Usui’s experience could be communicated to others. Within some contemporary interpretations of Reiki, the forms now known as the Reiki symbols are understood not merely as practical ritual tools but also as graphic expressions of key dimensions of Usui’s transformative

⁵ Based on ongoing conversations with Reiki masters such as Fokke Brink, being a specialist in Reiki symbols.

realization. From this perspective, the first symbol may be interpreted as expressing an encounter with a greater healing or spiritual agency; the second as representing liberation from ego-centered awareness and a return to one's deeper nature; and the third as expressing an experiential realization of interconnectedness and the overcoming of separation.

Whether these interpretations reflect Usui's original intention cannot be established historically. Nevertheless, they provide a useful phenomenological framework for understanding how transformative experiences may become communicated, preserved, and transmitted within a spiritual tradition. If such a process occurred, Hayashi may likewise have used these forms when explaining to Takata what Usui had experienced on Mt. Kurama, allowing a personal experience to become embodied within a shared lineage of practice. And here it becomes interesting for this article.

An important yet often overlooked aspect of Reiki's historical development concerns the changing interpretation of Reiki symbols as the practice moved from Japan to the West. While contemporary Western Reiki traditions frequently regard the symbols as carriers of profound spiritual and mystical meaning, reports from members of the Usui Reiki Ryōhō Gakkai often suggest a more pragmatic understanding. Symbols are commonly described as tools employed within practice and transmission. Once their function has been internalized through repeated use, they may become less important or even unnecessary.

The widespread English translation of these forms as "symbols" may itself have influenced their reception in the West. While the term naturally invites questions of meaning and interpretation, contemporary Japanese practitioners often describe them more pragmatically as tools employed within practice. This raises the possibility that Western symbolic understanding reflects not only the forms themselves but also the interpretive consequences of their translation and transmission. This difference in reception raises an intriguing question. If Reiki symbols are today widely understood as vehicles of spiritual insight, mystical realization, and personal transformation, how did this interpretation emerge?

One possible explanation lies in the different cultural environments in which Reiki developed. Within many Japanese religious traditions, ritual efficacy often takes precedence over doctrinal explanation. Talismans, mudras, mantras, ritual diagrams, and sacred characters are frequently valued because of their practical function within a ritual context. Their significance is embedded in use rather than in systematic theological interpretation. In such settings, the question is often how a symbol functions rather than what it means.

Western religious and esoteric traditions frequently approach symbols differently. Influenced by currents such as Christian mysticism, Hermeticism, Theosophy, Jungian psychology, and later New Age spirituality, Western practitioners often regard symbols as repositories of hidden wisdom. Symbols invite contemplation, interpretation, and the search for deeper meaning. Rather than asking how a symbol functions, practitioners frequently ask what spiritual reality it represents.

The transmission of Reiki from Hayashi to Takata and subsequently to Western students may therefore have involved more than geographical relocation. It may also have involved a gradual shift in the way symbols were understood and experienced. Symbols that may originally have functioned primarily as ritual instruments increasingly became objects of contemplation and interpretation. Through decades of reflection and practice, Western practitioners developed rich symbolic readings connecting the Reiki symbols with healing, transformation, non-duality, spiritual awakening, and interconnectedness.

Such developments are not unique to Reiki. Throughout the history of religions, symbols often acquire additional layers of meaning as traditions spread across cultural boundaries. Experiences are frequently transmitted first through ritual and practice, while later generations develop theological, symbolic, and philosophical interpretations that seek to articulate those experiences more explicitly.

The possibility also exists that the symbols themselves preserve aspects of the formative spiritual experiences associated with Reiki's emergence. Contemporary interpretations have suggested that the symbols may function as graphic condensations of experiential insights associated with the transformative events remembered in Reiki tradition. From this perspective, the symbols may not merely represent abstract doctrines but may serve as visual gateways through which practitioners participate in and reinterpret foundational experiences.

This possibility resonates with earlier observations regarding *reiju*. Horowitz interpreted *reiju* as recreating participation in Usui's original realization through ritual transmission. If *reiju* transmits participation in a formative experience, the symbols may be understood as complementary vehicles that assist practitioners in reflecting upon, embodying, and articulating dimensions of that same experience.

Within this perspective, the growing symbolic and contemplative engagement with Reiki symbols in the West may have contributed significantly to the emergence of Reiki as an explicitly mystical path. What may have functioned originally as practical ritual instruments gradually became focal points for reflection on transformation, unity, receptivity, healing, and spiritual realization. The symbols thus served not only as instruments of practice but also as catalysts for the development of a shared mystical vocabulary.

