

## **Carp and Goldfish as Auspicious Symbols and their Representation in Chinese Popular Prints**

The Chinese have long used images of plants, flowers, animals, birds and objects to convey auspicious wishes. This convention is based on the tonal nature of the Chinese spoken language where one sound may have a variety of meanings, resulting in visual puns and rebuses. Fish, for example, express hopes for wealth because the pronunciation of the character for “fish” is identical to that for “abundance.” In this context, carp and goldfish, despite their distinctly different physical appearance, were especially favoured because the carp’s jumping ability was associated with the idea of leaping through the Dragon Gate, an emblem of success in the civil service examinations leading to prestige and wealth. In contrast, the very name of the domestic goldfish, implied money (gold) and expressed wishes for the wealth for the family. This article focuses on identifying and explaining some of the ways in which the carp and the goldfish were represented in the Chinese popular print medium and how they embodied the pursuit of wealth in imperial China.

*Keywords:* carp; goldfish; auspicious motifs; Dragon Gate; success in life; wealth.