

parts of a crab's viscera — gastric, hepatic, cardiac, branchial, etc. — are reflected externally. This is not to say that these structures are unaffected by selection. They are as subject to evolutionary pressures as any other feature of a crab. The point here is that these ridges and grooves occur in nearly all members of the crab family Dorippidae, whether they live near Japan or not. As pointed out by the great Japanese carcinologist Tune Sakai, there are at least 17 different species of crabs in two families in the Indo-West Pacific that are similar enough to be called *Heike-gani* by local residents, and there are many related species from other far off waters that bear a likeness to a human face. Many Asian countries have vernacular names to account for the similarity of such crabs to a human face, such as the Chinese name Kuei Lien Hsieh (Ghost or Demon faced crab), and in several countries the crabs play a prominent role in local folklore, sometimes being considered sacred, with the face representing that of a deceased relative. In the northeast Atlantic, the crab *Corystes cassivelaunus*, although only distantly related to dorippids (and belonging to a separate family, the Corystidae), bears a similar arrangement of grooves and elevations of the carapace that have resulted in one of its common names, the "masked crab." Additionally, fossils of dorippid crabs or closely related crab species are known from sites predating man's appearance on earth. Furthermore, and most damning to the myth of reincarnated samurai warriors, the fisherman who make their living from the Sea of Japan do not eat *any* of these crabs. Whether they resemble a samurai, a human

face, or merely a crab is a moot point; all are thrown back. For *Dorippe japonica* reaches a maximum size of only 31 mm (1.2 inches) across the back, not at all worth the trouble of retrieving from the nets, let alone sorting through to see which ones resemble a face and which do not.

And yet the Heike will not be forgotten. A recent revision of the crab family Dorippidae found that the species *Dorippe japonica* differs in several respects from other members of the genus *Dorippe* — so much so, in fact, that it was necessary to place the species in a separate higher taxonomic category (genus). And following the rules of priority in handing out scientific names, the name *Dorippe* must remain where it was first used, necessitating that a new name be created to accommodate the samurai crab. Dr. Lipke Holthuis, formerly of the Rijksmuseum in Leiden, and Dr. Ray Manning, of the Smithsonian Institution's U.S. National Museum, performed the transfer and proposed the new name in 1990. And they chose a most appropriate one: the samurai crab will henceforth be known as *Heikea japonica*, in honor of the defeated Heike warriors who drowned at the hands of the Genji in the Inland Sea of Japan in 1185. And so the Heike will indeed be forever remembered in the form of crabs that roam the bottom of the Sea of Japan.

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Map of southern Japan, showing the location of the battle of Dan-no-ura near what is today Shimonoseki, in the southern Inland Sea of Japan.

