

## Thoughts on the Schism in Reiki

Tina M. Zion generously included some of my Reiki stories in her book *Reiki and Your Intuition: A Union of Healing and Wisdom* (WriteLife Publishing, 2019). I heard about Tina's intuitive gifts from a very dear friend of mine who told me Tina was "the real deal" as a medical intuitive and teacher. I bought her books *Become a Medical Intuitive* and *Advanced Medical Intuition*. Both were beautifully produced and intriguing. When my friend told me Tina was looking for submissions for her upcoming book about Reiki and urged me to write something, I did so. (By the way, my friend submitted a lovely piece as well. You can now read Dr. Cheryl Meisterman's own heart-warming Reiki story in Tina's book.). I did not know until Tina graciously sent me a signed gift copy of the published book that she would be revealing the Reiki symbols, as she understands them. This surprise prompted me to share some thoughts, to put my inclusion in her book in a broader context.

I love the way Tina writes about Reiki and intuition, and I respect her insights and experience as a fourth-generation intuitive medium. She writes from a sincere desire to serve the Reiki community and to clarify areas of confusion. However, to do that, the source of the confusion must be understood, and there are different ideas about the nature of the confusion itself. Some people attribute it to the secrecy connected with Reiki symbols and initiations, believing that if we all revealed the symbols we use we could resolve our differences. In my opinion, though, secrecy is only one factor in the current state of affairs. At the heart of the matter is a split that took place decades ago, following the death of Hawayo Takata, the woman who brought Reiki from Japan to the U.S. Beginning with Mrs. Takata's efforts, Reiki has spread around the globe since the end of World War II.

In her lifetime, Takata trained 22 Reiki Master Teachers. She set the guidelines and fees for First and Second Degree trainings, the Master level apprenticeship, and the practice of Reiki in general. All her Masters agreed to maintain those guidelines and fees in the future. Initiation into Reiki takes place person to person and hand to hand, transmitted from the Master to the student directly. First Degree is suitable for anyone who wants to learn, whether to use on themselves or others. The higher degrees are for those who are more committed to the Reiki path. In Mrs. Takata's time, a lengthy apprenticeship allowed the serious Reiki student to become truly proficient and to develop their mastery. Reiki can't be learned from a book, even though written texts are useful tools. And just knowing the symbols does not enable one to practice or teach Reiki, even though the symbols have traditionally been kept secret in order to protect them from the disrespectful or casual observer. Mrs. Takata intended the higher fees for the higher levels to reflect a student's growing commitment to Reiki. In those days, advancement required a significant investment of both time and money. It was only available to

those with significant resources or those who were very serious about this path and able to enlist support.

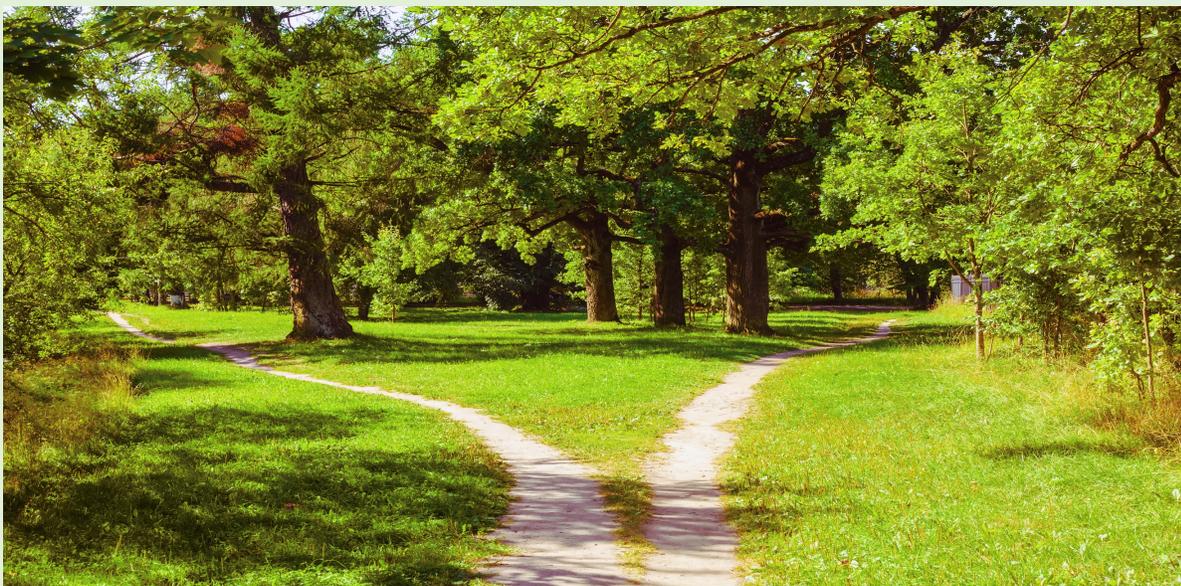
In many fields, there's often a conflict between those who think all knowledge should be open, free, and democratic and those who want to protect their specialized knowledge from the opportunistic or uninitiated. Reiki has been no different. The schism occurred when a new Master Teacher wanted to break free from the constraints imposed by the late Mrs. Takata and got permission from one of the original 22 Masters, his teacher, to do so. He lowered prices, reduced the time needed to learn Reiki, altered the symbols and introduced other changes. The rest is history. Two entirely separate branches of Reiki evolved—although within that second branch, many offshoots and variations have developed, each adding things to the original Usui Reiki system devised by Mikao Usui in the early 1900s. I've been told that today, 85% of those practicing Reiki have learned through this second branch. After all, thinking all other things are equal, who wouldn't prefer a faster, less expensive class? The problem, however, is that the two paths may not have remained equal in all other respects.

