

# Book Highlight

*Tokio Yokoi: From Japanese Christianity to Universal Reiki*  
by Dr Jojan Jonker  
Review by **Sarah McNamee**



Everyone's Reiki journey looks different, but we all hear the same origin stories - tales of Mikao Usui and how he spent his life rediscovering Reiki and taught a few masters to carry on his healing work. But what is actually known of the man himself? He lived just a century ago, and we have many tales, stories passed down from master to student, but very little concrete evidence from his life, only a memorial stone in Saihoji Temple in Tokyo. For many of us, the tale of the founder of Reiki plays little part in our daily Reiki practise. But there are some scholars who want to know more about the man we call Usui.

Jojan Jonker's newest publication explores questions posed by Elizabeth Latham's earlier work, *The Samurai Master* (2023), on why so little factual information can be found on Mikao Usui's life and delves into the records to research other potential origins of Reiki Ryoho.

I must preface this review with letting you know that this book is a rigorous academic investigation into the origin story of Reiki and finds, like with many religious or spiritual myths, that the facts do not always line up with the tales passed down through the oral

tradition. So if you are not interested in finding out more about what is actually known, or not known, about the figure we know as Mikao Usui, then I would suggest that this publication is not for you. However, it does examine Reiki practice's spiritual history, which I'm sure many of you would find fascinating.

I found the book incredibly interesting. Not just in the conclusions drawn, but in the processes, the references and the many-faceted information gathering methods undertaken by Jojan. He scoured local archives, talked to fellow masters and reviewed other published works on the subject. I was granted insight into how the masters have kept the conversation going on Usui and the origins of Reiki, and what has been agreed upon and what has diverged or evolved throughout the decades.

Jojan's research questions aspects of the story we all know: that Usui was a principal teacher at a university and an ordained minister, that he studied in countries including China and the USA, that he stayed for years at a Zen monastery and that he meditated on Mount Kurama for 21 days until the moment of revelation and the creation of the Reiki practice we now know as Usui Shiki Ryoho. Scholars have known for decades that, except for on his memorial stone (erected in 1927 after his death), there are very few records of Usui ever having done any of the things he is said to have done. Many things we are told about Usui is known only through the passing of such information from Usui to Chujiro Hayashi and then to Hawayo Takata, and not through official records. However, one contemporary of Mikao Usui does fit the bill: Tokio Yokoi (1857-1927).

The crux of Jojan's research is around the question of whether or not Usui was who we think he was or whether the name could have been a pseudonym for another. The book outlines, point by point, the few 'facts' we have been told about Usui's life and shows how Yokoi actually closer matches the man we have been told about. Jojan does this not



Tokio Yokoi

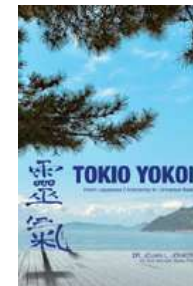
only through looking at official records and timelines, but through the Reiki origin story and how much of Reiki's spiritual practice is based not only in its Japanese roots, but in some aspects of Christian belief and methodology. There has long been the suggestion that, as Reiki expanded, there was an assimilation of Christian theology within the original Japanese spiritual practice in an attempt to make it more palatable to a Western demographic. Jojan posits that it has been a part of the practise of Reiki all along and examines in depth how some Christian traditions have always sat beside and interwoven with aspects of Buddhism, Shinto and Confucianism within Reiki practice, and he puts this into historical context. As someone with an interest in theology, I found this delve into Reiki's religious origins really detailed, and ultimately the most rewarding aspect for me of Jojan's book.

In his third part, Jojan examines why, if Yokoi really was the founder of Reiki, did he assume the pseudonym of Usui? Or if they could have known and worked with each other, so their stories got mixed? Jojan examines many aspects of the history of the Usui legend within the context of the Reiki masters who

followed, predominantly those closest to Usui in the timeline, Hayashi and Takata, and their accounts on Usui.

Since publication, Jojan has also come across further evidence, namely a CV of Usui from 1904, which further supports the theory that he was a contemporary of Yokoi and that Reiki's roots are linked more closely to Christianity than had previously been believed. After this discovery, Jojan worked on a new article, 'Is Rev. Tokio Yokoi the monk in Takata's story?', which looks closer at the aspect of Usui's history with the 'Zen Abbot' on Mount Kurama. Jojan states that the word for 'abbot' is the same for 'teacher' in Japanese and goes on to examine to what extent Yokoi and Usui could have influenced the other, comparing Reiki tradition with aspects of Zen imagery, Christian beliefs and ancient Japanese traditions.

Johan admits that much of the theories about the links between these two people is speculation and will possibly never be known for sure, but has become more certain that the two figures knew and influenced each other as his research has developed. He concludes that, regardless of the truth of the origins of Reiki and the details of its founder, we should not change our practice. Knowing who discovered (or rediscovered) Reiki doesn't change its power, effectiveness or how we use the universal energy in our everyday lives. ■



*Tokio Yokoi: From Japanese Christianity to Universal Reiki* can be found from some specialist booksellers, as well as on [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) worldwide

For more information on Jojan's newest research, visit [www.jojan.nl/publications.html](http://www.jojan.nl/publications.html)