



Across Species and Cultures

WHALES, HUMANS, AND PACIFIC WORLDS

Edited by RYAN TUCKER JONES
and ANGELA WANHALLA

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Whales, Humans, and Pacific Worlds

**EDITED BY RYAN TUCKER JONES
AND ANGELA WANHALLA**



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Cover art: John Alfred Cooper, “Cutting the blubber off a whale on Mohaka Beach,” ca 1860. Cooper’s depiction of a right whale being butchered on Aotearoa’s North Island illustrates the diverse communities generated by Pacific whaling. Courtesy of the National Library of New Zealand, Wellington, NZ.

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The Pacific Worlds of Whales and Humans

Ryan Tucker Jones and Angela Wanhalla

ASK AN AVERAGE AMERICAN why the United States entered the Pacific and the answer is likely as not to be whaling. Half-remembered (and half-read) scenes from *Moby Dick* will ascend from the deep, even though almost none of Herman Melville's 1851 novel actually took place in the Pacific. New Zealanders and Australians are probably less likely to reference whaling, despite the fact that industry was perhaps the most crucial factor in their early colonial histories.¹ However, if one speaks of their relationship to the Pacific Ocean today, whales are probably the most important symbol of conservation, stewardship, and identities increasingly focused around the presumed abundance of national natures.² These, after all, were the countries—along with the United States and Canada—that “saved the whales” in the 1970s and 1980s. Many Japanese will react quite differently, seeing Western environmentalists—and earlier Western whalers—as the villains who attempted to sever the island nation's connection with the ocean. In those stories too, whales are powerful avatars of the Pacific.

This popular connection linking Pacific history, whales, and whaling may seem at first glance a mere reproduction of European, American, Japanese, and other colonial narratives about that ocean. Looking deeper, though, reveals a wealth of Indigenous whale histories. Ask a Makah, Kāi Tahu, or Squaxin about the Pacific and whales will soon be mentioned. Some of these histories stretch back into deep time, some became particularly salient during cross-cultural encounters and some emerged more recently. Many are all three at the same time. Whales are everywhere in the Pacific and everywhere in Pacific history.

Across Species and Cultures: Whales, Humans, and Pacific Worlds presents the first attempt to seriously examine whales' place in the history of the Pacific Ocean. Whales are big, but they have not often found themselves at the center of the Pacific as conceptualized by its scholars. Although the classical whaling era of the nineteenth century usually plays a key role in standard narratives of Pacific history, historians rarely consider the complexity of the engagements between cultures and species. Nor have they been able to survey the entirety of the Pacific, even though whales' migrations take them to all corners of the ocean.³ Whales, for example, connect Pacific history to that of Southeast Asia. This region, "linked by internal seas but long connected to the Indian and Pacific Oceans" through the flows of people, trade, and human and nonhuman migrations, "provides a unique laboratory in which to consider different maritime environments" reflected in how oceans and its inhabitants are integrated into the worldviews of coastal peoples.⁴ Whale histories connect Southeast Asia and the Pacific Ocean in a myriad of ways: in some cultures, whales take the form of ancestors; in others, of deities. At Lembata, in eastern Indonesia, and in fishing villages along the Vietnamese coast, beached whales are venerated as ancestors, their deaths mourned, and their bones and skulls stored in temples.⁵ As Southeast Asia shows, following migratory creatures, such as whales, links oceans and illuminates shared beliefs and practices across cultures and environments.

Most notably, historians have not considered—in any form—the impact of twentieth-century industrial whaling on peoples and environments in the Pacific. Likewise, the interrelationships among decolonization, Indigenous sovereignty, and whales are only just receiving attention, and that mostly in the northeastern Pacific.⁶ All of these topics, and more, appear in this collection. They reveal that whales and whaling not only highlight many of Pacific history's most important themes, but also uncover new narratives that should transform our understanding of the Pacific Ocean from the inside out.

As Joshua Reid writes in the afterword, this volume's crucial contribution is its recognition of the central role that Indigenous whale histories have had in the Pacific. For example, as Susan Lebo reveals, although Honolulu gained importance and fame as the center of the nineteenth-century European whaling industry, Native Hawaiians played a key role in this transition. Long familiar with whales, they joined distant ventures to the Arctic, New Zealand, and everywhere between. They also headed whaling businesses of their own in local

waters. Similar stories of Pacific peoples' embrace of whaling and identities as "whale people" can be found in the Pacific Northwest, Alaska, and elsewhere. Billie Lythberg and Wayne Ngata demonstrate that many Māori share in non-Māori New Zealanders' association with whales, though in different ways. Adam Paterson and Christopher Wilson show something similar for the Njarrindjeri in South Australia. Sometimes Indigenous whale worlds surprised outsiders, such as environmentalists who came to the Bering Strait in the 1980s and found their ideas about whales challenged. Together, the essays in this book show a Pacific full of whale histories, overlapping with each other, sometimes parting ways, sometimes swimming together.

Of course, factors other than the Pacific's classical Indigenous-outsider dichotomy also structured human relationships with whales. Tense racial relations onboard the Pacific whaleship encouraged whalers to treat many of the ocean's creatures with appalling cruelty, as Lissa Wadewitz explains. And though the capitalist market may have sent many Pacific whale parts anonymously packing around the globe, whalers developed more personal relations with sperm whale teeth, a medium on which they could carve their hopes, desires, and sorrows. Even when cross-cultural relations were at the center of whaling encounters, such as in southern New Zealand, the histories produced there are inexplicable unless Kāi Tahu women's special environmental and economic roles are accounted for. Finally, several authors—especially Akamine Jun in his exploration of municipal Japanese cultures of eating minke whales—also usefully break down national spaces and notions of cultural ubiquity to show how profoundly local stories shaped Pacific whale histories. Race, emotion, gender, and geography all have their place in any history of Pacific whaling.

And what of the whales themselves? Slippery subjects, scarcely amenable to traditional methods of historical analysis, these creatures have often been absent in stories of the Pacific—even in whaling histories—except as bodies dismembered, barreled, and sold. Not in this volume. Jason Colby hints that gray whales' own cultural changes have shaped the Pacific's history; meanwhile, Bathsheba Demuth shows that Iñupiat understood bowhead whales as individuals and as members of their own nations, the whales showing a complexity of traditions and notions of proper behavior that matched those of any human culture. And, as Jakobina Arch and Noell Wilson each demonstrate, whales' long migrations and the complexities of the seas they inhabit shaped human practices across the Pacific. Many of these



Figure 0.1. A humpback whale off the southern coast of Maui. Humpbacks are among the Pacific's widest-ranging travelers, migrating from both the Arctic and the Antarctic to tropical seas every year. Hunted sporadically in the nineteenth century and nearly exterminated by industrial whalers in the twentieth century, today humpbacks are among the Pacific's most numerous cetacean species. Wikimedia Commons. Public domain image.

chapters draw on paradigm-setting work from the scientific world, such as Hal Whitehead and Luke Rendell's *The Cultural Lives of Whales and Dolphins*, which is forcing historians to take seriously the notion of whale culture and the certainty that it has a historical component.⁷

No other ocean is so replete with cetacean life.⁸ No other creature, save humans and a few species of birds, crosses such vast distances of that ocean. Although whales are not necessarily the sole, gigantic heart of Pacific history, they are one of its strongest connective ligaments. In their creative blending of science, Indigenous epistemologies, sensitivity to questions of gender and local difference, the contributors have found productive new ways into this history. From Japan to Australia, Mexico to Alaska and Hawai'i, *Across Species and Cultures: Whales, Humans, and Pacific Worlds* makes a strong case for the centrality of whales to

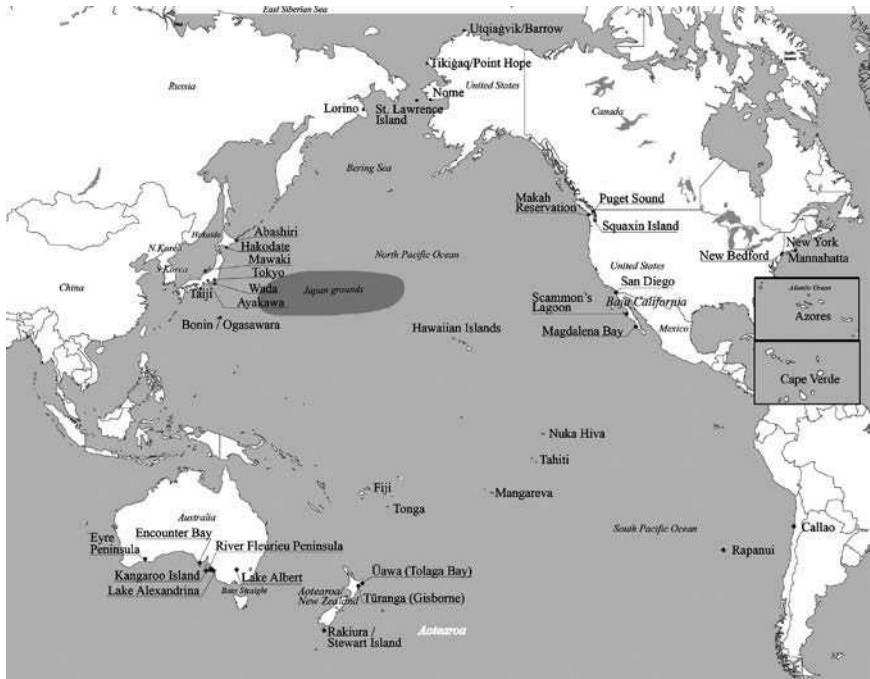


Figure 0.2. Map of the Pacific identifying important land and sea locations discussed in the book. Map by the authors.

the Pacific's cross-cultural, colonial, and environmental histories. It adds some of the necessary historical detail to explain and contextualize the abundance of whale stories and identities around the Pacific. It also puts cetacean lives back into these histories in ways that recognize the differences between species and the different ways whales have related to humans. None of these stories completely harmonize with one another, nor are they meant to.

The ubiquity of whales in the Pacific sits side by side with many kinds of human knowledge about them and relationships with them. We should not, though, overlook important continuities. Despite the worst ravages of commercial and industrial whaling described in this volume, whales survived two centuries of mass killing in the Pacific. Their perseverance continues to nourish, in various ways, many human communities around and in the Pacific Ocean, where they are hunted as commodities, regarded as signs of wealth and power, and act as providers, protectors, and also ancestors, providing a bridge between human and nonhuman worlds.

Notes

1. See Morton, *The Whale's Wake*; and Dakin, *Whalemen Adventurers*.
2. Armstrong, "Whale Road"; and Jøn, "Whale Road."
3. Matsuda devotes a chapter to whaling in *Pacific Worlds*; Iglar does the same for the North Pacific in *Great Ocean*. Chappell considers Pacific Islanders' experiences on board whaling ships as crucial to their history in *Double Ghosts*. So does Rosenthal, though only for Hawai'i, in *Beyond Hawai'i*. More standard accounts of whaling in parts of the Pacific include Newton's *Savage History*, Webb's *On the Northwest*, and Richards' *Samoa's Forgotten Whaling Heritage*. Dolin discusses the American history of whaling, largely in the Pacific in *Leviathan*. Other attempts to narrate Pacific histories with whales include Jones's "Running into Whales" and "Long Distance Animal Migration."
4. Andaya, "Seas, Oceans and Cosmologies," 350.
5. Andaya, "Seas, Oceans and Cosmologies," 358; Barnes, *Sea Hunters*; and Lantz, *Whale Worship*.
6. Coté, *Spirits of Our Whaling Ancestors*; and Reid, *Sea Is My Country*.
7. Whitehead and Rendell, *Cultural Lives*.
8. Earlier, the Antarctic would have been able to make this claim, but after the devastation of twentieth-century industrial whaling it no longer can.

