

Shokushu #22 – The Treasure of Ki Testing
Friday, August 29, 2014
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Good evening everyone.

This is the last of our 22 Shokushu. It has taken almost three years for us to work our way through these. We thought maybe 22 months, but it doesn't really work that way, does it? Sometimes I'm traveling and we miss a month, here and there, and then vacations, and so it has taken a bit closer to three years to do all of them. And this will be the last discussion group for this year.

This Shokushu is entitled "The Treasure of Ki Testing." So I think I will begin by reading this from the Shokushu book.

"The Treasure of Ki Testing

Having no color, no odor, and no shape, the mind is not something that can be grasped by the senses. However, based on the principle that the mind and body are actually one, we can know the state of this ungraspable mind by testing the body, which is available to our senses.

Ki Tests are not founded on the idea of testing for strength or weakness. The most important factor in Ki Testing is to accurately inform the person of the state of his or her mind. Thus the person performing Ki Tests must truly understand and exhibit oneness of mind and body from the outset, and then perform the test correctly."

Now Sayaka, would you read it in Japanese please? (she reads)

Thank you Sayaka. Now I'll read it in English from Sayaka's translation and the work that we did on it. The first difference, as you heard her say in Japanese, "ki no testo." It doesn't say anything about "the treasure" of Ki Testing.

"Ki Testing

The mind is an ungraspable thing that doesn't have color, odor, or shape. However, because the mind and body are one, you can know the state of ungraspable mind by testing the body. This is Ki Testing.

Ki Test is not to test to determine strength or weakness. It is important that the person that performs Ki Test first coordinate one's mind and body and then perform a correct testing to let a partner know his or her state of mind."

It's about half the length of the one in the Shokushu book. Something interesting to know about this, is that this is the only Shokushu that Tohei Sensei didn't write. And maybe you can tell, because Tohei Sensei's Shokushu are all very poetic and this is rather prosaic. It's very straightforward. It just tells you what to do. This is what Ki Testing is. So it's very informative and straightforward.

It was written, probably by Shinichi Tohei Sensei, or someone at Headquarters, in Japanese, of course, and then translated into English, though I don't know who did either of these. We now have Wataru Hatakeyama and Nadia Litz that do all of the translating, but they weren't there at the time this was written. Maybe you know, Tohei Sensei was supposed to come to Maui to bless our new dojo in 2001, and while he was preparing to come, he had his first stroke. So he was unable to come. And it was after he had his first stroke that this was written, so he was obviously not able to write any more, since he couldn't use his hand. However, it was before his second and third stroke, which resulted in him being completely incapacitated, so he was still able to understand and approve of this Shokushu. But it is quite different than the rest of them.

The thing that always strikes me about this Ki Testing Shokushu is, often Tohei Sensei would come to test us, and he would come up and look at you, and sometimes just say "OK," and go on to the next person. And then he would check, and then move the next person. And then maybe the next person he would just say, "OK." And then, as one of the chief instructors, I spent hours and hours being taught by him how to see if mind/body unification is present, without touching the person. This is very important for an instructor, or a Ki Tester, because by the time you touch the body, you have to know already. The movement that's caused after you touch the body, is to show the student their state of mind, as he said. Because we, as students, might not fully understand what is mind/body unification, might not fully understand the experience of One Point, and be doing something else to attempt to be stable, like using our muscles, using our stance, depending upon the mat, in order to get our stability instead of One Point.

Once you touch, then they know what you already must know. So isn't it interesting that this says, "However because the mind and body are one, you can know the state of ungraspable mind by testing the body." Well, actually you have to know the state of ungraspable mind prior to testing the body, according to Tohei Sensei and his teaching to us. And of course, Shinichi Tohei Sensei taught this very thing to us this year in Las Vegas {at the National Chief Instructor Seminar}. Same thing. We must know. We must be able to see. And he is often showing us the wrong way and the right way and saying, "Can you see the difference between mind/body unification and not?" And then he has us do exercises, as we do here in this class, where you

have to be able to see whether unification is there or not.

