

Jikiden Reiki Japan Trip April 2008 Journal

12th April:

The journey out: Taxi from home to Piccadilly Railway Station, train to Euston, London, tube to Paddington and Heathrow Express train to Heathrow Airport. Met up with most of the group at Heathrow and then, a nearly 13 hour flight direct to Tokyo Airport (next time I think I will fly from Manchester to Heathrow!)



13th April:



Arrived in **Tokyo** about 4pm Tokyo time and we had to queue for ages in one of the longest queues I have ever seen at passport control. But we got through it eventually and collected our luggage and then had a 1 hour bus ride to the hotel: **Tokyo Royal Park** (we had been upgraded to 5-star!). The staff there were very friendly and courteous and the foyer and my room were lovely. However, being a 5-star hotel, it was very expensive! About £60 for drinks for 5 of us as there was a £5 table charge for each drink! Fantastic view of Tokyo from the 20th Floor Sky Bar, though. We had our first meal there – a **Teppanyaki**, where they cook the food in front of you. The beef was Kobe beef, the cows for which are fed beer



and they are stroked with brushes to spread out the fat evenly. The raw beef looked very different to beef in the West, with a fine patterned appearance – it was delicious. An unexpected experience was watching large live prawns being put on the hotplate and cooked in front of us – rather disturbing! Then we move to another room for our coffee and dessert. A lovely meal and ONLY about £80 each!! I slept well, though.

14th April:



9am start and Rika, one of our organisers gave us all our **Tokyo Metro** Day Pass tickets to go to meet our guide (a Vortex Reiki Master and expert in many historical aspects of Japanese healing methods!) who was going to show us around **Meiji Jingu** (the Meiji Emperor's Shrine). The metro was not as busy as I had expected for a Monday morning and we all arrived in one piece! At the entrance to Meiji Shrine there is a huge **Tori Gate**, on which is the flower symbol of the Meiji Emperor. The weather was a little drizzly but we were all so excited, we hardly noticed!

Several of the people in our group were couples or knew each other and those that didn't began to pair up. I was fortunate enough to meet Jane, a lovely lady from Knutsford, who I had seen once before, at a meal after the Manchester Jikiden Seminar, but not spoken to, and we decided to take photos of each other so that we could each be in the scene. This proved useful as Jane had forgotten to bring her camera charger and ended up buying lots of disposable cameras!

On our way to the shrine itself, we passed many wine barrels and colourful sake containers, used for the



emperor. Just outside the main entrance to the shrine was a purification trough, where we purified ourselves with water in the traditional Shinto way (**misogi harai**) before entering the shrine. This involved picking up a wooden ladle with our right hand, filling it with running water and pouring it over our left hand. Then holding the ladle on a different part of the handle with our left hand pouring water over our right hand, changing hands again and pouring water into left hand again and putting water

into our mouth and spitting it out into the drainage trough. Then, after holding the ladle vertical to let the remaining water drain out, we replaced the ladle and gave a little bow.

The shrine itself was very peaceful and not too crowded. We were shown how to say a prayer to the **Kami** (nature spirits) of the place by putting a coin through a grill into an offering box, bowing twice (once to the kami of heaven and once to the kami of earth), clapping twice (to attract the attention of the kami), bowing once more, putting our hands together and saying a little prayer then clapping once to indicate we had finished and another little bow.



There were two trees connected by a thick rope (**shimenawa**) from which were hung zig-zags of white paper or cloth (**gohei**). This was to indicate they were sacred and contained **kodama** (spirits). We could feel quite a bit of energy coming from this area!



There was another tree which had a shimenawa, which was surrounded by a rack containing many special blocks of wood, containing prayers and wishes (**ema** = horse pictures, as traditionally, the wealthy offered horses to the kami in exchange for granting wishes). Here the ema can be read by the kami or gods.

We were also very lucky to see a Shinto wedding procession at the shrine and watch them arranging the people for a wedding photograph. They had many cameras and took a long time arranging the people and paying close attention to the way people were sat, the way their clothes fell and their hair etc. until everything was just right.

At one of the shrine shops, I bought a book containing some of the Meiji Emperor's waka poems and a couple of little charms (**o-mamori**). Then we had lunch (miso soup, beef curry, beer and green tea) and set off back to the metro to visit **Saihoji**.

