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BOOK REVIEWS

'Bulls' and the Zen Bull

Viewers of 'Bulls' would also have brought to these works their knowledge of Zen. Many Zen writings allude to bulls. Symbolizing the Ultimate Fundamental Truth of the Universe, bulls appear in various Zen parables, including 'The



The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Purchase, Friends of Asian Art Gifts, 1986. (1986.142)

Detail from 'The Ten Zen Bulls', attributed to Karasumaru Mitsuhiro.

Ten Ox-herding Pictures' (*jūgyūzushu* 十牛図首). Also known as 'The Story of the Ten Zen Bulls',¹⁶ this parable compares the process of achieving enlightenment to that of taming a wild bull; it is believed to have originated in China,¹⁷ although it was known in Japan as early as 1395. In that year, the Japanese Zen master Zekkai Chūshin 絶海中津, 1336–1405, used a version of this parable, composed by the Chinese Zen priest Kuo-an 廓庵, to teach this philosophy to the shogun Ashikaga Yoshimitsu 足利義満.¹⁸ By this time, paintings of this parable had also appeared in Japan,¹⁹ first in the form of anonymous circular pictures called 'Ten Bull Pictures in a Circle' (*ensō jūgyūzu* 円相十牛図), and later in other formats.²⁰ The parable continued to be

¹⁶ Zenkei Shibayama, *The Six Ox Herding Pictures*, n.d., p. 3.

¹⁷ The parable developed in China during the T'ang-Sung period from earlier Indian tales; the story is known in Japan as the *Ushikai no Monogatari* 牛飼の物語. It tells how the King of Bimbisara ordered certain bull-herders to test the wisdom of the Buddha by teaching him the secrets of bull herding. Saegusa Mitsuyoshi 三枝光恵, *Daichidoron no Monogatari* 大智度論の物語, Regulus Library, 1973, 17, pp. 64–71.

¹⁸ The text of Zekkai's version of this parable survives in Shokokuji. For a translation, see Jan Fontein & Money Hickman, *Zen Painting and Calligraphy*, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 1970, pp. 113–18. Daisetsu Teitaro Suzuki, *Essays in Zen Buddhism*, first series, Luzac, London, 1927, pp. 349–67, and *Manual of Zen Buddhism*, Eastern Buddhism Society, 1935, pp. 162–71; and M. H. Trevor, *The Ox and His Herdsman*, Hokuseidō, 1960.

¹⁹ A Kōan-period (1278–1288) example of an illustration of this proverb is published in Shimbo Tōru, 'Shinshutsu no Kōan-bon Jūgyūzukan' 新出の弘安本十牛図鑑, in *Ars Buddhica*, 96 (May 1974), pp. 77–79.

²⁰ Paintings of this subject by Shūbun 周文 (fl. 1414–1463), Sesshū 雪舟 (1420–1506), Kano Kōi 狩野興以 (1539–1636), and Mori Tesson 森徹山 (1775–1841) survive. For the relationship of these paintings to *ensō* 円相, or circle painting, and Ashikaga Yoshimitsu's interest in them, see Etō Shun 衛藤駿, 'Chinzō ni okeru Ensōzō no Seiritsu ni tsuite' 頂相における円相像の成立について

popular in Sōtatsu and Mitsuhiro's day,²¹ as can be seen by its inclusion in Zen texts such as *Shiburoku* 四部録, 1694.²²

Mitsuhiro studied Zen and received *inka* 印可 from the Zen master Isshi 一之. A handscroll illustrating 'The Ten Zen Bulls' and now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, is attributed to him, as are other examples of this subject.²³ Thus, it is likely that in his inscription on 'Standing Bull', Mitsuhiro is referring to this parable in the line where he asks: 'Why, then, should this bull seek for grass or sprouts?' According to the sixth section of Kuo-an's text of 'The Ten Zen Bulls', when the herdboy reaches enlightenment, 'the ox lacks nothing . . . and does not cast a glance at the grass.'²⁴

In addition, Mitsuhiro says in the inscription on 'Standing Bull' that this animal is 'single-horned' (*ikkaku* 一角). By this, he may imply nothing more than the bull, shown in profile, presents the viewer with only one horn. On the other hand, *Ikkaku* is the Japanese reading of the name of the Indian Buddhist saint Ekrisinga, who was born with a horn in the middle of his forehead.²⁵ Ekrisinga was the Buddha in a former life, so that the term *ikkaku* often serves as a synonym for the Buddha. This usage can be found in the Zen master Dōgen's 道元 *Shōbōgenzō* 正法眼藏,²⁶ a text published in numerous editions during the lifetime of Sōtatsu and Mitsuhiro.²⁷