Seen in this way, the Western reception of Reiki symbols may represent an important stage in the movement from individual mystical experience toward collective spiritual realization. Through the ongoing interpretation of symbols, personal experiences become communicable, shared, and transmissible within a wider community. Symbols thereby contribute to the formation of a living tradition capable of sustaining what Usui Shiki Ryōhō describes as the fourth aspect: Mystic Order.

7. FROM MYSTIC ORDER TO EVOLUTIONARY ENLIGHTENMENT: REFRAMING COLLECTIVE AWAKENING IN REIKI

This chapter explores one contemporary stream of evolutionary spirituality as a possible interpretive dialogue partner for Mystic Order. Questions concerning

collective spiritual development and the evolution of consciousness have been explored by a variety of religious and philosophical thinkers, including Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, Sri Aurobindo, and, more recently, Andrew Cohen. The present discussion draws selectively upon Cohen's formulation of Evolutionary Enlightenment as one contemporary expression of this broader discourse. Cohen's framework is used here not as a historical source for Reiki, but as an interpretive lens for considering how Reiki practice might be understood as a pathway of conscious self-transformation and collective realization.

As Deepak Chopra observes in his foreword to Cohen's work, the first step toward transformation begins with the assurance that it is possible—an inner reassurance that “there is a place for the seeker” and that the universe has brought one to this moment to awaken. This assurance aligns with Reiki's ethos that anyone can participate in spiritual growth, beginning from where they are. Cohen articulates five Tenets—Clarity of Intention, The Power of Volition, Face Everything and Avoid Nothing, The Process Perspective, and Cosmic Conscience—that together provide a disciplined yet expansive orientation toward life's unfolding. Clarity of Intention, uniting desire, steadiness of purpose, and depth of awareness, mirrors the Reiki practitioner's meditative alignment in *reiju* and treatment, ensuring that intention is in harmony with the universal movement of *rei* (spirit). The Power of Volition [choice, desire]—the recognition that “I am the universe” and thus bear responsibility for the world—resonates with the conscious decision to live by the Reiki Precepts, making spiritual development an active, sustained choice rather than a passive inheritance. The third tenet, Face Everything and Avoid Nothing, which Chopra highlights as the courage to meet life fully, corresponds to Reiki's openness to whatever emerges in practice—physical sensation, emotional release, or spiritual insight—without denial or resistance. Chopra reframes this as part of the natural evolutionary process, not as a fearful rupture but as an awakening of dormant capacities. Continuing with Cohen, The Process Perspective emphasizes seeing one's life as a continuum rather than a set of isolated events; in Reiki, healing is understood as an evolving journey (i.e., Beeler 2015; *doing-becoming-being*), each attunement and session contributing to a larger unfolding. Finally, Cosmic Conscience, Cohen's call to act from the welfare of all beings (also addressed by Beeler (2015) in her Chapter on “Reiki as Love ...”), reframes Reiki's healing ethos as inseparable from a universal ethical responsibility, echoing Chopra's assertion that awakening is not withdrawal from the world but deeper participation in its evolution. Interpreted through these Tenets and foreword insights, Mystic Order emerges not merely as an organizational element within *Usui Shiki Ryōhō*, but as a living, evolutionary framework in which personal transformation and collective awakening are mutually reinforcing.

In this light, and building upon the framework outlined above, Mystic Order can be seen as the structural vessel through which Usui Shiki Ryōhō practitioners embody the principles of evolutionary self-transformation in a shared context. By embedding clarity of purpose, active responsibility, openness to all experience, a process-oriented view, and an ethic of universal care within its ritual life, the Reiki community integrates the individual journey of awakening into a collective rhythm. This framing seeks to preserve continuity with Reiki's historical roots—Christian-Holiness sanctification, Zen discipline, and Pure Land receptivity—while positioning it as an

active participant in the unfolding evolution of consciousness. Mystic Order thus becomes not only an internal organizational principle but also a catalyst for what Chopra describes as participation in the life-process in a deeper and more authentic way, enabling Reiki to function as a living bridge between personal healing and the ethical imperative of contributing to the greater good.

CONCLUSION: REIKI AS A MYSTICAL CONVERGENCE TRADITION

The present study gradually moves from individual mystical experience toward questions of collective realization, lineage, transmission, and shared spiritual continuity. Within this broader movement, Koenig's Source Theory does not function as a historical explanation for Reiki's emergence, but as a contemporary interpretive vocabulary for reflecting on how formative spiritual impulses may become embodied, transmitted, and preserved within living communities and traditions. Seen in this light, the final sections of the article extend the discussion from the phenomenology of mystical experience toward the question of how such experiences become collectively embodied within traditions, lineages, and spiritual communities.