So how is it that we can perceive, without even touching the body, the state of mind/body unification, prior to touching and testing? What mechanism is used there? If not the senses, then what? I mean certainly if they are displaying some tension or emotion, fear or anxiety, you can see this with your eyes. But quite often, with more experienced Aikido practitioners, most people cannot tell. But if you are an instructor or the person testing, you are expected to be able to tell. So what is the mechanism that is used?

Sometimes, students ask me this question. "What is it that is happening there?" Well, you could say that a popular word for that is "intuition," or "sensing." "I can sense it." Along the same line, for instance, when we say "Keep One Point." What do you do? Well of course there are all sorts of incorrect things that you do, but if you actually shift from being self-conscious to universally conscious, in other words you experience mind/body unification, then what did you do to do that? Can you say? Can anybody say? No, you cannot say. Something happens, and it is profound. But there is no word for it.

You know, the four aspects of practice: "Show up, open your heart and mind, follow along with whatever is happening in the moment without editing, and then accept whatever the results are." That's a way of describing what it is like when you are experiencing mind/body unification. But who can say? We don't have a word. It can't be spoken. Can anybody tell me? I've never been able to express it in precise language, and I've never heard anyone else express it.

I have often told you I would like to have the Four Basic Principles sign taken down and re-done. Because the Japanese doesn't say "Keep One Point." It says "One Point is the place where your mind rests." It doesn't say "keep." It's not a command. Those are all four expressed as commands. "Relax Completely." Do you relax when I tell you that? No, you don't. You become tense. So in Japanese, it just refers to being completely relaxed. Same thing with weight underside. It just says that "weight is underside," not "keep weight underside." The last one is "Extend Ki." No. "Ki o dasu." Which means "Ki is Extending" or "Ki extends." None of them are commands. But the way they were translated by someone from Hawaii back in the 50's, they came out that way. So we have always used them, all over the world, in that way.

But they are not commands. They are not something to do. Those four things are the result of this thing that I can't say, that we do. When you are experiencing One Point, Complete Relaxation, Weight Underside, and Ki is Extending, when you are having that experience, (and you know he always said that when you have one you

have them all) it's because mind/body is unified. What did you do to enter into that state or condition of mind? Well, it's the same mechanism, if you want to call it that, though it sounds very mechanistic, but it is the same mechanism that we use to see. A very famous teacher in Japan, Iwao Tamura Sensei, his explanation for it was "Universal mind recognizes itself."

So it really doesn't have anything to do with me or you. If I am experiencing Taiga, big self, instead of Shoga, small self, if that experience is present, then it recognizes whether it is present in someone else immediately, like that.

So somehow these two things that I am bringing up here are related in some ungraspable way, unspeakable, indescribable, very difficult to point to. You can't really teach Aikido. If you can experience it when you are with a student, then student may be able to pick up on that and experience it also. Then the more often you are with someone who is experiencing that, the more often you can experience that, then over a period of time you can also help another person, in some way that is very difficult to describe.

I mean we do have all of these classes and all of these methods. Of course, the same thing is true when someone is attacking you. You have to be able to see their state of mind. We call it "osayru." If you can't see their state of mind, they are going to overwhelm you. The same thing in Kiatsu. You see the patient, you have to be able to see their mind state before you touch them, otherwise don't touch them.

In other words, Tohei Sensei is constantly teaching us that we have to be able to experience mind/body unification prior to anything. And of course, these are just dojo activities. Before you cook dinner, you must be experiencing mind/body unification. When you get up in the morning. That's why we get up and sit in meditation first. Sometimes you are grumpy in the morning, or just feel out of sorts. So sit. And then, when you come out, you are experiencing mind/body unification before you engage with the world.

We have been studying this Shokushu for over a month now, and these are the things that I have been noticing. And of course, we have had this for over ten years in the new Shokushu book. So ever since I first read it, and probably you too, or maybe not....have you also wondered about this, since you are being taught all the time that you must be able to see it before touching them? Or not?

OK, I said my piece. You can comment on that or ask.

Student: Sensei, it says that "Ki testing is to accurately inform the state of his or her mind." However, it's usually yes or no, isn't it? Like on or off. There aren't any shades

of grey. I mean, the tester says "Oh, you are anxious." But you are keeping One Point or not, right? So to say to accurately inform someone of the state of their mind, that state is when that transition or transcendence happens, that which there is no word for...

