

## ***Shachi* Tiles**

The roofs of many castles are adorned with ornamental ridge-end tiles in the shape of creatures called *shachi* (or *shachihoko*). These legendary beasts have the heads of tigers and the bodies of fish. According to folklore, *shachi* can spray water from their mouths to put out fires, and the tiles were believed to protect the castle.

*Shachi* tiles likely developed from similar tiles that were placed on the roofs of ancient palaces and temples. Much like the guardian lion-dogs (*komainu*) seen at Shinto shrines, *shachi* frequently appear in male–female pairs. The male’s open mouth and the closed mouth of the female are said to represent the sounds “*a*” and “*m*.” These two sounds signify the beginning and the end of all things, and they have deep significance within Buddhism and other religions that originate from India.

The tiles displayed here were removed from the roof of the Great Keep during repairs in the 1950s. The male is 127 centimeters from base to tail and was located on the southern end of the roof, while the female measures 124 centimeters and was located on the northern end. Inscriptions on the two wooden posts that held the tiles indicates this pair of *shachi* was likely added to the castle in 1843.