

TO THE ROOTS OF REIKI RYOHO...

By Giuseppe Paterniti

I post for your attention an article I wrote on Taireido, an ancient Japanese doctrine that, in my opinion, should stir the interest and curiosity of every Reiki Ryoho practitioner.

By a series of peculiar circumstances, accidental events, and with some 'sacrifices' I came into possession of an old book dated 1920 (and today almost impossible to find) that contains all the information regarding the system founded by Morihei Tanaka (that is, the Taireido).

Carefully translating and reading this book, I found proof of what previously had only been hinted at in some publications on the origins of Reiki...

... with high probability Mikao Usui was one of Morihei Tanaka's disciples or, at least, he was strongly influenced by his teachings.

If you don't believe me, just keep reading!



Morihei Tanaka and the doctrine of `Tai Rei Do` (太靈道)

Morihei Tanaka (田中守平) was born on the 8th of September **1884** in the Ena district, a Gifu-prefect of Japan ¹.

It seems that, thanks to his precocious skills, from a very early stage he was regarded as an extraordinarily gifted child.

His first working experiences were as primary school teacher and in the press office of the Ministry of Finance in Tokyo.

He was involved in controversial political activities and for this reason he was arrested, sent back to his village and put under house arrest.

Soon after his life unexpectedly changed...

It is said that, after four months of fasting and isolation on a mountain, Morihei Tanaka developed some special powers (*Reishiryoku*) that helped him become a renowned healer and attract many groups of followers ².

This is how Tanaka founded **TAI REI** ³ **DO** (The Way of the Great Spirit), a discipline which is older than **Reiki** but still incredibly close to it both on a theoretical and on a practical level ⁴.

¹ Some sources indicate that Tanaka was born in the village of Tajimi, other sources indicate the village of Takenami. However, both villages were very close to Mikao Usui's birthplace: Miyama-Cho.

² It seems that, while descending from the mountain, he healed a girl who was suffering from a toothache by placing his hands on her face. A similar healing episode is narrated in the popular history on Mikao Usui!

³ 'Rei' (靈) is the same character (kanji) that forms the word Reiki; it can be translated as Universal Spirit.

⁴ For this reason many think that Mikao Usui might have been one of Morihei Tanaka's disciples or, at least, that he was influenced by his teachings.

In **1910** he completed his work '*Taireido Jiten*' (The Code of the Way of the Great Spirit) and the following year he established the *Reiri Gakkai Tokyo* (Tokyo Spiritualist Society).

Later, Tanaka founded several centres throughout Japan where people were given the opportunity to study the theory at the basis of his doctrine, and to practice the '**Reishi**' techniques ⁵ (aka *Reishijutsu* 靈子術: the art of *Reishi*).

By the term *Reishi* we mean Vital Energy, force emanating from the Great Spirit (*Tai Rei*): every phenomenon of life and universe is the result of the incessant work of *Reishi*.

The Taireido teachings state that through the conscious channelling of *Reishi* it is possible to achieve many goals. Among them: healing of illness, developing the intellect, reforming bad habits, and even empowering one's martial art skills.

During the Taishō Period (1912-1926) the doctrine of *Taireido* spread not only throughout Japan but also through China and Mongolia ⁶.

In **1916** Tanaka established the *Honin Taireido* (the main temple of *Taireido*) in the Kojimachi area of Tokyo: here he devoted himself to training its practitioners.

In **1920** the *Ena Dai Honin* (The Great Monastery of Ena) was erected in a little town which probably was Morihei Tanaka's birthplace: the village Takenami. Over fifty thousand people visited the monastery, which was pyramidal in shape and on six levels. Due to the high number of visits, a post office, a train station and some housing were built to assist in the guests and in the relation with the public. An accidental fire destroyed the monastery in the Shōwa Period.

It was still in **1920** that Tanaka published '*Taireido – A new revelation for the spiritual, mental and physical salvation of mankind*': a sort of compendium (455 pages) on the theory and practice of his doctrine, complete with illustrations. The idea beyond the book was to reach every human being; for this reason the book was also published in English ⁷.

"Choso" ⁸ Tanaka Morihei died on the 17th of December 1928 of a heart attack ⁹. Today no trace of his group remains.

What is Taireido (The Way of the Great Spirit)?