Everybody has access to 100% of mind/body unification, everybody, from birth. There are no exceptions. And there is no one that has more access than anybody else, inherently. However, through practice, we can build our capacity to experience mind/body unification. That is a relative thing. In other words, there can be more or less of my participation in mind/body unification, or my experience of mind/body unification. It doesn't mean there is more mind/body unification. Taiga is Taiga. The universe is what it is. It's not about me. It's about my giving up it being about me, so that I can participate in this greater, universal self, or universal condition we call mind/body unification or just unification.

So yes, when I test the students, they can have some degree of participation in that. It's not just a yes or no. That said, if we are doing a Shoden Ki Test, let's say, a formal Ki Test, the student is expected to have a certain level of participation in mind/body unification, which we call "Shoden level." So the person who is testing must understand what that level is that is required, and perform accordingly, testing to that level. And you know that the way you change testing levels is not by doing something with your body, but your degree of calmness. In other words, your own participation increases in calm intensity as the test becomes higher. So, in this case, it is either a yes or no, you are either on this level or not. And usually, if you don't pass, you get another chance, the teacher touches you and puts calmness and gives you confidence and then your participation can be a little bit greater, hopefully enough to pass the Shoden Ki Test. And so on and so on. Shoden, Chuden, Joden, Okuden...

I was the first person that ever took Okuden Ki Test. When Otsuka Sensei gave me the test in front of Tohei Sensei, Tohei Sensei didn't give him any explanation. So he wasn't sure what the level of the test should be. So he was lost and didn't know what to do. He told me later, "I thought if I move you, I test too severely. If I don't move you, I don't test severely enough. And Tohei Sensei was watching." So he said he completely didn't know what to do. So Tohei Sensei didn't give him a chance to decide. And we had never had an Okuden Ki Test before that time. And, he didn't give me a chance to prepare. He just said, "You take Okuden now."

There was Okuden Ki rank before, but no test for Okuden. So you could get Okuden by some Sensei recommending you. Maybe if you make a big enough donation you get Okuden. But then finally he said "That's not right. We need to have a test.

Because there are too many people walking around out there that have high rank that actually..." Well, I don't want to say.

For instance, one time Tohei Sensei gave Ki Tests to all the top instructors at a seminar in Honolulu. The teachers were there from all over the U.S. He had three of the Chief Instructors give Shoden Ki test to all of the other Chief Instructors. The problem was that these three different individuals had three completely different ideas about what Shoden Ki Test is. Tohei Sensei was upset, and said that they didn't know what they were doing. And so after that, then we began spending all of our time in a separate group with Tohei Sensei, where he could concentrate more on teaching each of us what is correct for the appropriate level of mind/body unification for each test. And Shinichi Tohei Sensei continues to teach us that way today.

So yes, it is a very relative thing, but the relative part is our participation in it, not the thing itself, which is completely present and available 100% of the time.

Student: Sensei, I am thinking of children here. A lot of what you are talking about is for the adult level, adult understanding. Even though I still need to be intuitive and perceive what is going on with a child, a lot of what you are testing with children is posture, just seeing if they are trying to fight back with strength, etc, just basic stuff. I mean there is no real manual for checking kids. All I can say is that you just have to connect with them.

Well, first of all, don't forget that Tohei Sensei requires you to be a certain age before you can take Shokyu, which is the lowest level of Ki Test. So before that, you are an encouraging agent. It's a little bit different. They are children, as you say, and I'd be interested to hear what Lynn has to say about this.

Lynn: What is he asking?

He is saying, "Well, you are describing all of these specific conditions for Ki Testing, but that's for adults, right, because kids are not even old enough to take Shokyu? So he is kind of asking, "How do you test kids? What's the point, or how do you go about doing that?"

Lynn: I think it's the same. It's the same. You're testing them with the same feeling, attitude, and awareness. I don't see the difference.

Student: Those adult standards are much different. I mean, kids don't know what One Point is.

Lynn: Sure they do. They center themselves, go to that place. Yeah, you are going to

put directions in language in a way that they can understand it, but it's all the same.

