A Strange People, These Japanese!

By KIMPEE SHEA

Tobiko.

The high priest of Zojei, one of the greatest and most imposing temples in Japan, if not in the world, received me in his private chapel. I asked him about a religious ceremony of appeasement for having eaten fish and meat.

- This is a Buddhist man called kupo and is held not only for fish and animals but for all animate and inanimate objects which have been sacrificed to make it possible for mankind to live more happily. It is held for animals killed during animal sacrifice, for mosquitoes one step to death, and for the needles which housewives and tailors unintentionally break, as well as for cattle and fish killed for food.

- Such masses have been increasing in recent years as the Japanese people find one object after another to appease. Whereas kupo were formerly attended by only a few persons, nowadays it is not unusual for several hundred persons to participate in them.

- What is the reason for the sudden increase in kupo? Of what does the ceremony consist? Can the priests bring life back to the objects that have been killed? These were some of the questions I wanted the high priest to answer.

- I was ushered into a room that was in semi-darkness. There was a tiny altar on one side. The high priest rose to greet me. He bowed slowly and motioned me to be seated on a thick black silk cushion.

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