"We believe that the universe is the result of a force called *Reishi*, which emanates from the true and good *Tai Rei* (Great Spirit)", *Morihei Tanaka*.

Tai Rei, Source and Ruling Spirit of all things, is beyond time and space, beyond existence and non-existence: all things emanate from Him and all things return to Him, ad infinitum. It is through *Reishi* (the Force of the Spirit), which is incessantly profused by *Tai Rei*, that all the phenomena of life and universe exist.

⁵ Even the word 'Reishi' (靈子) is incredibly similar to 'Reiki' (靈氣): 'shi' (子) literally means 'son', 'child' or 'force', but in this context it would be more appropriate to translate it with 'force'. Therefore, 'Reishi' can have the meaning of 'Universal Spiritual Force'. This is not so different from Reiki: 'Universal Life Force Energy'. It seems that, in this context, the word 'shi' corresponds to 'ki' (氣); in fact, both terms refer to a force/energy that is originated and emanated by the Universal Spirit (Rei靈).

⁶ Some Chinese Masters in Japan claimed to have learnt the art of Qi Gong from Morihei Tanaka.

⁷ Nowadays this book is a rarity; the author of this article has the privilege of owning an original copy signed by Tanaka himself!

⁸ 'Choso' means 'Founder': Mikao Usui also used to sign with this title.

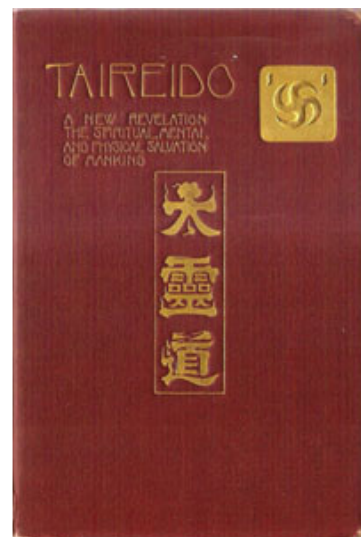
⁹ Usui Sensei died of a heart attack too!

Tai Rei is perfection, truth and love: His Great Substance, which has neither birth nor death, is everywhere present, at all times.

The doctrine of *Taireido* (The Way of the Great Spirit) includes and transcends every philosophy, religion and moral principle.



Giuseppe Paterniti showing Morihei Tanaka's signature on the book 'Taireido'



The 'Taireido' book - Front cover

The *Taireido* teachings includes:

[Each topic listed below is extensively discussed in the book '*Taireido – a new revelation for the spiritual, mental and physical salvation of humankind*', see note 6]

- The *Tai Rei* philosophy ¹⁰;
- The external *Reishi* practice ¹¹;
- The internal *Reishi* practice in physical treatments ¹²;
- The self-treatment practice;
- Various techniques for performing treatments: with the palms of the hands and with the fingers, through pressure and through massage;
- Practical treatments for the mind or for reforming bad habits;
- Distance treatments;
- Group treatments;
- Practical exercises for the development of the internal *Reishi* ¹³;
- *Reiyu*;
- *Reishi* as a method to achieve many goals: self-defence and martial arts skills, weight control, development of intellectual faculties, control of the body temperature, improvement of communication skills, etc.;
- *Reiri-Gaku*: the principles of *Taireido*.

¹⁰ In the book, hundreds of pages are spent on this teaching.

¹¹ This is very similar to spontaneous Qi Gong.

¹² The book is a good guide to treating many illness.

¹³ These exercises are performed with the aid of special wooden boards or other common objects.

In the light of what has been said so far... it seems quite clear that Mikao Usui Sensei's 'Reiki Ryoho' was largely influenced by Morihei Tanaka's 'Taireido'...

After two years of testing, I have integrated my personal Reiki Ryoho practice with the Taireido teachings. This has widely enriched and completed my practical knowledge of Usui Sensei's method; in particular, it has offered me a deep understanding of 'Rei', the Spirit which sustains the Universe.

*This new understanding, together with all my other recent achievements, can now be shared with everyone during my workshops on **Reiki 'Seki Ji Do'**: my own Traditional Reiki Ryoho technique.*

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Another beautiful image of Morihei Tanaka



Morihei Tanaka observes one of his disciples practising 'Reishi' on a wooden board



Morihei Tanaka's assistant, Mr Hasegawa, practising the external 'Reishi'.

