

Traditional New Year painting - The old toad teaches how to read (Vietnamese: Lão oa giảng đọc)

Southeast Asian Collection

Accession Nr.: 61.1.7 

Type: woodblock print

Date of production: between 1950 and 1960

Place of production: Bắc Ninh province, Đông Hồ village, Vietnam, Southeast Asia

Materials/Technique
s: paper, coloured woodblock print

Dimensions: height: 25. 4 cm
width: 34.7 cm

This satirical woodcut, made in the Đông Hồ workshop in Vietnam, parodies traditional schools. To obtain lucrative government posts, candidates had to pass an examination, which required a thorough knowledge of classical Chinese texts. For this reason, traditional Vietnamese schools already taught students to read and write Chinese characters and prepared them for the civil service examinations.

Frogs are considered by Asian folklore to be rain-bearers, and thus a fertility symbol promising abundant crops and many children. So, for all its satirical content, the image also served as a New Year's image of fertility and good luck.