PART I

South Pacific

Māori Women and Shore Whaling in Southern New Zealand

Kate Stevens and Angela Wanhalla

BEGINNING IN THE LATE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY, a wide range of foreigners arrived in southern New Zealand seeking seals, whales, and trade opportunities with local Kāi Tahu communities. They were initially drawn in pursuit of profit from fur seal skins, which were valuable on the Chinese market. Overexploitation, however, quickly led to a catastrophic decline in the seal population. At the same time, whalers around the Australian coasts also found their hunt increasingly challenging as the whale population dropped and their routes changed in response to predation.¹ Faced with an increasingly unsustainable industry, the options were to move location or select new prey. Attracted by the presence of southern right whales (*kewa*, or *tohorā*) that migrated north from feeding grounds near Antarctic waters to breed around New Zealand between April and October, many sealers switched their focus to these whales beginning in the late 1820s.² Australian-based whalers expanded into New Zealand and set up onshore stations. A shore whaling industry flourished in southern New Zealand for at least two decades from 1829, though whaling ships traversed the waters from the 1790s into the latter half of the nineteenth century.

The shore whaling station has long been explored as a site of cultural encounter, often serving as the vanguard of colonialism and capitalism in the Pacific. As such, it was a liminal space, both between and connecting different communities.³ Yet, as Jonathan West highlights, the whaling station was also a site of environmental encounter, straddling the marine and terrestrial, the human and nonhuman.⁴ The whaling station might mark a frontier, but it also dissolved it, for it

was situated between land and sea: “a space that compressed geography and intensified social interactions” where cross-cultural relationships and families were forged and cross-species encounters flourished in these ecologically rich areas.⁵

In this chapter, we focus on Māori women’s participation in shore whaling, a dimension of New Zealand’s early history that has gained limited attention outside that of their role as wives, mothers, and domestic laborers. Although popular writing in New Zealand focuses on whalers as the founding forebears in local histories, recent scholarly work identifies shore whaling as a key site of interracial marriage and of expanding global capital.⁶ It is well established in the literature how Māori women, through their strategic marriages with newcomers, played a key political role in the establishment of shore whaling economies. Responding to a body of scholarship that has foregrounded the intimate, economic, and strategic dimensions of marriage in southern whaling worlds, Tony Ballantyne calls for renewed attention to whaling within the context of empire and capital accumulation.⁷ After all, whalers brought their skills in chasing whales and transforming these leviathans into tradeable oil. Economically focused histories of whaling as a global industry in New Zealand regularly reel off sizable quantities of goods traded as evidence of the impact and breadth of this economy, but such accounts rarely consider those whose labor enabled this thriving pattern of exchange. As David Haines notes, the impact of whaling “must be measured in inland villages and remote islands as well as popular coastal bays,” in addition to quantities exported and numbers of visiting ships.⁸

Centering shore whaling within an Indigenous context, we draw on Māori relational frameworks to inform our analysis of how gender, power, and knowledge shaped shore stations as cross-cultural and environmental spaces where land, sea, and people met. The shore whaling economy was underpinned by relationships among peoples, species, and environments that relied on local knowledge and ways of managing relations. Aside from gaining access to land on which to establish a station, whalers also relied on Kāi Tahu knowledge about the local land and ocean. The interplay of these environmental knowledges underpinned the emerging industry. From a Kāi Tahu worldview, the European division between nature and culture was blurred. We argue that this was also true of the whaling station, highlighting the significance and interplay of environmental encounters in the southern whaling world, which drew on the knowledge and labor of Indigenous women and men.

Through their marriage alliances, women were central to the successful founding of shore whaling stations, communities, and cross-cultural families, but their participation in the southern shore whaling world was not limited to the domestic sphere. To broaden understandings of Māori women's participation in New Zealand's shore whaling industry, we draw on accounts that link human and nonhuman worlds through *whakapapa* (genealogy). It is "a way of being based on complex networks that encompass all forms of life, interlinked and co-emergent," that Anne Salmond argues "might assist in exploring relational ways of understanding the interactions between people and the land, other life forms, waterways, and the ocean."⁹ This broader, relational approach enables us to bring to the fore women's environmental knowledge, which can easily be obscured when whaling is examined solely on economic terms. Such accounts both demonstrate women's leadership capacities, skills, and expertise in relation to maritime activities and provide models and examples of women's participation in the new industry.

To understand the shore whaling station in this light, we detail the importance of whales in Māori history before discussing the historical and environmental context of the whaling stations in southern New Zealand, which encompasses the regions of modern-day Otago and Southland as well as the islands of Rakiura/Stewart Island and Ruapuke. We set this discussion of whaling stations within the wider context of the shore and marine environments and their importance to Kāi Tahu, from which we analyze women's labor and expertise—as well as their spiritual, medicinal, and cultural knowledge of coastal environments—within the southern shore whaling world.

Whaling Lineages

In a culture with strong voyaging traditions, whales feature prominently in *mātauranga* Māori (knowledge). *Whakatauki* (proverbs), *pēpeha* (tribal sayings), and *waka* (canoe) traditions demonstrate a respect for these marine mammals. Kāi Tahu and Ngāti Porou *iwi* (tribes) specifically *whakapapa* to Paikea, an ancestor who, depending on the account, summoned a whale or transformed into a whale by reciting a *karakia* (ritual chant) to journey to New Zealand.¹⁰ In accounts of the world's creation, whales themselves were children of Tangaroa, god of the oceans, and thus had supernatural significance and were often considered *tapu* (spiritually restricted).¹¹ Their

importance to Kāi Tahu is recognized in their 1998 Waitangi Tribunal settlement, where whales are acknowledged as *taonga* (treasures). Te Ara a Kiwa (Foveaux Strait), for instance, is named for the navigator who commanded a *kewa* (southern right whale), which were abundant in the region, to create a passage through the land so that he could cross through by *waka*.¹²

“Whales were chiefly fish,” says Margaret Orbell, and “symbolic of rich food and abundance.”¹³ Traditions indicate that whales were not only ancestors but valued resources as well, which is supported by archaeological evidence. Jill Hamel reports that midden deposits in Otago (part of Kāi Tahu territory) show that whalebone was rare “which must raise doubts if cetaceans were ever deliberately hunted for food.”¹⁴ Although it is unlikely that Kāi Tahu hunted smaller whales before Europeans arrived in the region, beached whales were certainly a valuable resource.¹⁵ Whale meat was eaten when available, and bone prized for carving. Thus, “He taonga no Tangaroa, I waihotia mo tātou, Ko te tohorā ki uta” (his whale cast on the beach is the treasure left to all of us by the great god of Tangaroa).¹⁶

Communities took advantage of strandings and held defined rules about distribution of meat, fat, oil, and bone.¹⁷ When a large pod of around 180 blackfish were “thrown by the surf” and stranded on the beach at Ruapuke Island in December 1844, resident missionary Johannes Wohlers recorded that the local people

came rushing along with knives before they could manage to work themselves back into the sea again. They seem to belong to the family of the sperm-whales, at least they have quite the shape as these whales are described, and their oil is as good as the one of the sperm-whales which, as is well known, gives the best fish-oil. The natives have roasted out for me a fair supply of lamp oil.¹⁸

As Wayne Ngata explains, because whales are ancestors such events were “an occasion for awe, for sorrow (at the death of a distant relative), and ultimately a cause for elation at the bounty provided.”¹⁹

Despite these connections between Kāi Tahu, whales, and the sea, women’s contributions to shore whaling have been read in limited ways because their link to the sea and maritime environment is little recognized. Yet numerous women have strong associations with the sea and are accorded a significant place in Māori tribal histories and tradition.²⁰ Some traditions depict the sea as female, given

that Hine-moana and her husband Kiwa are the progenitors of certain kinds of fish, shellfish, and seaweed.²¹ Moreover, in some tribal traditions the ocean's protectors or guardians, such as *taniwha*, are female.²² In the Hauraki Gulf, for example, Irakau is a female ancestor who had "mana over all the creatures in the ocean, including the whales and taniwha."²³

Women play a role in voyaging traditions as navigators and feature as archetypal figures associated with the ocean in accounts found across Polynesia that made their way to southern New Zealand.²⁴ These narratives were applied to particular local circumstances to help explain the world and its creation, including its natural features and the creatures that populate it. Traditions relating to Hina, who is said to have given fish their special characteristics, are found throughout Polynesia, where she is known variously as Sina, Hine, or Ina. In New Zealand, she is known by Hine-te-iwaiwa. In a southern version, collected by the ethnographer John White in 1887, Hine-te-iwaiwa regularly stopped to question the fish while on a journey to locate Tinirau (who commanded the fish), giving them their particular characteristics as she went, thus explaining the variety of local marine life. In a later version collected by southern historian James Herries Beattie, Hine-te-iwaiwa stomps the sole, tramples the sandfish, and scratches the *paieka*, creating the distinctive markings on its front.²⁵

Given that women played significant roles in *waka* traditions, helped create marine life, were skilled navigators, held important economic roles, and were politically significant as landholders, it might be expected that they feature in historical treatments of shore whaling. Associations between Māori women and the sea, however, are rarely noted in historical accounts of the shore whaling industry. The dominant narrative has remained focused on stations as masculine spaces and the ocean as a place for men's work.²⁶

Feminist historians have often noted the historical relationship between women and nature.²⁷ The ocean, they comment, has often been mythologized as a masculine space and the land as feminine. This binary has been contested since the 1980s as historians have interrogated the relationship between women and the sea.²⁸ To date, much of the scholarly output has focused on white women and ocean travel as a source of freedom from gender constraints. Scholars have documented the ways in which women refused to limit their lives to the land—highlighting how some traveled the ocean as seafarers, pirates, and the wives of whalers.²⁹ They were also rescuers and navigators,

disrupting and challenging representations of life at sea as a masculine world full of risk that was no place for a woman.³⁰

Historical scholarship on Indigenous women's relationships with the maritime world across the nineteenth-century Pacific is strongly linked to violence, coercion, and abandonment.³¹ From the mid-nineteenth century forward, for instance, Indigenous women crossed the Pacific as part of the indentured labor trade. Islanders, predominantly from Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands, were recruited to work plantations in Queensland, New Caledonia, and Fiji; the Fijian colonial administration brought additional laborers from India between 1879 and 1916. Although the majority were men, significant numbers of women were also indentured. The nature of this labor trade has been widely debated, missionaries at the time claiming that indentured migration was simply slavery by another name and historians contesting the issue ever since. Women and men may have been motivated to indenture themselves, seeking both new opportunities and freedom from community expectations. Nevertheless, the conditions experienced once under contract were certainly frequently exploitative and sometimes violent, and many never returned home at the end of their contracts.³²

The link between involuntary mobility and Indigenous women's labor is particularly prevalent in relation to their involvement in maritime resource economies.³³ In southern New Zealand, some Kāi Tahu women certainly were kidnapped. Wesleyan missionary James Watkin, who in the early 1840s was based at Waikouaiti, a Kāi Tahu village located near a whaling station, regarded whalers with contempt. In March 1841, he reported in his journal that Captain Smith of the French whaleship *Oriental* had abducted the wife and child of a local man.³⁴ An earlier instance of violence erupted at Otago Harbor in 1817 when James Kelly, captain of the *Sophia*, called in to uplift provisions. Kelly's crew were attacked and killed in retaliation for his attempt to take a local chief hostage and for burning local villages and canoes. Kāi Tahu historian Atholl Anderson suggests that mistreatment of local women may have also been a key factor in the violence.³⁵

Violence was part of the shore whaling industry as well. How Kāi Tahu handled violence directed against kin demonstrates women's status and roles within these early cross-cultural communities and economies, as an example from Ruapuke demonstrates. Methodist missionary Charles Creed reported in 1846 "the death of a native woman at Ruapuke supposed to have been murdered by a European, residing

near the spot where the body was found and at whose house she had lived for a long period.” She was discovered on a beach among the rocks a week after she had disappeared but showed no signs of having drowned. Local chiefs called a meeting of all the residents. Seven boats arrived and, as Creed recalled, “great was their speechifying,” some proposing that the European’s boat be taken as *utu* (recompense) for the murdered woman.³⁶ Women were valued community members, and the boat itself was a high-status commodity, indicative of the ways Kāi Tahu adapted to the industry. Its requisition marked both the seriousness of the offense and the degree to which resident Europeans were subject to Kāi Tahu protocols and modes of justice that required the redistribution of property in compensation for an offense. These accounts hint at Kāi Tahu women’s significance in the shore whaling world despite their absence in the historiography.

