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DARUMA

Daruma in Ancient Japan

Daruma was a Buddhist monk who settled in Japan in the sixth century. He was also known as Bodhidharma. According to legend, Daruma sat cross-legged in meditation for seven years without moving. Supposedly, he cut off his eyelids to keep from falling asleep. When he threw his eyelids on the ground, they grew into tea plants (providing tea to help monks stay awake during meditation).

After all those years of sitting absolutely still, Daruma's arms and legs withered away. Because he was admired for his determination and perseverance, Daruma became a symbol for these admirable qualities.

A 19th Century Daruma

The Daruma shown here was probably made for display in the house of a wealthy merchant in 19th century Japan. He is finely carved from wood and has rock crystal eyes. Notice that his eyes appear so round because he has no eyelids.

This daruma looks surprised. Could it be because we have caught him holding a pipe in his hand? What other details can you see? Try to copy his pose and expression.

Daruma in Contemporary Japan

In the Japan of today, Daruma is one of the best-known folk toys. He is an egg-shaped tumble toy with large round eyes and no arms and legs, used as a good luck charm.

Daruma is represented as a figure that cannot be knocked over. Darumas have weighted bottoms so that, no matter how you roll them, they will always return right side up. They are also usually painted red, the color of robes worn by the monks.

The custom in Japan is to buy a Daruma to make a wish when starting a project or new effort. The figure comes with both eyes painted only as white circles. One eye is painted in with black when a wish is made or at the beginning of a project. When the wish comes true or the project is completed, the other eye is painted in.

Making a Contemporary Daruma

Make an oval figure from papier mache applied over a balloon. Use many layers of strips and add extra strips to add weight to the bottom. When the papier mache is dry, paint the Daruma with an original design.

Daruma on the World Wide Web

[Web Daruma: Bring home a little good luck!--> not active/found](#)

[The Daruma Challenge](#)

[Daruma Lessons: Upper elementary or junior high](#)