Yeah, I think sometimes when I am giving the Ki Tests to the line of children on children's testing day, I'm always amazed by the degree of unification that they are experiencing. It's always mixed with a kind of childish intensity, which isn't there with adults in quite the same way. I mean, they are enjoying themselves in a way that adults are not. They know how to enjoy themselves in certain way. I think that the strict criteria that you are talking about, that doesn't start until they get to be twelve years old. But before then, you know, you are teaching them, as Lynn is saying, you are helping them learn what is the feeling.

I want to repeat that the theme of Shinichi Sensei's seminar in Las Vegas a couple of months ago was "learning to feel the difference between mind moving and mind stuck." Another way of saying that is, "learning to feel the experience of mind/body unification for what it is, and not fooling yourself." So all four or five days of the seminar was built on many different exercises to help us to tell the difference between this. Not just looking, but to feel the difference between when your mind is stopped and when mind is moving with the movement of the universe, which is what kakudaiho/shuchuho is all about.

So the kids can experience this, to whatever degree, in the same way that adults can. In some ways, because they don't have established habits, it might even be more accessible to them. Adults can be pretty stubborn in their ways, I've noticed. OK? Thank you, and thank you, Lynn.

Student: It's just a comment. You started out by talking about Shoden, Chuden, Joden type of tests, versus talking about Shokyu, Chukyu, and Jokyu type of tests. These have more to do with the body, physically, than the more advanced tests. And you were talking about how to pass, and it's not something that we really think about. You know, you can't think yourself through a Ki Test. Where physically, you can kind of get the physical positioning for a basic level test, and then as you get more advanced, it's more getting out of the way of that.

Yeah, well the other fellow was actually talking about pre-Shokyu, Chukyu, Jokyu, prior to even getting to that level. And I should repeat, kids are sometimes miraculously in tune with great levels of mind/body unification.

I think that it's really important to remember that Shokyu, Chukyu, Jokyu are always expressed as tests of the body, and tests of mind begin as Shoden level. Certainly you can pass Shokyu and Chukyu if you have good posture and a relatively stable condition. But you can still be cheating big time, meaning using physical ways to be stable.. And as you go up in testing levels, those don't work any more, because as

you come into contact with someone who is testing you on a much calmer level, they'll go right through that physical part.

Student: I want to comment a little more on the student that was saying that it is black and white, you've either got it or you don't. I remember distinctly when Shinichi Sensei was here, he often said to us, "Almost good" when One Point came up a little bit only.

Yeah, Tohei Sensei used to always say, "Almost good." Which is a kind of way of encouraging the student too, but that's right. Everybody who is engaged in taking and giving Ki Tests understands that it is a relative thing, your degree of participation, and there is always room for improvement. Shinichi Sensei was teaching us a certain kind of Ki Test in Las Vegas and he insisted that we be aware of the fact that every Monday, he and Otsuka Sensei and Kataoka Sensei do that Ki Test on each other. And he said, "I am telling you this because I want you to know that even we, the Chief Instructors of the world, have to constantly be tested, because there is infinite room for improvement. And whoa be to the teacher that doesn't allow him or herself to be tested regularly. Hence, I go to Japan and to the National Chief Instructor Seminars every year, because my peers are there, and they are more than happy to check me out and see. Right? So this is a very important part of our on-going practice. You never get above being challenged.

And I'd like to say one other thing about this, that that reminded me of. We often wish for a world in which there is no conflict. We are always looking for pleasure and avoiding pain. We are always looking for a stress-free environment. Right? We avoid people who make us uncomfortable, and hang out with people who make us comfortable. Or, in other words, we avoid people that challenge us, and hang out with people that don't challenge us. That's like wishing for a world of dead relaxation. That's like wishing for a world of dead calmness. What would it be like to live in a world of dead calmness? So when you are taking a Ki Test, that tremendous tension, or upheaval that the challenge causes in you, aids and feeds mind/body unification. It's not to be avoided. It's to be used, to be embraced. This is the one thing that is very difficult for Aikido students, particularly on their way up through the Ki Tests, to get. Everybody wants to pass that test, thinking, "OK, I need to get rid of my stress. I need to get rid of being affected this way by a challenge." It's never going to happen, folks. You will be faking it, if you do. You want to live in a world where no one ever laughs or no one ever cries, where no one ever feels any pain? What kind of world would that be?