The Shore Whaling Station in Southern New Zealand

Southern New Zealand hosted shore whaling stations for at least two decades, beginning with the Rakatima station at Preservation Inlet established in 1829. Unlike arriving whalers, Kāi Tahu did not separate land and sea. Rights to the foreshore, ocean, and its resources did not neatly terminate at the high tide mark (the boundary according to English law), but were part and parcel of *iwi rohe* (tribal boundaries).³⁷ *Mana moana* (authority over the sea) existed alongside *mana whenua* (authority over the land). Thus, newcomers had to negotiate access to whaling waters, as well as land around the stations, from Kāi Tahu.³⁸ As Sub-Protector of Aborigines Edward Shortland noted when he visited the southern region in the mid-1840s, agreements between Kāi Tahu and whalers to set up a station involved the occupation of ground “ashore for the requirements of a whaling station, and to fish along a certain extent of coast, to the exclusion of all others, within a reasonable distance of the station.”³⁹

These stations varied in footprint, ranging from small operations with only one boat to larger entities that encompassed a store, try-works, numerous houses, and up to ten boats. Kāi Tahu recognized the importance of shore stations as sites of economic exchange and potential wealth, both personal and collective. At stations, Kāi Tahu congregated to access new goods, often in exchange for working on the station or by trade in potatoes, flax, pigs, and other items. By the 1840s, many of the stations that remained were run by resident

whalers rather than Sydney-based merchants and were operated very much like a family business.⁴⁰ Some whaling continued into the early twentieth century, but overall the industry declined from the 1850s onward because of overexploitation.⁴¹ At Jacob's River, whaling came to an end in 1847, though employment lasted until around 1860, with men going out to sea "around the sounds and down Stewart Island way."⁴² Most communities, however, reorientated their focus to other fishery activities or toward the land.

Intermarriage was an important component of the shore whaling world. Marriage operated to fold new members into Kāi Tahu relational networks, and such relationships cemented the rights of whalers to establish stations on Kāi Tahu land, guaranteeing their protection and also a "right to use the small areas on which they dwelt."⁴³ For example, captain and manager of the Jacob's River station John Howell appeared initially reluctant to take a Kāi Tahu wife, but did so after pressure from local Kāi Tahu and his fellow whalers, who felt that his refusal to marry was the cause of tension with Māori.⁴⁴ Through his first marriage to Kohikohi, the daughter of chief Horomona Patu, Howell gained access to land on which to establish a station near modern-day Riverton and, later, a pastoral run. The access to resources that marriage enabled was an important factor rooting these men to the southern region and allowed them to establish small fishing, agricultural, and trading settlements along the coast. In most cases, these rights were not confirmed by formal title to the land but through Kāi Tahu expectations of land use and rights, a fact that could lead to dispossession after annexation of New Zealand by the British Crown in 1840.

Women were acknowledged as "capable and valued fishers, muttombirders, sailors, rowers and swimmers in their own right."⁴⁵ Their role within the shore whaling economy, however, has been largely analyzed in regard to their role as wives and companions to whalers.⁴⁶ Unfortunately, focusing on these women alone, who were predominantly of high rank, has occluded the array of women's contributions, ranging from those who managed homes and domestic economies, worked on gardens, cultivated potatoes, wove baskets, gathered fish, and scraped flax. Women of rank, who married captains and station managers, appear in the colonial archive in probates, applications for recognition of land claims in the mid-nineteenth century, and the accounts of visiting government officials. Yet recovering the names and the contributions and roles of a broader group of Kāi Tahu women

presents an archival challenge. Shore whalers rarely left records (aside from some memoirs), and the whaling elite—the owners and managers, like the Weller Brothers and Johnny Jones, who operated numerous stations—left an uneven and light impact on the archive. Kāi Tahu men and women are rarely named in these records but were present, as the writings of visitors to the region and family histories and memoirs make clear.

In southern New Zealand, the *mātauranga* (knowledge) and *mana* (authority) of local collectivities (*iwi*, *hapū*, and *whānau*) were directed toward the success of whaling endeavors: both men and women worked as crew, station employees, and producers of key trade goods, as well as through efforts to ensure the well-being of the station community and environment. Kāi Tahu men and women played an important role in sustaining the shore whaling economy. There is no doubt about the economic significance of the industry, reflected in the numbers of whales successfully hunted and commodities exchanged, as Jonathan West's detailed examination of the Weller Brothers whaling station that operated on Otago Peninsula demonstrates.⁴⁷ He argues that by the 1830s, Kāi Tahu at Ōtākou “had developed an export economy increasingly based on supplying food and flax fibre” to trade with visiting ships, “and their communities had become nodes within a trans-oceanic nexus of trades and exchanges.”⁴⁸ We are interested in tracing Kāi Tahu women's contribution to these local and global economies and suggest that women's labor and cultural expertise helped support the whaling station community.

In subsistence economies, Indigenous women played multiple roles: they collected and preserved maritime foods, undertook gardening work, and manufactured valued items of exchange; their expertise and skills were also vital to creating trade items.⁴⁹ This was the case as well with Kāi Tahu, who relied on “resources known generally as *mahika kai* and *kai moana* [that] formed the basis of the southern economy.”⁵⁰ *Mahika kai* is a broad term that refers to sites where food and resources were gathered, in which ownership and use rights to land, in-shore waters, and coastal zones were determined by residence and ancestry.⁵¹ Southern Kāi Tahu followed a seasonal cycle of resource harvesting, with communities traveling to the Titi Islands off the coast of Foveaux Strait in April and May, for instance.⁵² Resource gathering was also undertaken on a daily basis close to villages. Activities such as “shellfishing, fishing, cutting flax, tending gardens” and preservation of foods, were divided according to gender.⁵³ These activities

were augmented by seasonal mobility to exploit *mahika kai/kai moana* (seafoods), including fish that migrated along the coast during certain times of the year, and potato cultivation and harvesting. Introduced by newcomers, the potato altered Kāi Tahu settlement patterns and trade economies. Because it could be grown in harsh environments, Kāi Tahu could take up semipermanent settlement in the southern reaches of the island. It quickly became an especially important trade item in the shore whaling world. Being able to produce potatoes in sizable quantities worthy of external trade, though, relied on the efforts of lower ranked men as well as women.

In terms of *kai moana*, Kāi Tahu used a variety of offshore fishing grounds (*tauranga ika*) for other species (barracouta, hapuka, cod) and quickly engaged with the new whaling industry.⁵⁴ Indeed, the knowledge and experience with the sea meant that Kāi Tahu men and women quickly proved adept whalers, and adopted the new maritime technology brought to the southern coast by whalers, including investing in whaling boats and equipment. By the mid-1840s, observers noted that “whaling and sealing boats have superceded canoes, in the management of which they show great skill and boldness; they have become expert whalers, and obtain employment at the fisheries often on the same terms as Europeans.”⁵⁵ In the early 1830s, the station at Preservation Inlet used about four boats, one of which was entirely crewed by Māori.⁵⁶ At Howell’s Jacob’s River/Awarua station, Kāi Tahu watched for whales from the sand hills, and signaled the news across the river to the station.⁵⁷ Kāi Tahu men joined Howell’s whaling trip to the South Seas in 1843 and 1844, and a number went to the Californian goldfields in 1850.⁵⁸ Over time, the proportion of Kāi Tahu whalers increased, and some Kāi Tahu women were involved in whaling. For example, Howell’s Aparima/Riverton station had a crew solely of Māori women.⁵⁹ The participation of women in nineteenth-century whaling reflects their maritime skills and their role as bearers of cultural knowledge.⁶⁰

Some women, as wives of whaling captains, also went to sea. Although not a Kāi Tahu example, a daughter of the Ngāti Manu chief Pōmare married Captain William Darby Brind and accompanied him to sea on the *Emily* in the 1820s.⁶¹ Similarly, Kāi Tahu woman Irihāpeti Pātahi married shore whaler Edwin Palmer and traveled with him to Sydney.⁶² Other Kāi Tahu women, such as Puna and Kohikohi, also participated in voyages across the region with their whaler partners. Many more labored in gardens, gathered food, and dressed

flax, engaging in vital economic activities that not only supported the external trade associated with stations but also sustained the communities themselves.

When examining Kāi Tahu women's engagement with the shore whaling industry, it is important to be aware that rank dictated the nature of economic activities. Women of rank often married whalers, and this mapped onto the status of men in the station itself, the manager or owner often partnered with a woman of chiefly status.⁶³ Atholl Anderson argues that these women often oversaw the work of women of lower rank, such as food preparation and weaving, and that "commoner women gathered shellfish, flax and other resources and laboured in the gardens. In the 1840s, they were also employed to cultivate European gardens at the whaling stations."⁶⁴ When visiting Ōtākou in the mid-1840s, Shortland found women busy preparing flax baskets to carry produce, laboring in gardens, and harvesting goods to carry home. He carefully distinguished these women from those of higher rank who were "principally occupied in weaving mats, in domestic cares, and other sorts of employments more suited to their sex."⁶⁵ Shortland's observations relate to the social structure of the larger fisheries in the region, so clear divisions of rank and labor may have been less prominent at the smaller stations.

Throughout all fisheries, women managed household economies—notably gardens—and gathered food for the station, making a vital contribution to the provisioning economy. Close examination of sealing and shore whaling household economies, argues Lynette Russell, shows that it was in the home where Indigenous women had opportunities to exert "power, control, and agency."⁶⁶ Women maintained gardens and the produce was traded for goods that enhanced individual and collective standing. The accounts kept by Octavius Harwood, who operated a store at Ōtākou whaling station, show that although "the main purpose of the Otakou station was the collection and shipment of whale products, the supplementary trade in flax, potatoes, and other country produce was substantial."⁶⁷

The shore whaling economy—encompassing land, shore, and maritime worlds—thrived through the efforts of Kāi Tahu kinship networks and women's work in gardens, on plantations, and on dressing flax. Evidence from Harwood's accounts suggests that women's labor contributed to Kāi Tahu wealth accumulation, enabling chiefs to trade with Harwood. For instance, the *rakatira* (chief) Karetai traded potatoes and seal skins for a range of goods; and the southern leader

Tuhawaiki bought a whale boat in 1842 for three tons of flax, which he paid for in several installments over 1843.⁶⁸ In 1845, Wohlers described the potato cultivations, pig breeding, and household responsibilities undertaken by Kāi Tahu women in settlements around Foveaux Strait as sidelines to the central occupation of their husbands in the whaling industry.⁶⁹ Yet such activities were central to sustaining the shore-based whaling stations, as well as a significant source of trade in their own right.

Due to the significance of intermarriage to the establishment of the shore whaling industry in New Zealand, historian Harry Morton has argued the chief role of the whaler's wife was "to keep the house clean and make the meals," and possibly tend the garden.⁷⁰ This view of women's roles reflects the gendered norms of European social structures. However, when we consider the specifics of this labor, the importance of Kāi Tahu women's knowledge of the local landscape is revealed. Women's domestic support, for instance, extended to in-shore food gathering to provision whaling households. In her assessment of the zooarchaeological remains at shore whaling sites in New Zealand, Tiffany James-Lee found that employees relied on the sea for subsistence, and that "intermarriage of immigrant whalers with local Māori women meant the rations of a whaler could be supplemented with the knowledge of the local food economy."⁷¹ A good example derives from the whaling station on Taieri Island (Moturata), which operated intermittently from 1839 to 1845. Located south of the Otago Peninsula, and situated at the mouth of the Taieri River, it was a short-lived station that operated a handful of boats and had an estimated population of between nine and twenty employees, some of whom had Kāi Tahu wives.⁷² Employees survived by relying on provisions supplied by Harwood and the rich local marine environment. Archaeological research shows that the small whaling community on the island survived on a diet "of beef, pork, fish and shell-fish," in which barracouta, groper, and blue cod were prominent. Shellfish including mussels, cockles, and pipi were present, and though the numbers recovered were not large, they indicate that Māori women were part of the community and active in collecting food resources for the settlement.⁷³ Taieri Island station is an example of women's food gathering and knowledge in practice.

