

Fascination with Fish

Photos and text by Sonia Katchian



Japan's oldest history book, *Kojiki* (Chronicle of Ancient Matters), compiled in the early 8th century, contains numerous myths and legends related to fish, reflecting the importance of fish in the nation's diet and folklore.

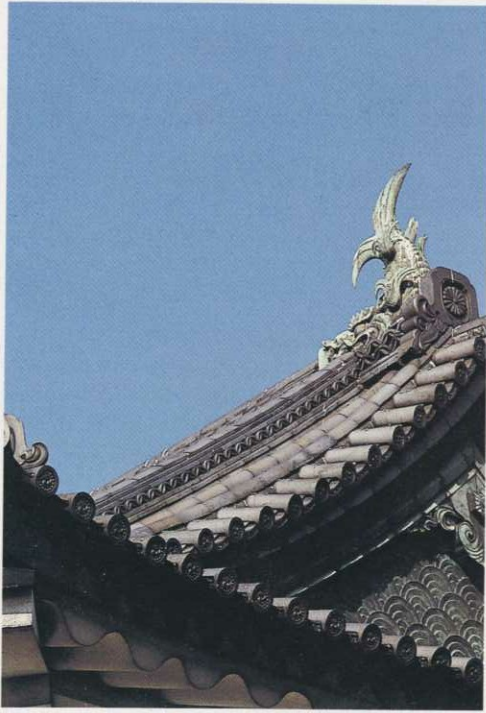
Fish appears on the altar when the Shinto priest commemorates a new part of the shrine.

Shachi, an imaginary sea creature traditionally used to decorate the roofs of large buildings, perches, tail in air, over the Sakuradamon gate of the Imperial Palace in Tokyo.

During a boys' festival in May, families in which there are boys place carp streamers outside their homes. The carp symbolizes strength and perseverance.

In a *kaiseki-ryori* (Japanese haute cuisine) restaurant, the chef's long knife has been skillfully wielded to bone a flounder whistle-clean, while tanks of live fish are a colorful attraction outside many sushi restaurants.

Even a child's toy oven contains a plastic fish to prepare her for the thousands of fish she will eventually grill.



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