This study has traced the historical and spiritual development of Reiki as a layered convergence of religious influences in modern Japan and beyond. Christian sanctification and Holiness healing, Buddhist contemplative traditions, and forms of receptive spirituality associated with Pure Land Buddhism each contributed theological, ritual, and experiential elements to the formation of Reiki's mystical identity. Through the six-stage timeline and the application of Kees Waaijman's characteristics of mystical experience, Reiki emerges not merely as a healing technique but as a spiritual practice oriented toward transformation through encounter with sacred Presence.

Within this process of transmission, Usui Shiki Ryōhō can be understood as a structured embodiment of Reiki's mystical inheritance. Its first three aspects—Healing Practice, Personal Development, and Spiritual Discipline—are widely practiced and provide the practical foundation through which practitioners cultivate awareness, ethical orientation, and embodied participation in the Reiki tradition. The fourth aspect, Mystic Order, points beyond individual practice toward a deeper realization of shared spiritual rhythm and collective alignment with the founding impulse of the system.

Seen in this light, Reiki mysticism is not only contemplative but also receptive. Experiences frequently described by practitioners—such as sensing guiding energy, perceiving light, or feeling that healing unfolds through rather than by the practitioner—correspond closely to Waaijman's characteristics of *Presence*, *Passivity and immediacy*, and the *Shift of the act-center*. These experiential patterns suggest that Reiki practice is often lived not as the manipulation of neutral energy but as participation in a greater-than-self healing activity.

By placing this experiential framework in dialogue with Andrew Cohen's model of *Evolutionary Enlightenment*, a further interpretive horizon opens. Reiki mysticism may not only preserve elements of earlier traditions but also provide a contemporary context in which individual awakening becomes connected with collective

transformation. As practitioners move from personal healing toward intersubjective realization, Reiki may function as a living field in which ritual practice, ethical cultivation, and shared presence converge.

From this perspective, Reiki can be understood as more than a convergence tradition. It is a living transmission that continues to reinterpret its historical roots while unfolding toward new forms of collective spiritual life. In this ongoing process, the realization of Mystic Order represents not the preservation of a fixed structure but the emergence of a shared rhythm through which the mystical dimensions of Reiki become consciously embodied within a community of practice.

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APPENDIX: REIKI AS A SPIRITUAL PATH: A PRACTITIONER-FRIENDLY EXPLANATION

Many people first encounter Reiki as a gentle method of healing through the laying on of hands. During a Reiki treatment the practitioner places their hands lightly on the body and allows Reiki energy to flow. This can support relaxation, emotional balance, and sometimes physical recovery. For this reason, Reiki is often described simply as a healing technique.

Yet many practitioners discover that Reiki gradually becomes more than a technique. With continued practice something deeper begins to unfold. Practitioners often notice that Reiki sessions bring not only physical or emotional relief but also a sense of inner calm, clarity, and connection. Some feel that the energy itself seems to guide the treatment, as if healing occurs through them rather than being directed by them, as if the energy has agency.

Experiences like this are familiar in spiritual traditions throughout the world and are often referred to as mysticism. They arise when people feel connected to a reality larger than themselves. In Reiki practice this connection often develops naturally over time. What begins as a method of healing may gradually become a path of personal and spiritual transformation bridging the seen and unseen world.

An important part of this transformation is the ethical teaching that accompanies Reiki. Practitioners are encouraged to live each day without anger and without worry, to cultivate gratitude, to work honestly, and to show kindness to others. These principles are not merely moral advice. They support the inner state from which healing and personal growth can arise. By returning to these principles again and again, Reiki practice becomes part of everyday life.

Many practitioners also notice a shift in how they understand healing itself. Instead of feeling that they must direct or control the energy, they experience that Reiki flows naturally when they allow it. The practitioner becomes less a controller of energy and more a participant in a larger process of healing. In this sense Reiki invites a movement from effort toward trust through surrender.

Over time Reiki can also create a sense of connection between people who share the practice. Practitioners recognize in one another a similar intention to cultivate compassion, balance, and awareness. Reiki thus becomes not only an individual practice but also part of a wider community of people exploring healing and inner development.

Because Reiki continues to be practiced by new generations, it remains a living tradition. Each practitioner contributes to its development through personal experience and reflection. At its heart, however, Reiki remains simple. It invites us to place our hands with care, to allow the energy to flow, and to live with calmness, gratitude, sincerity, and kindness.

For many people this simplicity reveals the deeper nature of Reiki: not only a method of healing, but a path toward greater harmony with life and its mystery.