That's why Tohei Sensei says, "True living calmness is not a condition of immobility." True living calmness, true mind/body unification is intense, and it is

right in the middle of conflict. It's just that it sees the whole of the conflict. It doesn't take one side or another. It has no opinion about it whatsoever. Of course, your small mind has a strong opinion about it. So the friction that's caused between small mind and big mind, in other words between shoga and taiga, this causes the heat in you which allows this transformation to take place, so that you can experience this on a very deep and powerful level. But if you are always trying to avoid conflict, you will never experience it.

I was in Honolulu and was teaching about this, and told the student that you have to come with everything, the good, the bad, and the ugly. Don't just come with the good. If you try to hide what you judge to be your own bad side, your own ugly side, then you cannot pass a Ki Test. And then when I came over and sat down, Naluai Sensei said, "That's it, in a nutshell." But then he said, "That's not a popular thing to say, you know. " People like the idea of burning the bad away, becoming "pure," and this whole idea of being saintly that has developed. If you are a Muslim you have to die to get this, but evidently in Christianity you can be living and be saintly. So you have burned away all the dross, all the negative. It's like the idea of transforming mercury into gold, which used to be a very popular idea with alchemists. It's alchemy, you know? A very dangerous idea, very dangerous because you will super-ego yourself to death, trying to do that.

So this is a very important distinction, in terms of giving and passing Ki Tests.

Student: Sensei, it seems like there is a little bit of conflict in how the Ki Tests are approached. There is a lot of emphasis on passing and failing, and yet the emphasis in the Shokushu is to accurately inform the person. So how do you pass or fail being informed.

Well, that's what the student's earlier comment was referring to, saying that it was either a yes or no, pass or fail. But that's only the case, when you are taking, for instance, and Shoden Ki Test, you are expected to be able to remain calm up to a certain level, to experience mind/body unification up to a certain level. If you don't reach that level, you don't pass. You fail. And if, with some encouragement you still can't, then you have to wait and take the test again later. You can actually fail the test. So there is pass/fail, but only in that sense. And why do we have that?

Student: No, with the emphasis in this Shokushu it seems like whether you "pass" or "fail" you need to be informed by that process. And if I am really obsessed with passing or failing I will not be informed.

You will be informed that you didn't pass.

Student: Yes, that's about it. Oh, he didn't pass. But that's not the object of this process.

Don't be confused between the formal Ki Test, and then all the time we spend in class supporting those Ki Tests. So during class, when you are with your fellow student, you are being constantly informed of your degree of participation in mind/body unification. Right? So you are learning how to, for lack of a better word I have to use the word, "do" or "make happen" that shift from self interest to universal interest, from being afraid to fail and wanting to pass, to just saying "so what?" and resting in your One Point, resting in this condition no matter what. So to some degree or other you learn that, and as you practice more and more with your fellows in the dojo, you begin to get more and more participation in that and a more stable feeling of that. And then, even when you go to work in the morning you might then feel, after many years of training like this, or when you come out to a Ki Test, you are in your One Point. You are experiencing that because you have practiced so much on a very deep level. When you are in that state, you come to work in the morning and you also feel that degree of confidence, that degree of stability in your work place with the challenges which can be very heavy duty, but OK. So you are passing advanced Ki Tests in your work place then. The reason to be informed of your state of mind, is so that you will learn what is actual mind/body unification and what is not. Because the mind masquerades this, constantly trying to substitute something else that it can control, because it thinks that it has to be the one in control in order to pass. It thinks, "I have to do something!" And when a student suddenly gets it, and passes a Ki Test, they say, "Well, I didn't do anything," or "You didn't really test me that time." "Yes, I did. That's it." But we can't believe it, because we didn't do anything consciously. Like Tracy said, "We didn't think our way into that one." That is what we are used to doing with everything. "I must be more calm. I must relax more."

These are all really good questions. I mean that is the purpose of doing these Shokushu discussions, to get beyond just reading the Shokushu and thinking, "Oh yeah, that's right." Well, OK, but in what condition is that right? And does that mean this or this. Does that mean that these tests are pass or fail or does that mean this is a relative thing and in what way? You know?

OK that's enough. Thank you very much.