

The REIKIKI and REIKI KANJO

by

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THE REIKIKI AND REIKI KANJO

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Reikiki is the title of an important yet relatively little-known document associated primarily within the Shingon sect of Buddhism [although it is more properly related to syncretic 'Shinto-Buddhist' doctrines known as *ryobu shinto* or *honji suijaku*].

The document, said to have been written by the 9th/10th century Emperor Daigo (died A.D. 930) professes to be an account of a secret initiation received by the Emperor from a mythical being living in the pond of the imperial Shinsen'en garden.

The final 'ki' in the title Reikiki refers to a "chronicle" or "record" but is also simply a suffix indicating a written text, thus the title Reikiki can be translated as:

The 'Text (or Record) of Reiki'

As someone researching into the history and origins of Usui Reiki, on first learning of the existence of such a document - an apparent "Text of Reiki" [predating Usui Sensei by several hundred years] - my initial reaction [no doubt like that of many other reiki researchers who learn of its existence] was one excitement and deep interest.

Obviously I had to learn more about this text, its content, and significance within Japanese Buddhism and Shinto-Buddhist syncretism.

My interest in the Reikiki, however, was even further deepened when I learned that there was apparently an actual ceremonial 'Reiki Initiation' ritual connected with the text.

While initial attempts to track down more detailed information concerning the Reikiki led to a series of 'dead ends', I eventually discovered that a paper [by Professor Fabio Rambelli] focusing in part on the Reikiki itself, was to be published in the Autumn (Fall) 2002 issue of the Japanese Journal of Religious Studies.

Cautiously optimistic that Professor Rambelli's paper would prove to be of great interest, I nonetheless attempted to remain openminded and avoid, in my enthusiasm, jumping to any conclusions based on the all-too-sketchy information that I had managed to glean about the Reikiki and the associated 'Reiki initiation'.

On reading Professor Rambelli's paper [entitled: 'The Ritual World of Buddhist "Shinto" - The Reikiki and Initiations on Kami-Related Matters (*jingi kanjō*) in Late Medieval and Early-Modern Japan'], I discovered that the apparent 'Reiki initiation' ritual, which I had learned was connected with the text, was in fact a form of kanjo.

The meaning of Kanjo

Kanjo is the term used within Mikkyo (i.e. esoteric) Japanese Buddhism for a particular type of ritual [the same type of ritual is referred to as *wang* in Tibetan Buddhism].

Kanjo is often loosely translated as 'initiation', though kanjo rituals are, more properly, rituals of dedication/consecration - being a ceremonial procedure whereby the

Buddhist Ajari or master/priest confers on the student the 'power' - in the sense of the right or (spiritual) authority - to engage in certain spiritual practices or to study the inner significance of certain sacred texts.

In this sense, a kanjo is essentially a 'ritual of permission'.

A second, and complementary use of kanjo ritual is as a ceremonial procedure of acknowledgement, confirmation or 'certification' of a student having achieved a required level of training or spiritual discipline.

So, while the sketchy information I had initially discovered had referred to a 'reiki initiation', this turned out to have been a somewhat simplistic translation of the term reiki kanjo; and as discussed, kanjo - while being a very important esoteric consecration/ empowerment ritual - is not quite the same as the concept of 'initiation' (denju) as understood in Usui Reiki.

In fact, the ritual known as reiki kanjo is firstly and foremost the ceremony of 'empowerment' to study the inner significance of the Reikiki text.

The *Reikiki* itself

As to the Reikiki itself, the first thing that became obvious having reached the second page of Professor Rambelli's paper was the fact that the *composite*: 'Reiki' in Reikiki, is not the same as the 'Reiki' we are more familiar with - that is, it is not written in the same kanji-pair as 'Reiki' (a la Usui).

Just as in English where (for example) the words 'rite', 'write' and 'right' all have the same sound, so too in Japanese there are often many words that sound the same, yet are written in different kanji-characters - and have very different meanings.