Like everyone else, when I took my Second and Third Degree Reiki trainings, the levels at which we learn the symbols, I promised to keep them secret from anyone other than fellow students of my own teacher. With that said, I can tell you that the symbols Tina Zion presents and other aspects of her teaching about Reiki differ significantly from what I was taught. Only one of her symbols precisely matches a symbol I learned, and even then, the meaning and use ascribed to it are somewhat different. Three of the other four symbols Tina reveals are similar to what I learned, but still far from the same as the ones I use, and a fifth symbol she describes is not at all part of the lineage I follow.

I didn't know much about Reiki when I took First Degree. I signed up for the class being offered at OMNI, the non-profit holistic education center I co-directed, a class taught by the Reiki Master my friend and colleague Rita Roberts had brought on staff before I joined her at the center. I got excellent results with that attunement. A few years later, a client at our center introduced us to Reiki Master John Harvey Gray, one of Mrs. Takata's 22 Masters. Rita, John, and I hit it off immediately. We invited John to teach Reiki at OMNI. I repeated my earlier training with him and then went on to Second Degree. I could see a number of differences from my first class, not in the attunement but in other aspects of the training, including how John guided us to structure each Reiki session. His teaching revolutionized the way I practiced Reiki. When John married Lourdes, also a Reiki Master trained by John, she joined him in teaching at OMNI. In time I took the Advanced and Master Practitioner trainings with Lourdes Gray, after John's passing. I did not do a lot of research before learning Reiki. I simply followed my personal connections and immediate intuitions, and fortunately that worked well for me.

During the years we worked with John, I talked with quite a number of students who wanted to repeat their Reiki training with him at our center. Many told me they'd learned all three degrees of Reiki in a single weekend and had experienced negative symptoms afterward, like headaches or other feelings of malaise or confusion. After studying with John, they felt grounded, comfortable, and confident about working with Reiki. I don't know of anyone who regretted repeating their earlier training with John, even when his classes cost more and took longer than their original workshops had. So although I have not directly experienced Reiki from the more recent branch of practitioners, the experiences of these students have made me cautious.

I also heard about the experience of one of John's most proficient Masters who was open and curious about this alternate branch. Wanting to judge for herself, she allowed a Master from another lineage to attune her. She said Reiki no longer flowed through her the same way, and she had to repeat all her attunements with John, from First Degree through Master level. Clearly, there is reason to be careful about who you choose to study with and who you allow to work on you.



Making the choice of teacher even more challenging, the attunement process remains secret until you reach the Master level, and you won't begin to discover what symbols a teacher uses till you reach Second Degree. Not until the Master level do we begin to learn what goes into initiating another person into Reiki. So, as a beginner, you allow yourself to be attuned without knowing what the process entails. You therefore can't evaluate a teacher based on what symbols they use, yet you are allowing that person to make changes in your energy field. The same holds true for choosing a practitioner. You don't know what symbols might be used during your healing session. Only because of daring authors like Tina Zion, her predecessor Diane Stein, and a few

others do I have any awareness of how different the process can be from teacher to teacher and also from practitioner to practitioner.

All of these variations and conflicts create pitfalls for the aspiring student or client. Before you commit, it might be wise to read all you want, explore, ask questions, and then make a very careful, intuitive decision about which teacher, which practitioner, and which path is right for you. I can only speak for my own teachers and their students, as their path is the path I know and trust, no matter how much respect I may have for someone else's sincere good intentions. In this, as in every area of life, each of us has to rely on our own inner guidance and discernment.

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