

Reiki As A Japanese Traditional Art Form Practice

Have you met a Japanese person and told them, “I do Reiki!” expecting that they know about Reiki? But the answer was, “What is that? “, and you had to explain “Reiki is a healing art that originated in Japan. Don’t you know?” and they reply, “Is it Japanese? Oh, I have never heard of it...”

Reiki is widely known as a Japanese healing art in North America, Europe and in many other countries. However, it is not as well-known for Japanese people, even though Reiki originated in Japan. I was one of those Japanese people who didn’t know about Reiki until 2005.

Many non-Japanese people think Reiki is a part of the Japanese culture, but it is actually a “personal choice”. Many Japanese people have never heard of Reiki. Even if they’ve heard the word “Reiki”, many would dismiss the idea of a healing hands method. Many Japanese people think Reiki is some sort of new religious group. Or they may even think Reiki is an occult group, just because the kanji “靈氣” can read as “ghost energy”, so the name itself can scare people away. Reiki is available for everyone, but not every Japanese person would be interested in it, just like learning piano, being a dog trainer, an engineer or any other interest one may have.

Then why don’t Japanese people know about Reiki?

Before World War II, there were over 1 million people who were practicing Reiki in Japan, either just as a home remedy, or as a Reiki business. However, after World War II, everything changed in Japan. GHQ (General Headquarter, the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers (1945-1952), which occupied Japan after World War II) prohibited all the natural medicine practices and replaced it with the Western medical system. Many natural medicine groups had to close their doors, or became a religious group to be able to continue their healing practice. Reiki businesses had to close their doors. The Usui Reiki Ryoho Gakkai became a members only group and was closed to the public. The population of Reiki followers quickly diminished. This is the reason why the Japanese people no longer had access to Reiki. Thankfully, Dr. Chujiro Hayashi, one of Mr.Usui’s disciples, decided to teach Reiki to Mrs. Hawayo Takata in Hawaii. He hoped Reiki could spread to the West. Thus Reiki was able to survive in the world because of Mr. Hayashi’s brave decision to travel to Hawaii to teach Reiki, despite the danger to him as a former Navel officer during this post war sensitive time in Japan and USA, and Mrs. Takata’s decision to teach Reiki to the 22 people towards the end of her life.

I was fascinated that Reiki survived in Japan despite the odds.

I am originally from Nagasaki, Japan, now living in Chilliwack, BC since 1999. I was introduced to Reiki in 2005 when I was looking for an alternative therapy for my daughter’s severe Eczema. I learned Reiki level 1 and understood the basic concepts of Reiki and started to practice. I was keen and wanted to know more about Reiki, so I

started to join many different Reiki shares and healing shares. I was very surprised to see so many non-Japanese people were practicing this Japanese healing method, and was happy & proud for my home country. Although, I started to recognize that Reiki practitioners often use words like “aura and chakra” during the sessions, which aren’t common concepts for the Japanese culture, and can’t translate into Japanese words. I wondered, “Reiki originated in Japan, but I see some non-Japanese concepts in the Reiki practice.” That made me want to research deeper about the origin of Reiki, and soon after I was introduced to Mr. Tadao Yamaguchi and learned Jikiden Reiki. Since then I started to practice Reiki more seriously and have continued to offer Reiki sessions daily and teach classes regularly.

While many people know and use Reiki, and many Reiki books and articles have been published, very few Reiki practitioners or teachers have access to the depth of history and extensive experience that the Yamaguchi family have. Reiki survived through Chiyoko Yamaguchi and her family, who learned Reiki directly from Dr. Chujiro Hayashi, with no outside influence from other healing methods or cultures. Not many realize that the original Reiki teachings are deeply rooted in Japanese history and cultural background, tracing back to the ancient Shinto teachings.