As distinct from 'Reiki' (a la Usui-Sensei), there are also several other, un-connected, written forms of the double-syllable: 'rei-ki', each having their own distinct meanings - including: established rule; cold, chill, cold weather, cold wave, cold air; & (electrical) excitation, etc.

In the case of Reikiki, as mentioned at the beginning of this article, the final ki in the title means 'chronicle', 'record' or 'text', hence the: 'Text of Reiki'.

As to the specific meaning of the reiki indicated here:

The rei primarily means 'beautiful' or 'wondrous'.

The ki is indeed the same kanji-character ki as used in 'Reiki' (a la Usui) and while commonly interpreted today simply as 'energy', it is of course, also - and more fully - 'mind', 'heart', 'spirit' and 'will'.

In an attempt to ensure a precise and relevant translation of the title Reikiki, I spoke with Professor Rambelli at the beginning of October 2003.

While he suggested something along the lines of:

"text (ki) on the wondrous (rei) essence (ki) .."

according to the Professor, it is not absolutely clear as to the precise meaning of the term 'Reiki' in Reikiki, since this particular kanji-pairing does not exist in the Sino-Japanese lexicon.

[For those who wish to pursue this further, look out for a forthcoming book by Fabio Rambelli and Mark Teeuwen, which will address this issue]

Professor Rambelli also explained to me that, in his paper, he did not focus on translation of the title Reikiki because it would require a long explanation that was not directly relevant to the content of the paper.

He did confirm however that the term reiki kanjo simply means: "consecration ritual on the Reikiki."

The Reikiki and Usui Reiki

So, even though the 'Reiki' of the Reikiki is not written in the identical kanji /does not have the identical meaning to Reiki (a la Usui), could there still be a connection between this "Text on the Wondrous Essence" and Usui Reiki?

We are all aware that recent research into the history of Usui Reiki has revealed that even during Usui Sensei's lifetime Reiki was continually in a state of flux and evolution.

Rather than being a purely therapeutic modality, what Usui Sensei originally founded and developed - so we are told - was essentially a spiritual-philosophical system involving syncretic elements of Buddhist and Shintoist belief - a system 'for the improvement of body and soul' .

Yet to all intents and purposes, by the time of Usui Sensei's death in 1926, the spiritual focus had almost disappeared.

The Shinto-Buddhist elements were being played down, the reiju ['to confer/receive a Spiritual Gift'] consecration/empowerment process devised by Usui-Sensei had been replaced with denju ['initiation'] - and Reiki had become primarily a system of therapeutic intervention.

So just what were the precise origins of what was to eventually become Usui Reiki?

While there has been much speculation - some scholarly and well-informed, some far less so - we still do not really know.

Could this text - with its reiki kanjo ritual - have been, if not *the* original source of Usui Reiki, then at least an *influencing factor* in the eventual realisation of the Reiki Phenomenon as shared by Usui Sensei?

Certainly there is a *possibility* here. This is something I will seek to address in a follow-up to this present article.

And while I am currently aware of at least two Reiki practitioners who, having recently discovered the Reikiki via Professor Rambelli's paper, are convinced that this is indeed the source of both the Spiritual and Therapeutic aspects of Reiki

- and who, it seems, are enthusiastically attempting to propagate this view, *I feel that further study is most definitely called for before we can legitimately begin to make such claims.*

I do feel we need to be cautious.

It is, I believe, all too easy, in our enthusiasm to mis-read the facts or to 'read into' the facts, more than is necessarily there...

In this article I have purposely avoided detailing the precise content of the Reikiki and for that matter, the Reiki Kanjo.

I suggest that those who are interested in the details, read Professor Rambelli's paper for themselves.

Entitled:

'The Ritual World of Buddhist "Shinto" -The Reikiki and Initiations on Kami-Related Matters (jingi kanjō) in Late Medieval and Early-Modern Japan'

It is available as a .pdf file here:

<http://www.nanzan-u.ac.jp/SHUBUNKEN/publications/jjrs/pdf/637.pdf>

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