



HEIKEGANI

The legend of the Heike crabs is a Japanese tale that has been passed down through the years. It is believed that the origin of this story lies in the Kamakura period (1185-1333), during the war between the Heike and Minamoto clans.

The legend tells the story of the Heike clan's defeat at the hands of their enemies in a terrible naval battle, where the defeated soldiers were cast into the sea while still wearing their armor. The story holds that the vengeful spirits of the Heike warriors transformed into crabs called Heikegani.

These crabs can still be found today on the coasts of Japan, and they have shells with patterns resembling a human face, especially a samurai warrior's mask. It is believed that these crabs are the reincarnation of the defeated warriors, still seeking revenge.

Fishermen who capture these crabs often release them back into the sea, as it is believed to bring bad luck to catch and cook them. This belief is rooted in respect for the spirits of the ancient warriors. It has been the fishermen's gesture that has led to the growth of the population of crabs with markings on their backs, allowing them to reproduce while the normal crabs end up in the pot. This process is known as artificial natural selection.



COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. What were the clans at war, and during what time?

2. Where were the samurai fighting, and what did they transform into?

3. Why do crabs have these curious marks?