When I learned Reiki with Mr. Tadao Yamaguchi (Chiyoko Yamaguchi’s son), I was absolutely amazed by the depth of the relation between Japanese culture and Reiki. Everything from the history, the concept, the cultural background, the way of giving the treatments to the meaning of each symbol, made sense to me. There was nothing that came to my mind as though, “Hummmm, that doesn’t make sense.” I recognized Jikiden Reiki has the essence of other Japanese traditional art forms. I felt the similar sense of depth and tangible feeling as if I was learning other Japanese traditional art like Sado (tea ceremony), Kado (flower arrangement), Shodo (calligraphy), which I had learned before. They all have the same sense of the deep history, deep respect to the past sensei (teachers), the respect to the teachings, and precise way of training.

As a small example, I would like to explain the similarity between Sado (tea ceremony), Karate and Reiki. There are many styles of Sado. Most of the styles are traditional but passed down through different lineages. If a person learned the Omote style, but was joining the tea ceremony gathering of Ura style, the person wouldn’t perform the Omote style at the gathering of Ura style. It would be considered to be disrespectful (or challenging) to the Ura group itself and also cause confusion. The person either has to learn how to perform the Ura style before joining the gathering, or enjoy just being a guest. There should be neither criticism nor comparison of the two styles, but simple honoring and respect. Also, an Omote style teacher (called “Iemoto”) can only certify the levels for students who learned the way of Omote style. The same way would apply to a Karate community. A traditional Karate instructor can give belts only for the students who learned the way the instructor taught. I see the same thing in the Jikiden Reiki community. If a person who would like to be a Jikiden Reiki teacher, she/he will have to start from the Shoden and Okuden (Level 1 & 2) classes even though she/he is an experienced Reiki Master, just because there are differences in teaching between each Reiki lineage.

This may seem too strict or isolating for non-Japanese people but it is really a Japanese way of practicing the traditional art. The intention is to help keep the traditional aspect. Japanese culture for some may seem simple, but it is very deep. Only people who have lived in the country can grasp the Japanese way of living. I am quite sure about it because I grew up in Japan and have lived in Canada for 14 years. There are certain ways of living that is normal for a Japanese person that I didn't even notice when I lived in Japan. But after 14 years of living outside of Japan, I am able to see the beauty and difference in both countries. I learned so much about my own country after I moved away from Japan and mainly through learning Jikiden Reiki. Thus my curiosity of the Japanese culture and history will continue to unfold as I continue my Reiki practice and teaching.

This is one of the reasons why I would like to let everyone know of the opportunity to learn with Mr. Tadao Yamaguchi from Jikiden Reiki Institute, Kyoto Japan. Everyone knows Reiki originated from Japan, and I know with my heart that leaning Jikiden Reiki is the one of the best ways to be in touch with Japanese culture through Reiki. Tadao Yamaguchi is now teaching Jikiden Reiki in over 15 countries, including Germany, England, Scotland, Holland, Spain, USA and others. Canada is one of the fortunate countries where he comes every year. He comes to Vancouver in the spring and Halifax in the fall. His seminar will be conducted in Japanese with English translation. Many Reiki followers who have joined his seminar are experiencing even deeper gratitude to the Reiki teaching. If you are looking for a missing piece of the Reiki puzzle, you might be able to find it in Jikiden Reiki seminar. Mr. Yamaguchi's encyclopedic knowledge and integrity can answer all of your questions.

There are many Reiki articles written by many people, but some may notice that not so many Reiki articles written by Japanese Reiki lovers. One of the reasons is that it is difficult for us to write an article and express our thoughts in English. I am also quite sure that many Japanese are being respectful to the Reiki community as a whole by maintaining a quiet respectful position. As I have lived in Canada for a while now, I am becoming more open to expressing my thoughts and excited for the opportunity to introduce the beauty of Japanese culture through Reiki. I am entirely grateful to live in Canada and I continue to adore my home country.

In closing, I would like to share my 9 years old daughter's realization. She said, "Mommy! I just noticed something really interesting! Chilliwack is in BC, BC is in Canada, Canada is in North America, and North America is on the Earth. Earth is part of the Galaxy, and the Galaxy is in the Universe. So, that means, even though auntie-Chie lives in Japan and auntie-Sheila lives in Switzerland, we are all in the same place! "~ I think this is a great reminder from my daughter.

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