

For Class Use Only.



ZEN CENTER OF LOS ANGELES – 2012 CLASS

THE TEN OXHERDING PICTURES

as depicted with verses by Zen Master Kakuan*

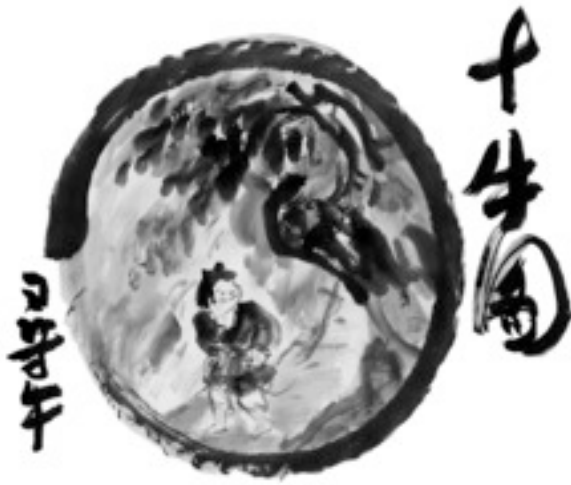
The Rinzai Zen Master Kakuan Shion (Ch. Kuo'an Shiyuan) lived on Mount Ryozan in China around the end of the Northern Sung Dynasty in 12th Century C.E.

In the early 1980's, Gyokusei Jikihara Sensei painted these pictures for ZCLA during one of his visits. Jikihara Sensei was a National Treasure of Japan, a Zen Master of the Obaku Zen School, and an esteemed sumi-e and Nanga ink brush painter.

The Verses are attributed to Zen Master Kakuan, the Preface to his successor Jion Osho, and the Japanese-style waka verses were added later by Shotetsu Shoki (the "Clerk Shotetsu") of Tofuku-ji in Japan. The text is from Yamada Mumon, "Lectures on The Ten Oxherding Pictures," translated by Victor Hori (University of Hawaii Press, ©2004).

*Japanese rendering.

THE TEN OXHERDING PICTURES 1 – 4



1 – Searching for Ox



2 – Seeing the Traces



3 – Seeing the Ox



4 – Catching the Ox

THE TEN OXHERDING PICTURES 5 – 7



5 – Taming the Ox



6 – Riding Home on the Ox



7 – The Ox Forgotten, The Self Remains

THE TEN OXHERDING PICTURES 8 – 10



8 – Forget Both Self and Ox



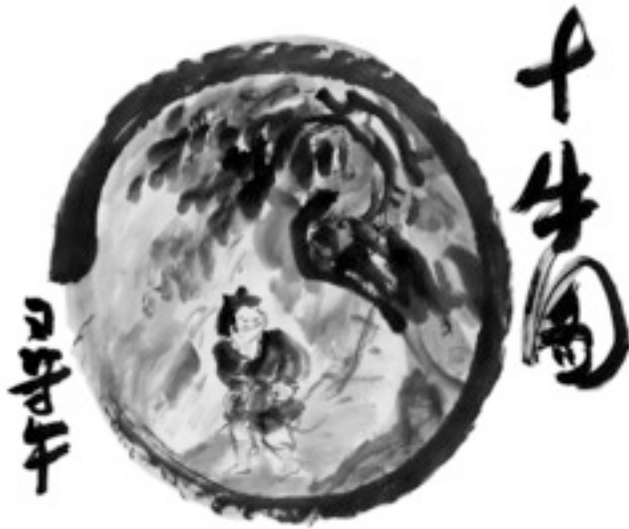
9 – Return to the Origin, Back to the Source