Consequently, yet another implication of 'Standing Bull' may be that it depicts a Zen bull, an identification that does not in any way contradict the interpretation of this animal as a Tenjin bull. Indeed, Ponsonby-Fane believed that Zen bulls and Tenjin bulls were much the same.²⁸ Why he thought so, he does not say, but the connection between Zen and the Tenjin cult has recently been explored by Robert Borgen, who holds that this relationship developed

て, in *Bijutsu Shi* 美術史, 24:2 (September 1964), pp. 31-37. See also Shibayama Zenkei, *Zenga no Ensō* 禅画の円相, Chūō Seihan Insatsu, 1969.

²¹ Seventeenth-century records list a set of 'Ten Bull Herding Songs' dated 1395 with inscriptions by Ichizan Ichinei (Ch. I-shan I-ning) 一山一寧. Ebine Toshio 海老根聡郎, 'Ichizan Ichinei *San Bokogyūzu*' 一山一寧贊牧牛図, in *Kokka*, 1030 (January 1980), pp. 26-32. A Momoyama example is given in Miyeko Murase, *Tales of Japan: Scrolls and Prints from the New York Public Library*, Oxford U.P., 1986.

²² The history of the parable of the 'Ten Bull Herding Songs' is given in Shibayama Zenkei 柴山全慶, *Jūgyūzu*, Kichūdō, 1963, pp. 111-14.

²³ Komatsu Shigemi 小松茂美, *Karasumarū Mitsuhiro to Tawaraya Sōtatsu*, Shōgakkan, 1983.

²⁴ Trevor, p. 65.

²⁵ The story of Ekrisinga, or Ikkaku Sennin, is told in *Daichidōron* 大智度論 (Mahaprajna Paramitra Sutra).

²⁶ Dōgen, *Kesa Kudoku* 袈裟功德, *Shōbōgenzō Zenkō*, Daihōrinkaku, 1972-1974, pp. 417-20.

²⁷ Forty-four editions of *Shōbōgenzō*, some with commentaries, were published 1258-1651. 1602 marked the 350th anniversary of the publication of the text and special editions of the text were made in that year. Azuma Ryūshin 東隆真, ed., *Dōgen Shōjiten* 道元小事典, Shunjūsha, 1982, pp. 177-90.

²⁸ R. A. B. Ponsonby-Fane, *Visiting Famous Shrines in Japan*, Ponsonby Memorial Society, Kyoto, 1964, pp. 218-19.

out of Tenjin's role as the patron of renga.²⁹ However it evolved, the connection between Tenjin and Zen seems to have been well known in Sōtatsu and Mitsuhiro's time. This is shown by those sketches of Tenjin called 'Daily Tenjin' (*Nikka Tenjin* 日課天神) that were invented by Konoe Nobutada 近衛信尹, 1565–1614, a friend of Sōtatsu's mentor Kōetsu. Such portraits illustrate the legend of Tenjin's posthumous flight to China to study Zen³⁰ and attest to the connection between Zen and the Tenjin cult. More importantly, they imply that this connection must have been fairly well known in Sōtatsu's day, since Nobutada's Tenjin portraits were called 'Daily Tenjin' because he is supposed to have made one a day.



Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

Daitoku Myō-ō

'Bulls' and the Daitoku Myō-ō Bull

The fourth tradition of bull imagery that viewers of 'Bulls' would have known is the Buddhist one. Bulls play an important role in Buddhist art, the animal being the mount, for instance, of the deity Daitoku Myō-ō 大德明王, the Japanese

²⁹ Robert Borgen, *Sugawara Michizane and the Early Heian Court*, Harvard U.P., 1986, pp. 325–29.

³⁰ *Tōtō Tenjin* (Tenjin who went to T'ang China) or *Tōsō Tenjin* (Tenjin who went to Sung China) are discussed in Hickman & Fontein, pp. 120–21. See also *Tenjin Sama Meigaten* 天神様名画展, Nihon Keizai Shimbunsha, 1975.