

Scroll Painting of Hotei

Date

1885-1895

Medium

Ink on paper, silk, cloth and wood

Description

This Japanese scroll painting from 1885-1895 is made on rice paper and features a silk border. It depicts a figure known as Budai, a human embodiment of happiness and compassion whose claim to spiritual fame stems mostly from minor miracles such as predicting the weather. Despite his humble aesthetic, he is among the most venerated Buddhist figures. As early as the 6th Century, Chinese Buddhism was consistently spread to Japan through trade and proselytization. An indeterminate amount of time after his death, stories of Budai were brought to Japan where he was readily accepted under the Japanese name Hotei. Just as it was in China, his likeness in Japanese sumi-e paintings and satsuma was a common sight. Some schools of Buddhism accepted Budai as an incarnation of Buddha rather than just as a Bodhisattva. Over the centuries the figure became more and more often accepted as a symbol of both happiness and abundance. The latter is due to him teaching that it is those that give that are most likely to receive in times of need.

Dimensions

20 × 72 in. (50.8 × 182.9 cm)