Saihoji is where **Mikao Usui's grave and memorial stone** can be found. When we arrived at the entrance to the cemetery we were told we had to wait and also split into two groups. The lady in charge of the cemetery was apparently very annoyed at people visiting Usui's grave and said we had to be very quiet, (in spite of the fact that there was a very noisy children's nursery school next to the cemetery!) could take no photos and had to be very quick in paying our respects! This was very disappointing for us but some people did manage to sneak a couple of pictures! I even got told off for taking a picture of a building at the entrance to the cemetery!



Then it was back to the metro to visit **Asakusa**, an old market area, where they had some really interesting stalls selling all kinds of things from food to artworks to kimonos! At the entrance to Asakusa was a huge red lantern, on the underside of which was a carved dragon. On either side of the entrance were



guardians (Nio Protectors or Benevolent Kings) as the path through the market led to the oldest Buddhist temple in Japan, **Senso-ji**. Inside the temple, we were honoured to be allowed to go behind the altar screen to pray in front of the altar itself (after removing our shoes of course!).

In the main temple I paid 100 yen (about 50p) to shake a metal cylinder and retrieve a wooden stick on which was a number. I then opened the corresponding

numbered draw and took out a piece of paper (**omikuji**) on which was written my fortune, which turned out to be not particularly good, so I did the traditional thing of tying my paper to a rack so the bad luck would remain there instead of attaching itself to me!

In the market I bought a lovely picture of **Senju-Kannon** (Thousand-armed Kannon) and a pendant containing some Sanskrit characters, including **kiriku**, related to Senju-Kannon. Then we went back to the metro and to an **izakaya** (traditional Japanese tavern) for our evening meal, with shoes off, sat at low tables, huge variety of food and plenty of beer! Through Rika, I chatted to our main guide

about various Japanese healing groups and healers and he was very surprised by my knowledge! One of the friends of the guide who had accompanied us had not spoken any English during the day but, after a few beers, he turned to me and said "I like heavy metal!" and we proceeded to exchange the names of various heavy metal groups (a little surreal but very Japanese, I think!). He said he liked to sing 'Painkiller' by Judas Priest on Karaoke and then played a couple of his heavy metal ringtones on his phone!

After returning to the hotel, as it was still relatively early, Dan (another of the organisers) and I went out for a walk and found an even more traditional izakaya and drank some more beer, facing a couple of huge Japanese spider crabs in a tank!

It was a long day but a very enjoyable final night in Tokyo.

15th April:

10am start. Rika split us into groups for taxis and gave each group a little packet



containing the money for the journey to Tokyo Railway Station to catch the **Shinkansen** or Bullet Train to Kyoto (very organised!). At the station we bought a traditional Japanese **Bento Box** for our lunch and some drinks. The box contained a lovely selection of fish, chicken, Japanese vegetables, red snapper rice, noodles and pickles. They also sold some soy sauce flavoured Kit-Kats (!) but I decided against one of those.

On board the train was very comfortable and the 3 hour ride went very quickly and I did my first bit of Reiki in Japan, a little Reiki Okuri with Jane and Karen, who I was sat with.



Then, more taxis from Kyoto station to the **Kyoto Tokyu Hotel** (not quite as plush as the Royal Park and, thankfully not quite as expensive – but expensive none the less!)

Tadao sensei (our Reiki Teacher) had arranged a welcome evening for us, so, after freshening up we walked (about 15-20 minutes) to the **Jikiden Reiki Institute** (a lovely 120 year old traditional Japanese house, where Tadao and his mother, **Chiyoko Yamaguchi** once lived). The room we were going to use for training had many photographs of Usui, Dr Hayashi and Reiki classes from the 1930's and some copies of old Japanese Reiki certificates, as well as the **Gokai Scroll** (the Five Reiki Principles, as written by **Dr Hayashi**).

We were then invited upstairs for a little tea ceremony, with **green tea** and some very sweet **mochi**. Tadao sensei explained about how the full tea ceremony was

carried out and talked about some of the many shrines and pictures that adorned the walls, some of which were drawn by a boy who had been cured from pancreatic cancer after receiving Reiki from Chiyoko and Tadao. We were also honoured to be allowed to say a little prayer for Chiyoko at the family ancestral shrine.



Then we walked to an izakaya, where Tadao had booked a whole room and sat on the floor, having yet more delicious food and more beer! Back at the hotel, and it was still only 9pm – but we couldn't get a table for eight people at the hotel bar and the staff were unwilling to put some tables together until 9.45pm! So, we went for a walk to try and find an izakaya that had been recommended by the reception staff. It was a long walk but we were rewarded with a friendly place, more beer and finished with hot sake. The walk back to the hotel seemed quicker somehow!