The local environment served as an important resource, and knowledge of significant terrestrial and marine species was passed down through the generations. The success of whaling cannot be divorced

from the wider coastal environment. For example, *kai ika* and *moana kai* such as mussels, *paua*, *kina*, and *kaio* all formed part of the whaling station diet from earliest years. Speaking about the varied shellfish found around Rakiura, Harold Ashwell remembered that “when the tide was out the table was laid.”⁷⁴ George Newton Te Au, a *kaumātua* (elder) from Murihiku, also highlighted the wealth of *kai moana* that his ancestors ate and shared:

I can recall as a child at our Kainga [village], Tokoro on Ruapuke, my Poua (George Newton) and my Taua (Arihi Pohe Newton nee Whaitiri) used to talk to us about how they and their parents used to live on Whenua Hou (Codfish Island), the Neck (Rakiura), Murihiku (Mainland) and (Ruapuke). They spoke of the abundance of Kaimoana, Kai Ika, Kai Manu, Kai Awa and Kai Roto [seafood, fish, birds, and foods from rivers and lakes] and how easy it was to obtain.⁷⁵

Kāi Tahu taught newcomers the ability to gather these resources, to catch shags, *titi*, *kererū*, and *kaka*, as well as how to prepare and cook them using locally available kelp and clay.⁷⁶ Women specifically gathered the seaweed for a sweet dish, which was washed and boiled and then sweetened with wild honey.⁷⁷

Some women also held and shared medicinal knowledge that was closely rooted in the environment around the whaling station. A descendant of Captain John Howell recalled that to deal with boils or inflammation, “an old Maori woman went searching along the shoreline for a certain weed which when heated made a splendid poultice, and would draw the boil to a head.”⁷⁸ The same woman (unnamed) related that she had been taught to swallow a mouthful of seawater daily, chew a piece of kelp, and swallow the juice. Such knowledge had been passed down generations as a way to ward off “rheumatics” and “swellings.” In the early years, or even decades, of the whaling industry, the ability to generate food and medicine from the surrounding land, shore, and seascapes was significant, given the distance from other markets and medicines.

Providing food for *manuhiri* (visitors) was an important part of customary hospitality as well as social exchange across the South Island,⁷⁹ and the foreshore and ocean were a reliable source of important foods for such occasions. Women played an important role in offering hospitality because sharing goods was an essential part of Kāi Tahu

life. Indeed, the sustained importance of hospitality was a defining feature of the affective economy on the whaling station. Women, in this capacity, were cultural guides and interlocutors, helping navigate appropriate customs and protocols because providing hospitality was a required activity that sustained connections. These were not one-off activities, but ongoing and undertaken at appropriate moments in ways that enhanced and supported the family and wider kin. Such hospitality not only drew on local environmental resources but also extended to the use of profits gained from shore whaling, which might be expended in the purchase of goods. What individuals did with their profits provides insight into the importance of maintaining good relations and signals the value of the affective economy to the success of the industry.⁸⁰ In this arena, women's labor was critical to a whaling economy that bridged land, shore, and the maritime environment and helped maintained harmonious relations across cultural and environmental boundaries.

These women further maintained the settlements and related economic activities while their partners were away at sea for extended periods, demonstrating that "women were an essential part of maritime economies."⁸¹ Archaeologist Emily Button's research on Indigenous engagement in the nineteenth-century whaling industry on the East Coast of the United States shows that whaling was a family affair. Men went to sea in kinship groups and their engagement in the industry was made possible by a system of gender relations that asserted and supported women's economic leadership. Thus "Native American women in whaling households assumed positions of responsibility and productivity prior to, rather than because of, men's participation in whaling." Button's argument about the centrality of kinship in whaling is demonstrated by tracking the distribution of lays, which were used to support familial and community endeavors: "Indigenous household structures, family networks, and labor practices both shaped and responded to men's participation in the whaling industry."⁸²

A similar pattern holds for Kāi Tahu, as our research on shore whaling operations as kinship economies has demonstrated.⁸³ For example, when George Clarke visited Otago to help negotiate the purchase of the Otago Block in 1844, he noted that at the Taieri River they "found the remains of a whaling station [on Moturata], and a couple of houses, in one of which was a Maori woman and half-caste child. Her husband was away, but we got from her a supply of potatoes, and the loan of a large boat, in which we pulled to the head of the Taieri

Lake.”⁸⁴ Kāi Tahu men frequently found employment on whaling vessels, and later, in shipbuilding enterprises through these kinship connections. For example, John Howell managed Johnny Jones’s station at Jacob’s River, but while he was engaged in overseeing his pastoral runs, his Kāi Tahu brother-in-law Thomas Brown acted as one of the station managers while also captaining whaling ships.⁸⁵ Kāi Tahu men and women were both involved in the whaling economy at all levels, from the hunt itself through to the largely invisible labor of provisioning and supporting the community. Much of their engagement with the new industry rested on long-standing, intergenerational knowledge.

These links with the natural world were expressed in other ways that went beyond the economic. An account recorded by local historian James Herries Beattie demonstrates the role of Kāi Tahu women and their knowledge of and relationship with the environment during the whaling era:

Woman’s Island for the titi (muttonbirds) of Rakiura belonged to Tuhawaiki—Parapara, who conveyed it to Puna, the wife of Chaseland or Tame Titireni, and she became the boss of the island. Her husband and she went to Chatham Islands and were wrecked. They built a boat and put sufficient food on it and came back here. She was a great tohunga and pulled one of her hairs, said a *karakia* and put it in the sea, so they had a safe voyage and landed at Moeraki.⁸⁶

The marriage between Puna and Australian Aboriginal whaler Tommy Chaseland was a partnership in which both were active participants. In particular, the narrative Beattie recorded demonstrates Puna’s status and knowledge through her ability to bring the pair to safety, highlighting the continued importance of Māori knowledge and traditions in interracial relationships formed around sealing and whaling stations. The arrival of whaling as a commercial activity did not displace these enduring forms of engagement with the natural world.

Puna’s actions, though, also recalled the role of women in tradition in which human beings triumph over external forces by calling on the spiritual world through *karakia*.⁸⁷ Puna may have been thinking of Pūpū-mai-nono, who features in southern traditions and who enacted rites to protect her siblings on their quest to avenge the death of a brother. She ritually protected them through a *karakia*, used to calm the stormy seas, so that they could cross the ocean safely.⁸⁸ An account collected by Beattie from Magda Wallscott in 1910 relates to

Puna's role in protecting crew, including her husband Tommy Chase-land, on a journey to New Zealand from the Chatham Islands. Magda Wallscott told how Puna "sat in the bow of the boat from Chatham Island karakia-ing to keep the storm down."⁸⁹

Given their spiritual significance, accounts also show whales as *kaitiaki*, or guardians. The mammals were potential "saviors of mariners in distress when the proper karakia [prayer] was made." The most well-known examples of this occurred in the voyage of the *Takitimu waka* to Aotearoa New Zealand.⁹⁰ A variation appears in Beattie's ethnological project that he conducted for Otago Museum in 1920, in which he interviewed elders across the southern region about all aspects of Kāi Tahu life.

A well-informed old man referred to the traditional lore that in storms at sea an efficient tohuka (or tohunga) could call up a great fish to protect the canoe. . . . Any whale, or shark, or big fish, or taniwha, or monster of the deep thus called up was called a takaroa, or tangaroa, and all were "paid with a hair from the human head."⁹¹

The account has clear parallels to the protective actions taken by Puna. More generally, *karakia* and related rites were used to ensure good fishing with the acquiescence of Tangaroa.

Similarly, the first child of Kohikohi and Howell, George Robert, was born on a whale ship in 1838 as the family returned from visiting relations on Centre Island in the Foveaux Strait. Betsy, an old Māori woman, and Kohikohi's young servant were also on the boat. After the birth, which was aided by Betsy, they spotted a whale:

Betsy was very superstitious, and thought this was a good omen. Better still, if the Captain could get it. Father thought this would be impossible, but egged on by the women made the attempt, and with the help of the women was successful. There was great jubilation, when he returned from his visit with a whale—and a son.⁹²

The account suggests that the women were adept at sea and maintained knowledge and beliefs that informed the practices of the whaling communities. The whaling economy thus went beyond cross-cultural relationships to include cross-species ones, and maintaining such knowledge and connection with the wider environment helped ensure the success of the industry.

Conclusion

Scholars have increasingly recognized the significance of the roles women played in the nineteenth-century whaling industry. The shore whaling station was not the masculine, frontier space often imagined. Newcomer men did not arrive on southern shores to find them empty. Instead, they engaged with Indigenous communities from the outset and Kāi Tahu women and whalers integrated to form new communities. Inter-marriage with newcomer whalers was common, and the relationships that drew Kāi Tahu women and their wider kin to the early stations were frequently characterized by emotional bonds. These affective relationships also drew newcomer men into the Kāi Tahu world, and as kin they were participants in an economy that implied shared rights and responsibilities. In this context, women's labor was a critical component of the emerging economy, engaging with, and supporting, the "main" business of whaling while directly contributing to wider exports of potatoes and flax. Through intimate relationships, Kāi Tahu women connected families, communities, and economies, and in the shore whaling world of southern New Zealand they laid the foundation for wealth accumulation, increased status, and authority at both collective and personal levels. This was an affective economy, defined by relationships.

Yet the affective went beyond the interpersonal to encompass the wider environment. The land, ocean, and species within these landscapes were of spiritual as well as practical significance to Kāi Tahu; they were a source of sustenance, trade, and identity. The cross-cultural affective worlds of maritime communities drew on personal connections forged through marriage and kinship and relied on enduring connections to the *whenua* (land) and *moana* (sea). Kāi Tahu women played an important role in sustaining these environmental relationships as the shore whaling industry developed. They used their practical knowledge and spiritual connections to the local coast and sea to support the survival and success of kin across cultural and environmental boundaries.

Notes

1. Jones, "Running into Whales."
2. Richards, "Māori Names."
3. As such, it is similar to the beach as Greg Dening describes it in *Beach Crossings*.

4. See West, *Face of Nature*, which dedicates a chapter to the Ōtākou shore whaling station and its fisheries.
5. Iglar, “Northeastern Pacific Basin,” 587; also see Bashford, “Terraqueous Histories.”
6. Popular works include Grady, *Sealers and Whalers*; and Newton, *Savage History*. Local histories relating to southern New Zealand include Hall-Jones, *Historical Southland*; Hall-Jones, *Invercargill Pioneers*; Hall-Jones, *Kelly of Inverkelly*; Hall-Jones, *Bluff Harbour*; Hall-Jones, *South Explored*; Howard, *Rakiura*; McNab, *Murihiku*; Natusch, *Island Called Home*; Samson, *Stewart Islanders*. More recent local histories include Church, *Gaining a Foothold*; and Entwisle, *Behold the Moon*. On interracial marriage, see Anderson, *Race Against Time*; Wanhalla, *In/visible Sight*; Middleton, *Two Hundred Years*; Stevens, “Gathering Places”; and King, “Wellers Whaling Station.” On links between shore whaling, capital, and the “imperial global economy,” see Ballantyne, *Webs of Empire*, 124–136.
7. Ballantyne, *Webs of Empire*, 134.
8. Haines, “Lighting up the World?” 168; and Patterson, “Glorious Stinking Stuff. . . .”
9. Salmond, *Tears of Rangī*, 3.
10. For example, the *pēpeha* “Ānō te mahi a Paikea, te tangata i whakaahua i a ia ki te ngohi (ika) moana,” and “Ngā mahi a Paikea whaka-Tangaroa” refer to Paikea as transforming himself into a whale and journeying on the back of whale, respectively. Mead and Grove, *Ngā Pēpeha*, 17, 325; and Colenso, *Ancient Tide-Lore*, 21, 29–36.
11. Gillespie, “Bicultural Relationship,” 2.
12. Ngāi Tahu Claims Settlement Act 1998, Schedule 104.
13. Orbell, *Natural World*, 143.
14. Hamel, *Archaeology of Otago*, 31.
15. Waitangi Tribunal, *Ngai Tahu Sea Fisheries*, 60–61; see also Cawthorn, *Meat Consumption*.
16. Quoted in Jolly, “Chatham Rock Phosphate,” 5, and Rodgers, “Connection of Māori,” 8.
17. Cawthorn, *Maori, Whales and “Whaling,”* 3–4.
18. Wohlers to the Committee, Ruapuke Report No. 4, May 1, 1845, MS-0967/014, Hocken Collections.
19. Potts, Armstrong, and Brown, *New Zealand Book*, 81.
20. Orbell, *Encyclopaedia*. See also Te Awekotuku, *Ruahine*; and Kahukiwa and Grace, *Wahine toa*.
21. Orbell, *Encyclopaedia*, 86, 129.
22. Wanhalla, “Maori Women,” 21. For instance, in the traditions associated with Āraiteuru at the Hokianga, see Orbell, *Encyclopaedia*, 29.
23. Orbell, *Encyclopaedia*, 75.
24. On Pacific traditions of female navigators, see Wilson, “Nā Wāhine Kanaka.”

