



7034 A silk kakemono (hanging scroll) painted in ink and colour with a semi-naked pearl diver seated on a rock beneath a matsu (pine tree). The scantily clad maiden is observing an underwater scene of a fellow diver being accosted by two kappa.

Japan 20th century Taishō period

Dimensions:

Scroll: H. 46½" x W. 24" (118cm x 60.5cm)

Painting: H. 16¾" x W. 12¼" (42cm x 30.5cm)

This image is a later depiction of a famous scene taken from the Shunga album entitled Utamakura (Poem of the Pillow) originally illustrated by Kitagawa Utamaro (1753-1806) in 1788.

Kappa or kawako (child of the river) are mythical amphibious goblins which live in rivers, ponds and lakes. They have the body of a tortoise, the limbs of a frog, and the head of a monkey, with a hollow at the top of the skull, which contains a fluid said to give the animal its strength. This creature attacks and devours human beings, but there is an easy way to thwart its attack: be very polite and bow to him. The creature is very civil though ferocious, and will bow to you in return as deeply and as often. This action causes the strength giving fluid to spill thus making the kappa weak. Should one ask the kappa to forefill a promise at this moment he is honor bound to keep it.