16th April:

9.20am start: walked to Jikiden Reiki Institute for first day of **Shoden Seminar**. It was lovely to receive the training in the Japanese room, with **tatami** mats, screens etc. and there was a lovely little garden outside. During our first **Reiju**, the rain started to fall outside and it sounded lovely on the wooden walkway and tiled roof. We had a lovely meal at lunchtime, provided by Tadao and the Jikiden Reiki office staff.



After the seminar, I stopped off at a **yakitori** with Mia, Dan, Tim and Debbie and we had a various forms of

chicken and vegetables on skewers and more beer. On the way back to the hotel, we went into a convenience store and bought some ice cream. I had a lovely wafer containing a layer of green tea ice cream and a split layer of mallow and sweet bean paste! Back at the hotel we had another couple of drinks before retiring.

17th April:

2nd day of Shoden training at the institute (raining heavily). Lovely lunch again. Afterwards we walked in the rain to find the izakaya two nights before, this time for food as well as beer – great! Back to the hotel for more drinks – quite a late night!

18th April:

Final day of Reiki training (**Okuden**). Rain quite light. Had lovely vegetable curry and a coconut curry for lunch. Tadao sensei showed me a copy of **Kaiji Tomita's** book which belonged to his mother and was signed by **Toshitaka Mochizuki** (who had republished the 1933 edition of the book). There are some great photos of hands on healing in the book. Tadao also allowed me to buy a copy of Mochizuki's book from him, which has a manga (comic style) section telling the story of Usui and Reiki and also has some very interesting photos of Usui, **Ushida** and **Mitsune** (2 master students of Usui).



After the course, it was back to the yakitori, and the staff and customers were very friendly again. We had a great time and at the end one of the customers took a picture of us with the owners and everybody came outside to wave goodbye to us! We had a relatively early night (about 11.30pm).

19th April:

Taxis to see the **Golden Pavilion** at **Kinkuji** Temple, with beautiful grounds and too many lovely

photo opportunities! More taxis to **Sanjusangen-do**, home of 1001 golden statues of Senju Kannon (Thousand-armed Kannon), complete with many protector statues. Said a prayer in front of the main central Senju-Kannon Statue and my hands really heated up! Very impressive indeed but not allowed to take photos so bought a brochure containing many photos and also a copy of the Lotus Sutra in Japanese and a prayer block on which was the kiriku character.



Some of us were accosted by some Japanese schoolgirls who wanted to practice their

English by asking questions and swapping Japanese for English coins as a sign of friendship. Lovely grounds here as well.

Then walked to place where we had another nice lunch with bento boxes in a lovely room which had some beautiful decorative scrolls on the walls. Afterwards, more taxis to **Kiyomizu Temple**, in the hills with breathtaking views and lots of little shrines and gateways. The main temple is on wooden stilts and we prayed inside there and



sounded a huge inverted bell (a bit like a very large singing bowl!). We had a nice walk through the cherry blossoms and then went to look in the many souvenir shops and tried some **annama** (black sesame and sweet bean curd – lovely but very different!).

Once everyone had met up again, we walked down through an old street lined with small shops, which eventually opened up into a large park area and then on to the **Yasaka Shrine**, where there is a covered power spot over which **miko** (shrine maidens) dance for the gods. Then we moved on to the popular **Gion** shopping district where we found a lovely crystal shop (very expensive but breathtaking crystal carvings and jewellery). I also tagged along with Jane and Rika while they looked around a very posh makeup shop where they sell make-up for **Geisha** and **Maiko** as well as interesting beauty products such as a make-up removing sponge made from potato and a washing cloth and soap made from paper!

Just round the corner from there we went for a very special meal, which Tadao had organised for us in a very posh restaurant, where we were entertained by a Geisha (or **Geiko** as they





are known in Kyoto) and two Maiko (apprentice Geiko). There are only a handful of real Maiko nowadays so we were very privileged to have 3 Geiko in one room! The Geiko and Maiko served us food and drink and told us about themselves, we had our photo taken with them and then we were entertained by the Maiko dancing, while the Geiko sung accompanying them on a **Shamisen** (like a 3-string Japanese guitar). The singing and music

sounded a little strange to our Western ears but it was very moving none the less. The Maiko then showed us a traditional hand game, with an **utuwa** (container). The game consists of taking it in turns placing hands palm down on the container and at some point, one person picks up the container and the other person must put a fist down where the container was, the container is replaced and the game continues until someone fails to put a fist down – the pace of all this was determined by the Geiko playing her shamisen and it got faster and faster! Some of us had a turn at playing against a Maiko – it took a while for me to realise exactly what I was supposed to be doing but my friend Jane was very good at it!