25. Tremewan, *Traditional Stories*, 121, 140, 151.
26. See Haines and West, "Crew Cultures."
27. Merchant, *Death of Nature*.
28. See Creighton, "'Women' and Men"; Stanley, "Women at Sea"; and Mohanram, "White Water."
29. See Druett, *Petticoat Whalers*; Wheelwright, *Amazons*; and Stanley, *Cabin Boys*.
30. For a discussion of this literature, see Pickles and Wanhalla, "Embodying."
31. See Russell, *Roving Mariners*. For a discussion of Indigenous women's experiences on board ships in the Pacific, see Chappell, "Shipboard Relations."
32. Shineberg's *People Trade* includes a chapter on female recruits; see also Banivanua Mar, *Violence and Colonial Dialogue*; Lal, *Chalo Jahaji*; Scarr, "Recruits and Recruiters"; and Moore, "Revising the Revisionists."
33. Russell, *Roving Mariners*.
34. Journal of the Rev. James Watkin, March 3, 1841, Waikouaiti, copied by the Rev. M. A. Rugby Pratt, MS-0534/020, Hocken Collections.
35. Anderson, *Welcome of Strangers*, 71.
36. Rev. Charles Creed to General Secretaries, London, August 5, 1846, Wesleyan Missionary Society Papers, 1817–1859, B-H, folder 31, Methodist Church Archives.
37. Salmond, *Tears of Rangī*, 370; and Waitangi Tribunal, *Ngai Tahu Sea Fisheries*, xvi.
38. Quoted in Waitangi Tribunal, *Ngai Tahu Sea Fisheries*, 80–81.
39. Shortland, *Southern Districts*, 122.
40. Stevens and Wanhalla, "Intimate Relations."
41. It has been estimated that New Zealand's southern right whale population was reduced by 82 percent between 1830 and 1849 and that the most intensive hunting period was during the decade from 1835 to 1844. See Carroll et al., "Two Intense Decades," 9. Note also the changes in whaling behavior described in Jones, "Whale of a Difference."
42. Wilson, *Hakoro ki te iwi*, 23–24.
43. Anderson, *Race Against Time*, 28; Wanhalla, *In/visible Sight*; and Stevens "Gathering Places."
44. Wilson, *Hakoro ki te Iwi*, 8–9.
45. Stevens, "Māori History," 167.
46. Anderson, *Race Against Time*; Wanhalla, *In/visible Sight*; Stevens, "Every Comfort"; and Stevens, "Māori History," 165.
47. West, *Face of Nature*, 17.
48. West, *Face of Nature*, 109.
49. D'Arcy, "Women and the Sea," 259.
50. Dacker, *Te Mamae me te Aroha*, 5.
51. Anderson, *Welcome of Strangers*, 111, 113.
52. Dacker, *Te Mamae*, 8–9.

53. Anderson, *Welcome of Strangers*, 120, 75.
54. Waitangi Tribunal, *Ngai Tahu Sea Fisheries*, 46–48.
55. Quoted in Waitangi Tribunal, *Ngai Tahu Report 1991*, Section 3.3.4; see also Waitangi Tribunal, *Ngai Tahu Sea Fisheries*, 65, 84–85, 118.
56. Richards, “*Murihiku*” *Re-viewed*, 50.
57. Wilson, *Hakoro ki te iwi*, 16.
58. Wilson, *Hakoro ki te iwi*, 19, 26. On Kāi Tahu employed in whaling at Ruapuke, see Wohlers’s comment in Ruapuke Report No. 8, 31 March 1846, where he states that “the owners of the whaling ships employ the natives as readily as the Europeans.” MS-0967/017, Hocken Collections.
59. Wohlers, Letter to Committee of Administration, June 5, 1855, MS-0967/925, Hocken Collections; Hall-Jones, *Kelly of Inverkelly*, 36; and Cawthorn, *Maori, Whales and “Whaling,”* 7.
60. Colenso, *Ancient Tide-Lore*, 18–19.
61. See Chisholm, “Brind, William Darby”; and Cawthorn, *Maori, Whales and “Whaling,”* 6.
62. Irihāpeti Pātahi’s recollections of her life with Palmer were transcribed by William Martin in 1863 when he encountered her on the West Coast gold-fields. See Wanhalla, “One White Man.”
63. Anderson, *Race Against Time*; Stevens, ““Gathering Places””; and Wanhalla, *In/visible Sight*.
64. Anderson, *Welcome of Strangers*, 91–92.
65. Shortland, *Southern Districts*, 87.
66. Russell, “Dirty Domestics,” 18.
67. Parker, “Re-Conceptualizing,” 325.
68. West, *Face of Nature*, 129. See also Petrie, *Chiefs of Industry*, 70–71. Petrie states that Tuhawaiki purchased a sealing boat for two thousand blades of whalebone in 1835, and that he had accumulated around forty whaleboats at Ruapuke by the late 1830s.
69. Wohlers, Ruapuke Report No. 7, December 31, 1845, MS-0967/014, Hocken Collections.
70. Morton, *Whale’s Wake*, 252.
71. James-Lee, “Subsistence Activities,” 95.
72. Coutts, “An Approach,” 294.
73. Coutts, “An Approach,” 296, 300.
74. Waitangi Tribunal, *Ngai Tahu Sea Fisheries*, 18.
75. Waitangi Tribunal, *Ngai Tahu Sea Fisheries*, 14.
76. Wilson, *Hakoro ki te iwi*, 11–12; and Stevens, “Kāi Tahu me to Hopu Titi ki Rakiura.” Regarding *mahika kai*, *kai ika*, and *kai moana* across the South Island, see also Waitangi Tribunal, *Ngai Tahu Sea Fisheries*.
77. Wilson, *Hakoro ki te iwi*, 11–12.
78. Wilson, *Hakoro ki te iwi*, 12.
79. Waitangi Tribunal, *Ngai Tahu Sea Fisheries*, 68–69.

80. See Parker, "Re-Conceptualizing."
81. Stanley, "And after the Cross-Dressed?" 10.
82. Button, "Family Affair," 113.
83. See Stevens and Wanhalla, "Intimate Relations."
84. Clarke, *Notes*, 65.
85. Wilson, *Hakoro ki te Iwi*, 36.
86. Ellison, quoted in "Casual Allusions to the Whalers Made by Maoris in Interviews given to Herries Beattie between 1900–1950," 2, James Herries Beattie Papers, MS-582/G/9, Hocken Collections.
87. Tremewan, *Traditional Stories*, xvi.
88. Tremewan, *Traditional Stories*, 185.
89. Cited in Russell, *Roving Mariners*, 58.
90. Mead and Grove, *Ngā Pēpeha*, 135. Margaret Orbell notes that whales were special because they might act as a guardian spirit. See *Natural World of the Maori*, 145.
91. Beattie, *Traditional Lifeways*, 154.
92. Wilson, *Hakoro ki te iwi*, 16.

Animals, Race, and the “Gospel of Kindness”

The American Whaling Fleet of the Pacific World

Lissa Wadewitz

THE 1830s THROUGH THE 1860s was the heyday of the American whaling industry in the Pacific Ocean. In those decades, thousands of mixed-race whaling crews penetrated the far reaches of the Pacific World in pursuit of whales and other animals. In the process, they caught, tormented, maimed, and killed thousands of creatures. Whales, sea otters, fur seals, walruses, porpoises, sharks, fish, birds, and turtles were all fair game. Indeed, the indiscriminate hunting of whales, fur seals, and sea otters contributed to the decline of these animal populations and thus to the ultimate demise of the industries that depended on them. These events also had significant, if uneven, environmental, cultural, and economic repercussions for the people located closest to the most popular hunting grounds.²

The violence that characterized the whaling industry of these decades is striking. Admittedly, this is partly due to the nature of our contemporary relations with animals. Most Americans today are far more likely to have grown up with domesticated pets and to have attended a Sea World Shamu show than do work involving killing animals in the ways our nineteenth-century predecessors did, modern meatpacking and commercial fishing aside. Still, the sheer volume of animal blood shed over the course of the 1800s is a critical part of Pacific World history that deserves more systematic analysis. Whalers' relationships with the various animals in their midst reveal much about life aboard whaleships and the strict social hierarchies imposed

on the men who often inhabited these vessels for years at a time. Although predominantly produced by literate European Americans, available sources offer an invaluable window into how whalers of different ethnicities viewed and treated animals. These sources also suggest that crew members' attitudes toward whales in particular were surprisingly nuanced; in fact, many seafarers of this era expressed a level of wonder and sentimentality toward whales that was at odds with the violence and gore usually associated with the industry. This chapter seeks to unravel this paradox and argues that the specific social and economic relations that emerged on board nineteenth-century whaling vessels influenced whalers' extensive interactions with the animals in their midst. The evidence further suggests that the nascent American animal welfare movement spawned by the Second Great Awakening of the 1820s and 1830s had filtered—albeit incompletely and imperfectly—into the Pacific whaling world.³

Food and Fun

Whaleship logbooks might be some of the most mind-numbing primary source materials of all time. Typical entries record the date, the location of the vessel, the weather, and the number and types of whales caught. Such logbooks, when combined with the journals and memoirs left behind by various sailors, demonstrate that life aboard a whaleship, though extremely adventurous at times, was often quite tedious. Between whale chases, captains kept ship crews busy painting, cleaning, and repairing equipment. Crew members also had hours upon hours in which to read (if they could), spin stories (“yarning”), or indulge in other amusements with their fellow crew. As one whaler put it,

The ceaseless motion of the vessel rocking at the centre of a circular space of blue, with a perfectly symmetrical dome of azure enclosing her above, unflecked by a single cloud, becomes at last almost unbearable from its changeless sameness of environment. Were it not for the trivial round and common tasks of everyday ship duty, some of the crew must become idiotic, or, in sheer rage at the want of interest in their lives, commit mutiny.⁴

One such form of distraction was to capture, kill, injure, and generally toy with the animals in their midst.

The monotony of daily sea life and sustenance drove many whalers to treat some animals as both sources of amusement and experimental foodstuffs. Francis Olmsted, a sailor aboard the *North America* in the late 1830s and early 1840s, described how he and his fellow crew harpooned porpoises frolicking at the bow of the ship.⁵ Frank Bullen, a British whaler on an American ship, confirmed similar activities aboard his vessel: “Again and again we hauled them in, until the fore part of the deck was alive with the kicking, writhing sea-pigs, at least twenty of them. I had seen an occasional porpoise caught at sea before, but never more than one at a time. Here, however, was a wholesale catch.”⁶ Such activities not only engaged the crew, they provided fresh meat for all. Other whalers captured large sea turtles to add variety to their meals. It was quite common to store these creatures alive and upside down on deck for months at a time.⁷ Whalers shot and beat birds in great numbers, and they clubbed seals, sea lions, and walruses to death by the thousands for their meat, skins, tusks, and oil. After a full day of such carnage in 1840, Olmsted remarked in his memoir, “We returned to the ship, shooting several birds on our passage, highly gratified with the varied amusements of the afternoon, and at supper feasted ourselves upon the fine fish we had taken, and the flesh of the young seal, which was tender and delicate like that of a pig.”⁸

The notoriously bad food available aboard whaling ships most certainly fueled this type of behavior. Enoch Cloud, a greenhand from Ohio, regularly complained about the “filthy” meat and “fine stinking cod-fish” served on board the *Henry Kneeland* in the 1850s, for example. Having fresh-caught fish or meat was a welcome respite from the usual salted beef and biscuits that were all too frequently maggot-infested.⁹ According to another seafaring passenger of the same era, porpoise meat was “eaten by the name of ‘sea beef’” and cherished, while sun fish could be “served up into very fine chowder.”¹⁰ After dining on both porpoise and a hefty turtle, Olmsted remarked, “We are living upon the fat of the ocean! Porpoise steaks, cutlets and fricassee, with turtle soup introduced very *apropos* by the way of variety.”¹¹

The goal in procuring animals was not always to expand menu variety, though that might have been a happy by-product. Whalers sometimes just decided to torment the fauna they encountered for fun. One such practice was to tie pieces of whale blubber to each end of a string and throw it out among the albatrosses that gathered while the crew processed dead whale carcasses. The men would then

watch in amusement as two birds ate up each piece of the blubber and “then a ludicrous struggle ensues between them, which terminates in the weaker party being compelled to disgorge what he had swallowed.”¹² After coming across a large school of “black fish” [pilot whales], Frank Bullen recalled that while it was not the same as catching a sperm whale, taking blackfish could be “a good day’s sport.” The boats lowered and harpoons flew. “Such a scene of wild confusion and uproarious merriment ensued as I never saw before in my life,” Bullen later wrote. “When we got the lances to work among them, the hubbub calmed down greatly, and the big bodies one by one ceased their gambols, floating supine.”¹³ Pilot whales produced small amounts of oil and meat, but chasing them down was a welcome form of entertainment.