10 – Entering the Marketplace with Extended Hands

POINTERS

1. Numbered from 1 to 10, the pictures depict the so-called stages of the Zen spiritual journey of knowing the Self or True Nature. One should be cautious to note that the various so-called stages are different and unique for each person, including in terms of sequence and duration. These so-called stages will become an obstacle for you if you regard them as something other than a generous guide.
2. The pictures can also be approached as presenting aspects or principles of the Zen journey. Aspects do not necessarily unfold in a specific order or length of time, but appear at any so-called stage of one's journey.
3. Historically, there are many versions of Ox Herding pictures. There are versions with six, eight, ten, and twelve pictures. Some versions feature a black ox that turns white. Some versions end with the *enso* (empty circle) as the last stage. The point was to present a sketch of the so-called journey for practitioners.
4. Although the Ox Herder is depicted as a man, both women and men are ox herders. This may seem obvious, but is important to state since women are seldom depicted in Zen spiritual paintings. For our purposes, the Ox Herder is also a community seeking to awaken together.
5. The ox was a deeply familiar animal to the Chinese farmers, whose family's everyday survival depended on their ox. What would be comparable for us today? (Note: the Korean documentary "Old Partner," about a farmer and his over forty-year-old ox, will be shown at some point in our exploration of this text.)



PICTURE 1 – SEARCHING FOR THE OX

PREFACE:

Till now, the ox has never been lost. Why then do you need to search for it?
Turning away from your own awakening, you became estranged from it;
then enclosed by dust, in the end you lost it. The hills of home recede
farther and farther away; you're lost as soon as the paths divide. Winning
and losing consume you like flames. Right and wrong rise round you like
blades.

VERSE:

Beating about the endless wild grass, you seek and search,
The rivers broaden, the mountains stretch on and the trails go ever deeper.
Your strength exhausted and spirit wearied, no place allows you refuge.
The only sound--evening cicadas shrill in the maples.

[Daido Looi Verse]:

Vigorously cutting a path through the brambles,
 you search for the ox;
Wide rivers, eternal mountains, the path seems endless.
With strength depleted, and mind exhausted, you cannot find it.
There is only the gentle rustle of maple leaves,
 and the cicada's evening song.

WAKA:

Searching
The deep hills,
No sight of the ox.
Just the empty
Shrilling of the cicadas.

PICTURE 1 – GUIDING QUESTIONS**On the Nature of Ox and Ox Herding:**

What is the Ox?

Who is the Ox Herder? What is the Ox Herder searching for?

What is Ox Herding?

Do you believe that there is a True Nature? an inherent Buddha Nature?
Is it worth seeking?

How would you feel if you searched for it until your dying day and never found it? Will the whole effort have been a waste?

On your Personal Journey:

Reflect upon this stage of your personal journey. What was (is) your experience of being lost? Of beginning to seek something other than what you knew (know)?

Why are you estranged from your True Nature? How does this estrangement come about? What are the characteristics of this estrangement?

What is the significance of the first line of the Preface to you?
"Till now, the ox has never been lost. Why then do you need to search for it?"

What is your process in acknowledging and clarifying the aspiration to realize True Nature?

On Searching for the Ox:

What is the relationship between the Ox and Ox Herder at this point of the journey?

What would this picture represent in terms of collective awakening?

ASSIGNMENT (HOMEWORK!)

We will have an eGroup (participation optional) for the course.

1. **What is your experience of being lost at various points in your life? In your spiritual journey? How did the practice arise for you (raising the Bodhi Mind) at these times?** Share with the eGroup.
2. For further investigation, select other guiding question(s) that resonate with you. Share your responses with the eGroup.
3. Throughout the course, draw your own Ox Herding pictures. Or draw your own stages of the journey.

REFERENCES

There are many publications on the Ox Herding pictures. Three excellent sources are:

1. Yamada Mumon, "Lectures on The Ten Oxherding Pictures," translated by Victor Sogen Hori, University of Hawaii Press, ©2004.
2. Master Sheng-Yen, "Hoofprints of the Ox: Principles of the Chan Buddhist Path as Taught by a Modern Chinese Master" with Dan Stevenson, Oxford University Press, ©2001.
3. John Daido Loori, "Riding the Ox Home: Stages on the Path of Enlightenment." Shambhala, ©1999.