Usui Reiki Ryoho - the Original Meaning

I was working on a private project concerning the Usui Gainen (the concepts also known as the Reiki precepts or principles) when something suddenly occurred to me.

The term Usui Reiki Ryoho originally referred to the main concepts of the original Usui document. The Usui Reiki Ryoho Gakkai (the old Reiki society) refers to them as the Gokai. If you look at the original wall hanging and a translation it reads something like this.

The Secret Method Of Inviting Blessings.
The Spiritual Medicine of Many Illnesses.
Anger not, worry not, today only.
Do your work with appreciation.
Be kind to all people.
In your life perform gassho as your mind recalls (these concepts).
The Usui system for connecting with your ancestral self, through the body-mind
The founder
Mikao Usui

(Refer to Usui Gainen article for the complete explanation)

At the Usui Reiki Ryoho International conference in Toronto in 2002, I asked Dave King of Usui-Do Eidan (www.usui-do.org) to give a presentation on his experiences with some of the students of Usui, Eguchi and Hayashi who are still alive, and on the original Usui-Do system. He mentioned this to Tenon-in (aka Mariko-Obaasan) who is the highest ranking living student of O-Sensei. In return she passed on some comments and information about the times she and her friends spent with Usui Sensei from 1920 to 1926.

Here was one quote:

"In (April) 1921 O-Sensei made a further trip to Hiei-zan (a mountain near Kyoto) and returned several days later with a sheet of yellow paper. He sent one of us to buy mitsumata washi (paper made from the mitsumata bush) and he spent the rest of the day with ink and brush. When we returned the next day the paper was already mounted in the tokonoma (alcove). He had signed the sheet in red ink and had spilled some of the ink on the edge of his cushion which looked like kokoro (the kanji for heart)"

(Note: For info on Mitsumata Washi see http://www.awagami.or.jp/awawashi_e/materials.html )

At URRI, Dave also spoke a little about some of the interesting “coincidences” he has experienced in his Reiki life, including this incident in the early 1990s after he had moved to Canada.
"Still not satisfied, I set off for Tokyo a few months later. Onuki (an Eguchi master) had described the location of the Usui memorial in the northwest suburbs (of Tokyo) and I ventured out on the private railway network to find it. Several hours later I arrived and was greeted by a middle aged man who showed me around and later invited me to his home where I met his father who had been a student of Usui in 1923. Later we made a trip in my guide's car to a small shrine lit with two oil lamps and containing a portrait of Usui, a jar containing some of Usui's remains (buried vertically in the ground) and a linen hanging scroll containing Usui's Affirmations (Gainen) written on a pale blue sheet of fine mulberry washi and bearing three red seals in the lower left corner. I was told that the Affirmations were the original copy that had been brushed by Usui himself in 1921. I was not permitted to take photographs."

When I asked Dave about the size of the original he said:

"The paper itself is 30 X 23 sun which is about 35 X 27 inches. It is mounted on a blue linen kakejiku (hanging frame) which adds another few inches all round. Yes, it takes up most of the wall!"

(Note: A "kakejiku" is a hanging scroll used for mounting pieces of Japanese calligraphy of painting. For information on the Japanese measurement system (including "sun") see http://www.geocities.com/Tokyo/Pagoda/8187/Script.htm)

Another interesting note about the affirmations is that they actually help to define the term "Reiki" as used by Usui Sensei. If you have assisted with translation of Japanese material you will know that you cannot simply look up Japanese words in a dictionary and get an accurate meaning. Their true meaning depends on the context in which they are used.

For many years people have simply defined "Reiki" by the independent translation of the words "rei" and "ki." In 1995/96 Dave King and Melissa Riggall met a senior student of Dr. Hayashi named Tatsumi. He had trained with Hayashi-sensei from 1927 to 1931, completing the hand healing system as well as the original Usui-Do spiritual system to the highest levels (beyond what we think of as Shinpiden, to Shichidan).

Melissa actually lived near the Tatsumi family for a month and learned the complete Usui-Do system. Both she and Dave were granted the highest level of Shichidan. One day Melissa pointed to a photo of the original affirmations in Tatsumi-san's house. She noted the term "Reiki" and said that this was how the West referred to the hand healing system. Tatsumi-san said that the healing was simply referred to as te-âte (hand healing), and that by using the term "reiki," O-Sensei had been referring to his ancestors.

Dave explained "Usui Reiki Ryoho" in more detail to me saying

"More accurately 'Usui therapy for connecting with your ancestral self (created at conception according to Eastern belief but also connected with our first cell division which is a perfect blueprint (and therefore a backup) of us the perfect being)."

I had always wondered why that simple phrase "Usui Reiki Ryoho" had stood out for me in the past (I use it as a backdrop for my Reiki web pages) and I think I now have a better appreciation.
The personal project I mentioned at the beginning was to recreate the affirmations in their original size, paper and hanging. In the process of doing so I was surprised to discover that Dave had just done exactly that. When I first saw my own copy in their full size I found I was staring at them in awe - something had grabbed a hold of me and had me rooted to them. I almost felt like I was right there watching Usui Sensei brush the entire work before me. I had been reading recently about the art of Shodo or Japanese calligraphy, which like other well known disciplines like flower arrangement and tea ceremony, is approached with great determination, sincerity and even spirituality. I felt I was looking at O-Sensei's own example of his highest form of Shodo.

(Note: Some interesting sites on Shodo are –
What is Shodo?  http://web-jpn.org/kidsweb/virtual/shodo/what-is.html
Styles of Shodo     http://www.tooter4kids.com/Japan/calligraphy.htm )

One additional awakening came to me when I rediscovered the original meaning of Usui Reiki Ryoho. The next time I read the literal translation (www.threshold.ca/reiki/usui_memorial_translation.html ) I have of the Usui Memorial in the Tokyo Saihoji temple grounds I now had a new understanding of what Admiral Ushida was saying whenever he used the term Usui Reiki Ryoho or Rei-Ho. It wasn't just the hand healing method that was a part of the modified Usui-Do system now known by the same name. It was also the heart of the concepts or gainen that he was referring to. This brought an entirely different understanding of how O-Sensei's students honoured and revered their teacher and his work.

**URRI 2003 NEWS**

Hiroshi Doi-sensei of Japan had been researching the use of the term "Reiki Ryoho." In his URRI 2003 handout (in Denmark) he shared the following findings.

"The word "reiki" is used often by spiritual therapists during Meiji (1868-1912), Taisho (1912-1925) and early Showa (1926-1988) Era. Many people used the word "reiki ryoho" to refer to their therapies, and "reiki ryoho" is not original with Usui Sensei. The name Usui Sensei used was "Usui Reiki Ryoho."

The first person to use the term "reiki ryoho" was Mataji Kawakami, who was a therapist, who published "Reiki Ryoho to sono Koka" (Reiki Ryoho and its Effects) in 1919. However, today the term "reiki ryoho" almost exclusively refers to "Usui Reiki Ryoho."

(thanks to Sue Tanida for sharing this last bit)

**The Original Meaning of "Reiki"**

For a detailed explanation on the origins and meaning of the term "Reiki", go to www.threshold.ca/ Origin-of-the-Term-Reiki.html