Most whalers saved their most violent behavior for sharks. Whalers detested these predators because they posed a direct, physical threat when they swarmed around the ship as the whale was being processed. The sharks would snap at the men’s legs as they cut into the whale carcasses hanging alongside the vessel. According to one crew member, whalers saw sharks as

a legitimate subject for the exercise of [their] . . . skill in darting the lance or spade, to which this savage animal is admirably adapted from his apparent insensibility to pain . . . even with a large hook in his mouth he still continues to exercise his voracious propensities . . . sometimes, upon the capture of a shark during the process of trying out [the rendering of whale blubber], he is drawn out of the water by two or three men, and a gallon or more of boiling oil is poured down his open mouth, a most cruel act, but defended on the ground that “nothing is too bad for a shark.”¹⁴

Bullen noted that one of the crew’s favorite things to do was “catch a shark and drive a sharpened stake down through his upper jaw and out underneath the lower one, so that its upper portion pointed diagonally forward and let him go; this would prevent the shark from being able to open his mouth . . . no doubt he would exist in this agony for a long time.”¹⁵ As was true of land-based Americans in their treatment of wolves, causing a predator as much pain as possible seems to have been the ultimate goal.¹⁶

Many seafarers deemed a shark killing an occasion for celebration and group bonding. While anchored at Tahiti in the 1840s, for

instance, William Reynolds of the US Exploring Expedition reported that the men

with much exultation were hauling their prize [a shark] on board. I had to drop my pen & run to be in at the death, for “all hands” collect & have a sort of jubilee over the dying throes of their common enemy. It is impossible to convey the least idea of the destruction of one of these monsters. While they are torturing him with all the means their ingenuity can supply, they are as merry over his floundering as if they were contributing to his pleasure. They jest & laugh & talk to the victim as if *he* possessed understanding, though there is as much of hearty spite in their tone as there is of positive happiness.

The crew proceeded to cut the animal open, dissect it, and then “hove [it] into the Sea to become food in *its* turn.”¹⁷ The novice whaler J. C. Mullett related a similar experience of group bonding when his crew caught a shark in the late 1840s. “I presume to say that most of my readers have made themselves acquainted with the passage in the good book, ‘do good unto your enemies,’” he later related,

but I saw no one there who I thought manifested a Christian disposition, every man with a club or billet of wood, taking satisfaction out of John shark’s hide, until he departed this life . . . All this watch my joy had been full. I returned to my berth and I doubt not but I felt as much of a conqueror as General Jackson after the battle of New Orleans.¹⁸

As another whaler noted, “Sailors don’t like them [sharks] a bit, but kill them whenever they can; and there is little wonder, considering they are so likely to be themselves eaten by this greedy ranger through the paths of the sea.”¹⁹

Whales

Whalers’ behavior suggests that they viewed most animals as lesser beings, sources of food, potentially life-threatening, and fully expendable. But whales were different. Even as concerns for animal welfare emerged out of the Second Great Awakening of the early 1800s, proponents of this “gospel of kindness” in the United States largely focused

on domesticated species that lived in close proximity to humans, not marine animals that roamed distant oceans.²⁰ Still, many seafarers recognized the intelligence and human-like qualities of whales; they saw whales as distinct from other animals and frequently wrote about their encounters with a sense of wonder and humility. Given the aims of the commercial whaling industry, it is easy to overlook the capacity of nineteenth-century whalers to express appreciation for the mammals they pursued, but the sentiments are there.

Hunting is one way to intimately acquaint yourself with the habits of your prey, and whaling was no exception. Whalers quickly learned to identify spouting patterns from great distances and recorded different whale species' habits and personalities. They also observed and marveled at the whales' curiosity and intelligence. According to one whaler, "a whale learns with amazing rapidity, developing such cunning in an hour or two that all a man's smartness may be unable to cope with his newly-acquired experience."²¹ Sailors soon realized, for instance, that whales that had survived previous attacks recognized whaling boats and gave them wide berth. After striking a large male whale in the summer of 1852, Enoch Cloud noted that "He was well acquainted with a boat it seems! He allowed no chance to get a lance at him & after running 'til night we cut the line & let him go!"²² Occasionally, mariners imbued whales with other human qualities, such as the ability to taunt or tease. In pursuing several humpback whales, one whaler was surprised when the animals did not immediately take to the open ocean where they could easily outrun the boats. Instead, the whales stuck to the coastline but consistently just out of reach. "Whether they were tantalizing us or not, I cannot say," Frank Bullen wrote, "but it certainly looked like it."²³ According to another seasoned hand, "Whales has feelings as well as any body [*sic*]. They don't like to be stuck in the gizzards, and hauled alongside, and cut in, and tried out in them 'ere boilers no more than I do."²⁴

Whalers also regularly noted the sociability of the whaling groups they encountered. As the Reverend Henry Cheever observed, "it is evident that the societies of these great sea monsters seldom go to war, but live together in cordial and happy amity, and render each other all the help in their power when in distress."²⁵ Whalers even used the word "gam" to describe both the meeting of two or more whaleships and a "sociable family of whales."²⁶ In the spring of 1840, Francis Olmsted witnessed the lancing of a pilot whale that minutes before

had been playing about the bow. When the boats towed the bleeding animal to the ship, they were

accompanied by all his companions spouting and foaming around the boats like attendant tritons. So affectionate are these poor fish, that when one of their number is struck by the whaler, the school continues around the sufferer, appearing to sympathize with him in his agonies. Even when dead, they do not desert him, and it was not until a long time after the victim had been hoisted upon deck, far from their sight, that they abandoned him.²⁷

Some whalers witnessed whales communicating with one another across the water. That same season, Olmsted watched a large school of sperm whales feeding and playing on the open ocean. However, “let one of the school become alarmed at the approach of danger, and with a flourish of his flukes, well understood, the alarm is instantly communicated to the others, though scattered for several miles over the ocean, and they betake themselves to precipitate flight.”²⁸ Whales were obviously more animated and companionable than other animals that were more easily captured and killed.

Nineteenth-century whalers were likewise not immune to the awe-inspiring or magical characteristics of whales. Herbert Aldrich, a whaler in the Arctic, was surprised to learn that several captains in the fleet had heard whales sing. “I at first took this for a sophomoric joke, slyly intended for me to bite at, so I kept quiet,” he remarked. “But one day there was a rehearsing of experiences, and I found that the masters really believed that whales do sing.”²⁹ When Mary Lawrence, a whale ship captain’s wife, saw her first blue whale, she watched it swim around the boat “very majestically” before speeding away into the open ocean.³⁰ William Whitecar was similarly impressed by a sperm whale breach in the 1850s: “I was struck with the greatness of the Creator’s works in this, to us, almost unknown element.”³¹ Richard Henry Dana’s description of a school of whales he encountered in the 1830s off of Cape Horn echoes the experiences of other men at sea:

We were surrounded by shoals of sluggish whales and grampuses, which the fog prevented our seeing, rising slowly to the surface, . . . heaving out those peculiar lazy, deep, and long-drawn breathings which give such an impression of supineness and strength. Some of the watch were asleep, and the others were perfectly still,

so that there was nothing to break the illusion, and I stood leaning over the bulwarks, listening to the slow breathings of the mighty creatures—now one breaking the water just alongside, whose black body I almost fancied that I could see through the fog; and again another, which I could just hear in the distance—until the low and regular swell seemed like the heaving of the ocean's mighty bosom to the sound of its heavy and long-drawn respirations.³²

Given that providing a “voice” to “dumb animals” was becoming a central tenet of the animal welfare movement by the mid-nineteenth century, it is possible that witnessing these various forms of intra-whale communication added to the ability of whalers to appreciate the leviathans in their midst.³³

Tellingly, whalers regularly recorded the touching maternal behavior of female whales. By the 1840s, American whalers found that attacking gray whales on their birthing grounds—which seafarers called “the nursery”—was a highly effective way to kill female whales. This provided whalers with ample opportunity to witness interactions between cows and their calves. According to one whaler, the calf's mother “will not readily desert her offspring, and in her extreme solicitude for her young, is a frequent victim. The taking of one of a school, almost always ensures the capture of another, for his [or her] comrades do not immediately abandon the victim.”³⁴ Mary Brewster, a whaling captain's wife aboard the *Tiger*, recorded a similarly haunting scene in Magdalena Bay off the coast of California in 1846:

A plenty of boats stove every day and they all say these are the worst whale to strike they ever saw. The only way they can get fast [or harpoon a female whale] is to chase the calf till it gets tired out then they fasten to it and the whale [the mother] will remain by its side and is then fastened too. Brother James . . . said he saw a calf fastened to and the whale came up to it and *tried to get the iron out with her fin* and when she could not she took it on her back and endeavored to get it away. [F]requently the iron will kill them [the calves]. [W]hen this is the case the whale . . . finding her young dead will turn and fight the boats.³⁵

In his remarks on the behavior of the right whale, Reverend Cheever noted that “its immediate recourse is to flight, except when it has young to look out for, and then it is bold as a lion, and manifests

an affection which is itself truly affecting.”³⁶ When Enoch Cloud and his shipmates pursued a cow and a calf in the summer of 1853, he recorded the event at length in his journal with his usual punctuational exuberance. “It was truly remarkable to see the watchful solicitude of the cow for her offspring!” Cloud wrote, “I thought I had seen the whales ‘fight’ before but I have come to a different conclusion now!” Although these two got away, they were both bleeding so profusely Cloud doubted there was any chance either would survive.³⁷

The expanding American animal welfare movement directly tapped into such concerns about maternal behavior and familial relations; in fact, children’s literature and Sunday school curricula increasingly presented anthropomorphized stories of animals with human-like feelings and animal families that showcased maternal love.³⁸ This attention to animal families in popular culture back home may have prompted European American whalers in particular to pay closer attention to these behaviors among the whales they encountered. According to historian Katherine Grier, “middle-class people valued types of animals which seemed to exhibit the characteristics they found desirable in themselves. In popular narratives and through their actual presence in households, animals reinforced the cultural conventions of domesticity by, paradoxically, giving the virtues of middle-class family life origins in nature.”³⁹

The Hunt Proceeds

Whalers thus often admired whales but this reverence ultimately did not interfere with the hunt for several reasons. Some of these motivations are fairly straightforward given the demands of the industry and the economic goals of individual workers. But to fully grasp whalers’ ability to both revere whales and then indiscriminately kill them requires a more in-depth examination of the ways in which social relations aboard ship were changing as the American whaling fleet moved into the Pacific.

