



7063 A wood carving okimono (decorative object) painted in colour in the form of a tree root with a group of three kaeru (frogs)

Signed: Zō Fujimoto Harufumi, Tōichi saku Tōichi saku (Made for Fujimoto Harufumi by Tōichi)

Japan 20th century Shōwa period

Dimensions: H. 6" x W. 14¼" x D. 6¾" (15cm x 36cm x 17cm)

Box inscription: Dai chyō. Kaeru. Tōichi saku. (A big sculpture of frogs by Tōichi)

Seal: Tōichi

The popularity of representations of toads and frogs stems from ancient traditions in Chinese and Japanese folklore.

Chinese tradition holds that a three-legged toad inhabits the moon and causes lunar eclipses by swallowing the celestial body. Further, the amphibian is reputed to have stunning powers of escape and a formidable knowledge of healing plants. It is such ascribed powers that undoubtedly led the Chinese, and later the Japanese, to associate the toad with Taoists who seek to develop these talents.

In many ancient Chinese tales and legends, the toad is a trickster, a magician, and a master of spells.

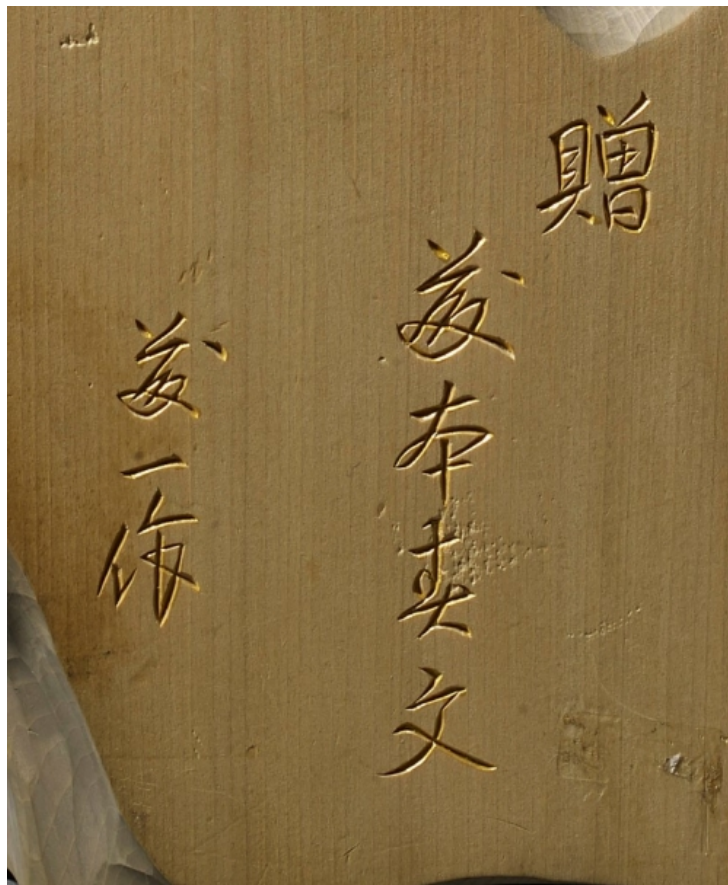
But he is also the keeper of the real, powerful secrets of the world, such as the secret of immortality.

Many legends involve a wandering wise man called Liu Hai and his three-legged toad companion Ch'an

Chu. The toad knows the secret of eternal life and in exchange for their friendship he reveals this secret to the wise man. In Japan there is a similar legend of a Gama-Sennin, also known as Kosensei, a wise old man with a hunched body and a warty face who wanders the land with his toad companion.

Another popular Japanese character, the fictional character of Jiraiya is often depicted riding an enormous toad and has repeatedly appeared in various Kabuki plays, and books since the Edo period. Jiraiya and the toad were inseparable and it is common for one to represent the other.

In some instances in Japanese legend and art gama (toad) and kaeru (frog) are interchangeable and they are both symbols of summer in haiku poetry. However, it is the long lived, terrestrial toad that is most closely associated with myth and magic, as is reflected in the expression gama yojutsu (toad black magic).





gregg baker  
asian art