



6659 An okimono (decorative object) carved from a bamboo root in the form of a Seiajin
(mythical three-legged toad)

Japan late 19th / early 20th century Meiji period

Dimensions: H. 4.8cm x W. 6.5cm x D. 7cm (2" x 2¾" x 3")

Japanese legend tells of Gama Sennin (Toad Immortal), a wise old man with a hunched body and a warty face who wanders the land with his three-legged toad companion Seiajin, who teaches him the secret powers of herbs, including the secret of immortality, and therefore he is associated with medicine and healing. This tale is similar to a Chinese legend involving a Daoist immortal called Liu Hai of the 10th century and his toad companion Ch'an Chu. The toad knows the secret of eternal life and in exchange for his friendship reveals the secret to the wise man. It is said that the mythical toad had lived in the moon and was caught by the Immortal with a gold coin. Therefore the three-legged toad has been regarded as an auspicious deity of wealth and is believed to bring prosperity and happiness to the house where it appears.