Perhaps the most compelling driver of whaler behavior was the desire to make money. When whalers signed onto a voyage, they agreed to both a specific position on board and a set “lay,” that is, a percentage of the ship’s total profits at the conclusion of the trip. A captain might receive one-twelfth of the cut and officers one-twenty-fifth, but the average inexperienced crewman usually received just one-two-hundredth of the final profits.⁴⁰ Because the length of the voyage and the crew members’ final pay were both directly related to how much whale oil and baleen a ship accumulated, whalers kept careful track of the

ship's total supplies. Enoch Cloud daily counted down the days left on his tour aboard the *Henry Kneeland* while Mary Lawrence worried about the strain on her husband when his ship experienced a bout of bad luck. "What long faces greet my eyes. Everybody is discouraged," she wrote in her journal in the summer of 1858.⁴¹ The need to return home with a specific amount of oil and bone in the hold so as to make the voyage profitable could provide tremendous incentive for whalers to not succumb to sentiment when it came to the animals around them.

That chasing and harpooning whales was also a highly dangerous activity most certainly compelled men to engage in the hunt.⁴² Every time these men pursued whales, they were acutely aware they were putting their lives at risk. Indeed, stories about angry whales smashing boats and summarily tossing sailors into the sea pervaded whaling lore. Whalers regularly broke bones, suffered from exposure to the elements, and, of course, lost their lives in their pursuit of these creatures.⁴³ As one whaler remarked in the 1850s,

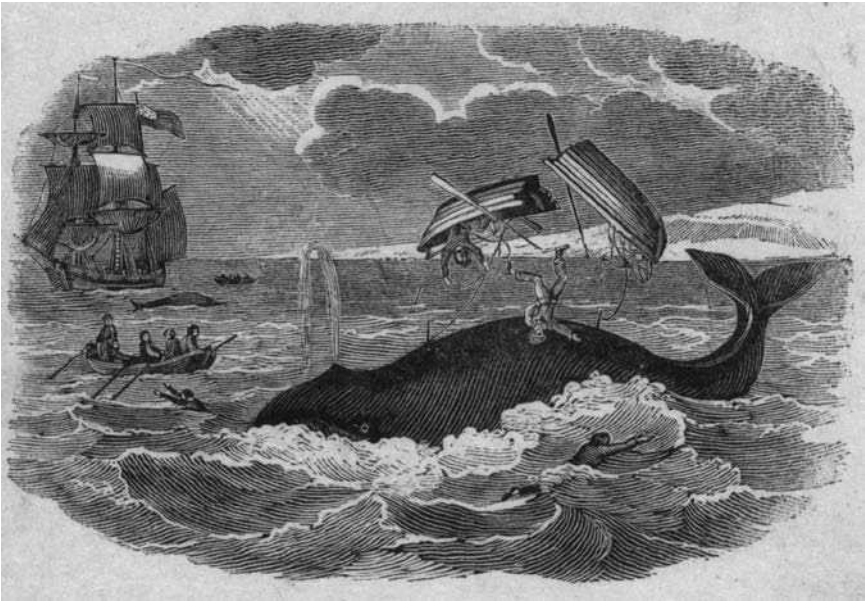


Figure 2.1. A sperm whale “stoving” a boat. Source: The Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division of Art, Prints and Photographs. Prints Collection, The New York Public Library. “Whaling. (#7)” (n.d.) Engraved by Alexander Anderson. New York Public Library Digital Collections. Accessed July 30, 2020. <http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47dc-7b9e-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99>. Public domain image.

It gives a faint idea of the monstrous size of the terrible animals with which we have to deal! But to know all—to be an eyewitness of their amazing strength & agility—to see them in all their monstrous dimensions—to be seated in a frail boat, in the middle of the ocean, exposed to their fury—when one experiences all—my word for it—there is no sport connected with any part of it!”⁴⁴

Chasing whales could likewise be an incredibly frustrating experience, particularly if the whales were elusive or made off with expensive equipment. Such encounters would no doubt have heightened the whalers’ desire to do damage to their prey. Enoch Cloud’s ship ran into a spate of such bad luck in 1852. Although they pursued whales nearly seventy successive days, more than half of those days were spent chasing whales for hours on end, with nothing to show for the effort. As Cloud recorded in his journal,

Pulling for 8, 10, 12 & sometimes 60 miles under a tropical sun, don’t feel very pleasant! It is quite an easy matter to think of, but when the bleeding blistered hands & body, the over exerted muscles, the gnawing of hunger, the scorching of thirst & the blighting effect of the sun on the human frame, is felt it then begins to assume a serious form!⁴⁵

Even if a harpooner managed to fasten to a whale, the animal often escaped by diving or, if dying, by sinking; many vessels lost thousands of dollars of equipment when this happened, which then affected the profit margins of the entire voyage.⁴⁶ That whalers lashed out at the source of their danger or aggravation is an understandable response to such encounters.

Less obvious motivations likely arose from the class tensions that pervaded most whaling ships in this period. Whalers, like most marine vessels, were organized according to a strict hierarchy based on status and skill that, as noted, directly correlated to wage rates. The captain and the ship officers tended to be experienced men who earned the largest returns on the ship’s profits. Because they also generally had more privileged backgrounds, the officers often believed themselves to be of a higher social status than the rest of the crew. This social distance appears to have increased as the industry expanded. If the captain or an officer were also prone to corporal punishment and cruel behavior, as many were, these class and status

tensions were often exacerbated.⁴⁷ For their part, the crew sometimes deliberately defined themselves in opposition to the ship's officers, using these divisions to strengthen the bonds among the men of the forecabin.⁴⁸ Successfully harpooning the voyagers' primary prey could be a way for "lowly" forecabin workers to assert power and highlight the value of their contributions to the ship.

Such class concerns likely often intersected with expressions of masculinity that could potentially unify the crew as well. Historians have found that whalers' rituals and social interactions might build gender solidarity in the forecabin. The historian Margaret Creighton argues that many men—especially younger men from New England—embarked on whaling voyages as a rite of passage toward independent manhood. According to Creighton, this expectation then fueled these whalers' actions toward one another, their attitudes toward women and sex, and their desire to create a collective masculine identity while on board ship.⁴⁹

What whaling historians have been slow to explore, however, is how understandings of human-animal relations—and thus understandings of racial hierarchies and definitions of humanity—also factored into these complex and shifting social dynamics. As the American whaling fleet more regularly entered the Pacific, issues of racial difference in particular became more pronounced. Finding adequate hands for the entire fleet became more difficult over time, so whaling captains started leaving New England ports with mere skeleton crews, seeking to hire enough laborers en route to ever more distant whaling grounds.⁵⁰ The result was that American whaling crews grew strikingly diverse. For instance, more than three thousand African Americans worked New Bedford whaling ships between 1803 and 1860; one in six whaleships had at least one Native American on board and some had as many as six or seven.⁵¹ After leaving New England, these ships made for the Azores, or "Western Islands," whose population was Portuguese, Catholic, and mixed race. Next was the Cape Verdean archipelago, which had a darker skinned population that European Americans often referred to as "Portuguese Blacks." Once in the Pacific, whaling captains next took on additional islander crew members, particularly Hawaiians and Māori from New Zealand.⁵²

Although some historians have argued that class and gender bonding experiences sometimes transcended racial difference, given that the dominant racial discourse of the nineteenth-century United States was so predicated on European American men's sense of cultural and

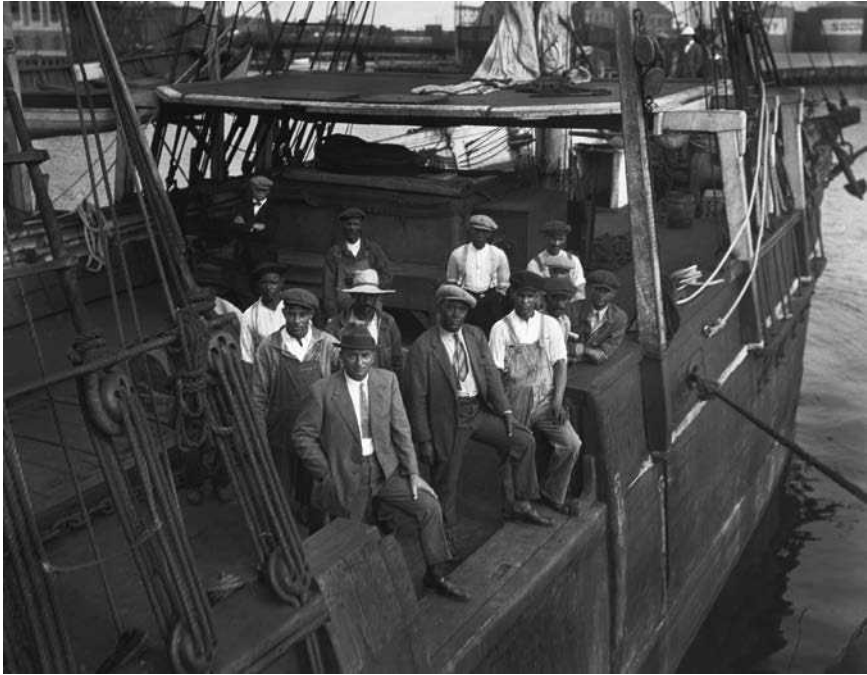


Figure 2.2. *Wanderer* deck view on sailing day with Captain Antone T. Edwards and some of his crew. Although this photograph dates from the early twentieth century, it illustrates the diversity that also characterized nineteenth-century whaling crews. Photograph by Albert Cook Church (1922). Item no. 2000.100.86. 3. Courtesy of New Bedford Whaling Museum, New Bedford, MA.

biological superiority, tensions between racial groups were bound to erupt, especially among the more diverse whaling crews of the Pacific World. Indeed, given white racism, stereotypes about their abilities, and that they were often hired to do “women’s work,” African American men fared the worst in the American whaling fleet.⁵³ They had fewer opportunities overall and were often poorly treated. An extreme case of this can be seen aboard the whaling ship *Sharon*. Captain Norris beat an African American man named Babcock throughout the voyage and experienced no interference from the crew. The captain ultimately murdered the man, noting in his logbook only that Babcock had died suddenly. Even after Babcock’s death, the first mate, who had a legal obligation to take the ship to the nearest American consul and turn the captain in, did nothing.⁵⁴ Racial animosities were so pronounced on some vessels that living spaces were segregated by race.⁵⁵

Still, whaling did generally offer thousands of men of color a way to achieve some sense of freedom, self-respect, and a chance to advance in their careers. In the words of one African American boardinghouse master, while aboard American whaling vessels, "A coloured man is only known and looked upon as a man, and is promoted in rank according to his ability and skill to perform the same duties as the white man."⁵⁶ Native American men ironically benefited from stereotypes about their skills as hunters to advance to officer positions after the 1830s. According to historian Nancy Shoemaker, rank trumped race. "That a man of color as an officer had special privileges could have fueled white foremast hands' resentment," she argues, "but ship rules protected and legitimated those privileges."⁵⁷

Did this jumbled and unfamiliar world of race relations affect whalers' relationships with one another or the animals of the Pacific World? It is difficult to say with certainty, but the line between animal and human was definitely blurry, especially for European Americans thrown into new situations and places inhabited by "exotic," dark-skinned people who were rumored to eat human flesh. Although debates about race, racial origins, and the link between the worlds of human and animal had a long history in Europe and the United States, European American ideas about the proximity of nonwhites to the animal kingdom intensified over the course of the 1800s in response to heightened tensions about slavery. Americans' uncertainty about how to classify whales (fish or mammal?) merely added to the confusion about the accuracy of existing taxonomies of the natural world.⁵⁸

That many European American whalers referred to the nonwhite peoples they encountered as not only lesser human beings, but as actual animals, fuels these speculations. While in Peru, whaler William Allen commented on the women he encountered in Callao. "In our country they call animals that wear bonnets and long togs, women, yes, I saw women but such women!! They were as *black* as my hat or blacker, and about as big round as they were long."⁵⁹ Another whaleman likewise expressed similar repugnance for the women of Cape Verde:

Love could never nestle on the thick Black Lips of a Portugee niggar . . . Saving their faces (the best resemblance to which is their imitative companions of the woods, the monkeys) the young ladies . . . might rival the finest figures in our own Country. In purchasing one of these Animals, you don't buy a Pig in a Poke, you see your bargain.⁶⁰

The remarks of mariner William Reynolds illustrate how tightly some seafarers embraced this racist rhetoric. With regard to some Pacific islanders with whom the expedition was having trouble, Reynolds fumed, “So that I regard the bloody fiends as I do the sharks, and would feel the same kind of inward joy in killing them in battle, as I exult in when one of those monsters of the sea is torn from his hold on life.”⁶¹ Likening human beings to lowly beasts no doubt gave European Americans license to treat people of color both poorly and violently—if they could. But what if such behavior was not only unsanctioned, but punishable?⁶²

The Pacific whaling grounds thus presented a racially mixed-up world where whites continually articulated their deeply held beliefs about European American superiority and the clash between “savagery” and “civilization” despite the racially diverse reality of the whaling fleet and the actual power structures they lived under every day.⁶³ Unable to freely lash out at the men of color aboard their ships and seeing the special privileges afforded all officers regardless of skin color may have pushed European American whalers to channel their frustrations at the animals they *did* have license to harm.



