

The Ten Oxherding Pictures



一
尋
牛

1. The search for the bull

In the pasture of this world, I endlessly push aside the tall grasses in search of the bull.
 Following unnamed rivers, lost upon the interpenetrating paths of distant mountains,
 My strength failing and my vitality exhausted, I cannot find the bull.
 I only hear the locusts chirring through the forest at night.



二
見
跡

2. Discovering the footprints

Along the riverbank under the trees, I discover footprints!
Even under the fragrant grass I see his prints.
Deep in remote mountains they are found.
These traces no more can be hidden than one's nose, looking heavenward.



見牛

3. Perceiving the bull

I hear the song of the nightingale.
The sun is warm, the wind is mild, willows are green along the shore,
Here no bull can hide!
What artist can draw that massive head, those majestic horns?



4. Catching the bull

I seize him with a terrific struggle.
 His great will and power are inexhaustible.
 He charges to the high plateau far above the cloud-mists,
 Or in an impenetrable ravine he stands.



5. Taming the bull

The whip and rope are necessary.
 Else he might stray off down some dusty road.

Being well trained, he becomes naturally gentle.
Then, unfettered, he obeys his master.



六
騎牛
歸家

6. Riding the bull home

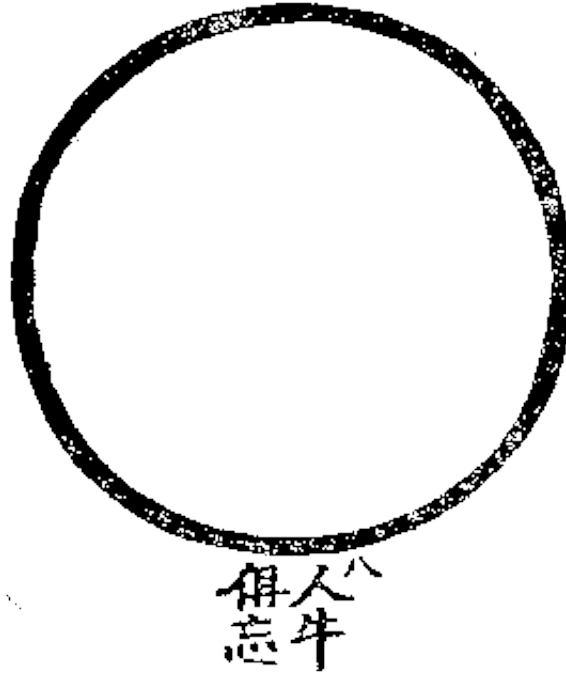
Mounting the bull, slowly I return homeward.
The voice of my flute intones through the evening.
Measuring with hand-beats the pulsating harmony, I direct the endless rhythm.
Whoever hears this melody will join me.



七
忘
人牛

7. The bull transcended

Astride the bull, I reach home.
I am serene. The bull too can rest.
The dawn has come. In blissful repose,
Within my thatched dwelling I have abandoned the whip and rope.



8. both bull and self transcended

Whip, rope, person, and bull -- all merge in No-Thing.
This heaven is so vast no message can stain it.
How may a snowflake exist in a raging fire?
Here are the footprints of the patriarchs.



九
返源
還本

9. Reaching the source

Too many steps have been taken returning to the root and the source.
 Better to have been blind and deaf from the beginning!
 Dwelling in one's true abode, unconcerned with that without --
 The river flows tranquilly on and the flowers are red.



十
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10. In the world

Barefooted and naked of breast, I mingle with the people of the world.

My clothes are ragged and dust-laden, and I am ever blissful.
I use no magic to extend my life;
Now, before me, the dead trees become alive.

Illustrations are by Tomikichiro Tokuriki, famous modern woodblock artist from Kyoto.

Poems by 12th century Chinese master, Kakuan.

Translation by Nyogen Senzaki and Paul Reps, as presented in **Zen Flesh, Zen Bones**.