At the end of the evening, we said our goodbyes to Tadao sensei and headed back to the hotel by taxi for more drinks (I think the beer in Japan must be very weak!)

20th April:

Trip to **Mount Kurama**! We checked out of the Kyoto Tokyu but left our luggage there and were picked up with our overnight bags by the **Kurama Onsen** minibus, which dropped us off in the car park near Kurama Station. There we met our guide for the day, a Mr Kitano, who said we should call him Sean Connery because he was going a little thin on top! Kitano-san was extremely knowledgeable about all aspects of Mount Kurama and had studied several styles of Reiki, including Jikiden. Before we even started to climb the many steps, **Kitano-san** spent about 20 minutes explaining the significance of a little, oddly shaped stone, with some Sanskrit characters on it, which involved the shapes, levels of existence, Reiki symbols and chakras – amazing that such a lot could be gleaned from a stone that many people might not even notice!





The weather was lovely and sunny and there was still plenty of cherry blossom around, which meant that there was a new photo opportunity at every turn! The light and the colours and the textures of the leaves and trees was incredible, interspersed with delightful waterfalls, shrines, large and small and sacred trees with shimenawa ropes and gohei. At the temple of the **Amida Buddha (Tenporin-do)** we crawled into a secluded space directly in front of the 12 foot high statue of Amida while our guide, Kitano-san explained about the appropriate **mudra** and **mantra** to use. There were also five-coloured ropes attached to the hand of the statue, which if you held them was like connecting to hand of the Amida Buddha.

We visited many other shrines on the way up and eventually arrived at the main **Kurama-dera Temple**. There we stood on the

Mandala Power Spot, saw the sacred stone that once covered some 3,500 year old sutras, listened to some **koto** players outside the temple, heard **Japanese flutes** being played inside the temple, and we were allowed to go down some steps under the main altar past hundreds, if not thousands, of jars which contain purified human hair from temple members. Once our eyes grew accustomed to the gloom, our guide pointed out statues of the 3 major deities of the Kurama Temple: **Mao-son, Bishamonten** and **Kannon** (Kwan Yin) and showed us the appropriate mudras and chanted the appropriate mantras. The back of the Mao-son statue is carved in an image of the **Osugi-gongen tree** a thousand year-old Japanese Cedar that was thought to be a reincarnation of Mao-son, who originally came to earth from Venus 6.5 million years ago to guide the evolution of mankind. However, the tree was blown over in a typhoon in 1950 and the broken top half has been used to fashion many artefacts, including the three statues.



We then continued our climb and finally arrived at **Osugi Gongen** itself, where the great tree had once stood and where many people believe Mikao Usui first received the Reiki energy after fasting. This area and the way down the other side of the



mountain is full of exposed roots and it is easy to see how Usui could have tripped when running excitedly down the mountain (several of our party also tripped but luckily did not injure themselves)! We had our lunch on this very significant spot and every so often we could hear the wind rise up as if to acknowledge our presence and our guide offered up some prayers to the Kami of the place. The wind had not been noticed until we arrived

at this spot! It was indeed a very magical place and our guide gave each of us a little gist he had made, which contained a picture of Senju-Kannon, the kiriku, a photo of Mikao Usui and the Reiki Principles in his handwriting and a personalised message written in kanji – very special! Kitano-san took a photograph of Jane, Jackie and myself, which appeared to contain a large orb (unusual for an outdoor photograph – I hope I can get a copy!).

After lunch, we made our way back down the other side of the mountain towards **Kibune**. This side of the mountain is a lot wilder than the way up, with rougher paths and many exposed roots and strangely shaped trees. We even saw a snake, which slithered away before I could get a picture – to see a snake was a good omen, our guide said.



After reaching the bottom of the mountain in Kibune village, we crossed a little bridge over fast flowing water and went to look at some more shrines, including a very old one which was said to contain a deep hole at the bottom of which was a dragon! In the old days, women would come here in the dead of night to curse others using a form of Japanese voodoo (**Ushinokokumairi**) which involved hammering a corn doll to a tree!



Unfortunately, we spent a little too long here and missed that last bus back to Kurama village, which meant a very long but picturesque walk to the nearest railway station and a 3-minute train ride to Kurama village, where the Kurama Onsen bus picked us up and took us to the Kurama Onsen. The Kurama Onsen has natural hot spring baths and provides traditional Japanese accommodation. There are two outside baths and two inside baths, segregated into male and female as if you want to

bathe you have to be completely naked by law. We had a very soothing dip in the outside baths before our evening meal and it was quite hot but not as hot as I had expected! After the bath, we changed into thin cotton gowns called **yukatas**, which

were purple and white, so we were all dressed the same for our meal and looked very traditional. The meal was lovely and afterwards we presented Dan and Rika with gifts and they also gave us a gift each and we took plenty of photos. Then back down to the bar area for drinks and a



turn in a massage chair (wonderful) and attempted to stand on a reflexology board, which had wooden pins that are supposed to stimulate all the reflex points on the soles of your feet but for most of us was quite painful! Some of us had brought along some **sake** and **shochu** and we finished that off as we talked long into the night before retiring to our futons which had been laid out in our shared rooms.

21st April:

In the morning, after a shower, I had a dip in the inside onsen, which was very refreshing (no hangover!) before attempting to eat the traditional Japanese breakfast of fish, rice, pickles and the like – not very easy to eat first thing in the morning! We

were then taken back to the Kyoto Tokyu Hotel to leave our overnight bags but we couldn't check back in until the afternoon.

This was our free day and Jane and I had already decided where we wanted to go, so we shared a taxi with Judith and Chris to **Ryoangi Temple**, where there is the famous Zen rock garden but also some lovely grounds and buildings. We then got a taxi to the **Gion** area, visited the crystal shop again and had a coffee in



Starbucks. The Japanese twist to that was that I had a **spinach and cheese muffin** with my cappuccino!



Then we walked to **Chion-in Temple**, where we intended to see some ornate golden doors and a 'nightingale floor' (**uguisu-bari**) which was designed so that it would emit a sound at every footstep to warn the monks of intruders. Apparently Chion-in was also a location for the shooting of the Tom Cruise film 'The Last Samurai'! However, once we

had seen the huge main gate (**San-Mon**) and ascended some steps, we heard some monks chanting within the main temple, so we decided to have a look. When we stepped inside, we were completely blown away! There were about 170 monks, in full ceremonial robes (some in purple and gold, some in lime green and gold and some in mainly gold) chanting and accompanied by a monk banging two pieces of wood together, there were TV cameras filming the event and 3 large flat screen TVs showed details of what was going on near the altar. The sound was hypnotic, the sight spectacular and the smell intoxicating! We set there for at least 45 minutes as various tour groups came and went and eventually we could even join in with the chanting and I started to sway involuntarily! The chanting changed speed every so

often, died down and then started up again. At one point the monks stood up and put on oblong hats, which were raised at the front and began slowly walking in long lines, chanting, with their hands held in **gassho** (prayer position) and the lines gradually began to weave through one another – as the pipes began and there was an occasional boom from what must have been a very large **taiko** drum, which we couldn't see. An incredible experience but unfortunately we couldn't take photos and we couldn't find any photos in the temple shop either!



The final place we wanted to visit was **Toji-in Temple**, where a monthly flea market was being held. By the time we arrived, the stalls were beginning to pack up but we saw some very interesting items for sale just the same, including lots of food, crystals, antiques, old photographs, kimonos and even some old mortar shells! Toji-in was quite a large place but looked as though it was in need of some renovation. It also boasts the tallest **pagoda** in Japan. As we made our way back out of the temple complex, we noticed that the also had lots of plants, bushes and even trees for sale.

We made our way back to the hotel by taxi and got ready for our final meal together at yet another izakaya, where I had deep-fried chicken and chips and some gorgeous prawn tempura. Then back to the hotel for more drinks but an early-ish night!

22nd April:

Up at 5am! Minibuses at 6am to Kansai Airport (a 3 hour drive). Rika had already been out and bought us some yoghurts and snacks for the journey, bless her! After a short stop at some services, we arrive at the very modern airport, checked-in, did some last minute shopping and headed off to the departure gate on a shuttle train. We boarded at 9.35am and arrived back at Heathrow at about 3pm GMT (11pm Japan time!). Had to queue for passport control (though not quite as long as in Japan!) collected our bags and said our goodbyes! I still had to catch the Heathrow Express to Paddington, the tube to Euston and the train back to Manchester. I managed to get a slightly earlier train and arrive home about 9pm GMT – very tired but having had one of the most wonderful trips of my life!