Figure 2.3. Bark *Wanderer*, coiling a whaleline. Cape Verdean whaleman. Photograph by William H. Tripp. Item no. T-335. Courtesy of New Bedford Whaling Museum, New Bedford, MA.

But what about whalers of color? Because they left behind so few written sources, their motivations have to be carefully teased out of the records that do exist. The evidence suggests that men of color may have felt compelled to join the hunt because of their frustrations with racist treatment or abuse. Although whalers of all ethnicities also saw the killing of whales as a way to distinguish themselves as men and demonstrate their worth to fellow crew members, men of color may have more acutely felt a need to prove themselves, to appear brave and skilled and so worthy of their positions. Surrounded by potentially hostile white crewmates, some men of color may have more zealously pursued the animals they encountered as a result.⁶⁴

Unlike potentially spontaneous and more individualistic approaches to animal slaughter involving birds, turtles, and sharks, the whale hunt was inherently a collective enterprise. No man would pursue a whale on his own—that would be sheer folly. The whaleboat required all hands to act in concert as they determinedly rowed toward their quarry on the open water. That their prey was revered as intelligent and powerful heightened the challenge. During the hunt, differences of race and class fell away out of necessity, and the goal at hand pitted collective man against beast.⁶⁵ As Enoch Cloud observed following a particularly arduous, but ultimately successful whale chase in the winter of 1851,

It was the most terrible sight I ever witnessed. Three hearty cheers burst from the four boats as a stream of blood shot from her spout-holes, full 30 feet into the air! I never knew before what it is to sail through a sea of blood! My feelings were now most peculiar! It is painful to witness the death of the smallest of God's created beings, much more, one in which life is so vigorously maintained as the Whale! And when I saw this, the largest & most terrible of all created animals bleeding, quivering, dying a victim to the cunning of man, my feelings were indeed peculiar!⁶⁶

Such cohesiveness in the heat of battle does not mean, however, that issues of power and perceived social or biological difference were not continually at work in the background, pushing and pulling at the ways these diverse peoples interacted and negotiated their roles onboard ship. Human differences had profound meaning in this watery world; how people understood those differences appears to have been affected by both their multifaceted identities and their grasp of the shifting location of the line between human and animal.

Conclusion

Nineteenth-century whalers' attitudes and actions toward whales were based on complicated and evolving understandings of human-nonhuman relations and perceived ethnoracial hierarchies. Emerging debates about slavery, taxonomies of the natural world, and the proper treatment of animals also appear to have combined and percolated into the whaling world of the 1800s, particularly for whalers of European American descent. A closer examination of the relationships between whalers and animals, as well as of the interethnic tensions that infused the Pacific whaling fleet, thus adds nuance to our understanding of the daily experiences of the thousands of diverse workers whose muscles powered this vital industry. Although the literature advocating the humane treatment of animals that increasingly circulated in the United States centered primarily on domesticated animals such as cats, dogs, and horses, some of the sentiments regarding animal welfare appear to have influenced how whalers perceived the animals they hunted. Whales' intelligence, curiosity, sociability, and especially the maternal instincts and actions of female whales, all struck a chord with many of the men engaged in this industry. Yet, at the end of the day, these sentiments did not outstrip the need to harvest these creatures for financial gain; the "gospel of kindness" may have given European American men pause, but it ultimately failed to interfere with the hunt.

Notes

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1. Shoemaker, *Native American Whalers*, 12.
2. Igler, *Great Ocean*, 99–128.
3. Davis, *Gospel of Kindness*, 4–5, 35.
4. Bullen, *Cruise of the Cacholot*, 162–164, 177. Whether Bullen directly experienced the events recounted in this book is not known, but he did spend several years working at sea, so it is likely that his descriptions are based on scenes he witnessed firsthand or learned about in his travels. For these

- reasons, I use this source sparingly and tried to confirm similar examples in other sources. See also Olmsted, *Incidents of a Whaling Voyage*, 48, 52–53; Whitecar, *Four Years*, 42–44; Druett, *Wake of Madness*, 54; Creighton, *Rites & Passages*, 72–73, 134–136.
5. Olmsted, *Incidents of a Whaling Voyage*, 90–92.
 6. Bullen, *Cruise of the Cacholot*, 13–14.
 7. Olmsted, *Incidents of a Whaling Voyage*, 93–94, 159; Newton, *Savage History*, 190.
 8. Olmsted, *Incidents of a Whaling Voyage*, 119, 132, 165, 328–329, 331. See also Cloud, *Enoch's Voyage*, 41, 250; Aldrich, *Arctic Alaska*, 27; Garner, *Captain's Best Mate*, 92 (seals), 93 (walrus); Scammon, *Journal*, 24, 71; and Nicholls, *Oil & Ice*, 69–70, 74–78.
 9. Cloud, *Enoch's Voyage*, 24 (bad meat), 97 (bad cod fish); Creighton, *Rites & Passages*, 127–128; Hohman, *American Whaleman*, 130–133; and Reynolds, *Voyage of the New Hazard*, 4.
 10. Cheever, *Whale and His Captors*, 97 (porpoise), 132 (sun fish). Whalers also sometimes ate pilot whales, see Whitecar, *Four Years*, 36–37. Porpoise and turtle were also favored by Mary Lawrence, the wife of a whaling ship captain who cruised at mid-century. See Garner, *Captain's Best Mate*, 7, 12, 13, 17, 18, 20, 45, 49, 75; Bullen, *Cruise of the Cacholot*, 15.
 11. Olmsted, *Incidents of a Whaling Voyage*, 91–94.
 12. Olmsted, *Incidents of a Whaling Voyage*, 113.
 13. “Gambol” means to run or jump in a lively way and was commonly used by whalers. Bullen, *Cruise of the Cacholot*, 177.
 14. Olmsted, *Incidents of a Whaling Voyage*, 63, 120, 183–184. See also Cloud, *Enoch's Voyage*, 19; Cheever, *Whale and His Captors*, 59; and Scammon, *Journal*, 32.
 15. Bullen, *Cruise of the Cacholot*, 85, 180–181, 187.
 16. Coleman, *Vicious*, 1–3, 55–65.
 17. W. Reynolds, *Private Journal*, 95. Although Reynolds was not on a whaleship, this behavior appears to have been common across the merchant marine and the whaling fleet.
 18. Mullet, *Whaling Voyage*, 12–13.
 19. Cheever, *Whale and His Captors*, 160.
 20. Davis, *Gospel of Kindness*, 4–5, 35.
 21. Bullen, *Cruise of the Cacholot*, 184; and Olmsted, *Incidents of a Whaling Voyage*, 56.
 22. Cloud, *Enoch's Voyage*, 151; see also Cheever, *Whale and His Captors*, 155; and Garner, *Captain's Best Mate*, 37, 38.
 23. Bullen, *Cruise of the Cacholot*, 205.
 24. Quoted in Cheever, *Whale and His Captors*, 126.
 25. Cheever, *Whale and His Captors*, 135.
 26. Newton, *Savage History*, 192; and Cheever, *Whale and His Captors*, 205.

27. Olmsted, *Incidents of a Whaling Voyage*, 155.
28. Olmsted, *Incidents of a Whaling Voyage*, 158.
29. Aldrich, *Arctic Alaska and Siberia*, 33–35.
30. Garner, *Captain's Best Mate*, 38.
31. Whitecar, *Four Years*, 36.
32. Dana, *Two Years Before the Mast*, 69.
33. Grier, “The Eden of Home,” 348–349.
34. Scammon, *Journal Aboard*, 27; and Olmsted, *Incidents of a Whaling Voyage*, 61.
35. Brewster, *Sister Sailor*, 181, quoted in Iglar, *Great Ocean*, 122 (emphasis added).
36. Cheever, *Whale and His Captors*, 110; see also Cloud, *Enoch's Voyage*, 55, 111–112, 257, 259.
37. Cloud, *Enoch's Voyage*, 274; Scammon, *Journal Aboard*, 41; and Iglar, *Great Ocean*, 102–103, 122.
38. Grier, “Eden of Home,” 340–341. For a rare example of such a story focused on whales, see “Barbarity of Whale Fishing,” in Thompson, *Youth's Companion*, 1119–1121.
39. Grier, “Eden of Home,” 340–341.
40. Dolin, *Leviathan*, 270–271. These lay amounts did not factor in the whalers' expenses while out at sea. It was not uncommon for crewmen to average as little as twenty cents per day in their final payout, and many of them returned in debt to the ship.
41. Garner, *Captain's Best Mate*, 103, 115, 121; Cloud, *Enoch's Voyage*, 146, 149, 151, 265, 293; Bullen, *Cruise of the Cacholot*, 276; and Iglar, *Great Ocean*, 122–123.
42. Alan Taylor has made similar arguments to explain the destructiveness of early American colonists. See “Wasty Ways’: Stories of American Settlement.”
43. For instance, see Cheever, *Whale and His Captors*, 100, 103–104, 148, 171, 186–188, 211–229; Cloud, *Enoch's Voyage*, 79, 80–81, 93, 127–129, 132–133, 145–146, 149, 251–252, 264; Olmsted, *Incidents of a Whaling Voyage*, 113–115; Garner, *Captain's Best Mate*, 40, 62, 150; Creighton, *Rites & Passages*, 63–68; and Iglar, *Great Ocean*, 119–122.
44. Cloud, *Enoch's Voyage*, 263–264.
45. Cloud, *Enoch's Voyage*, 63–169, 90–91; see also Olmsted, *Incidents of a Whaling Voyage*, 79–82, 102–104, 112–113.
46. Cheever, *Whale and His Captors*, 133; Scammon, *Journal Aboard*, 30–33; and Whitecar, *Four Years*, 35–36.
47. Bolster, *Black Jacks*, 75, 79–82; Dolin, *Leviathan*, 255–260; and Hohman, *American Whaleman*, 59–60.
48. Creighton, *Rites & Passages*, 116–138.
49. Creighton, *Rites & Passages*, 116–138.
50. Whitecar, *Four Years*, 22, 40; and Dolin, *Leviathan*, 221.

51. Shoemaker, *Native American Whalers*, 13–14. On racial diversity of whaling crews, see also Cloud, *Enoch's Voyage*, 38; Farr, "A Slow Boat to Nowhere"; Bolster, *Black Jacks*, 177, 220; Chappell, *Double Ghosts*; and Rosenthal, *Beyond Hawai'i*. The number of Native American and African American mariners declined as the nineteenth century progressed.
52. Shoemaker, *Native American Whalers*, 40–57, 48 (Portuguese Blacks), 147 (diversity of crews); Druett, *Wake of Madness*, 100–110; Dolin, *Leviathan*, 223–226; and Hohman, *American Whaler*, 50–57. Some whalers claimed that owners and captains purposely chose mixed race crews so as to limit the chances of rebellion. See Newton, *Savage History*, 186 and Ellsworth, *Journals of Addison Pratt*, 15–16.
53. Bolster, *Black Jacks*, 5; Chappell, *Double Ghosts*, 43–77; Creighton, *Rites & Passages*, 159; and S. Reynolds, *Voyage of the New Hazard*, 11, 14n31, 15, 112.
54. Druett, *Wake of Madness*, 113–132; and Chappell, *Double Ghosts*, 60, 68–69.
55. Bolster, *Black Jacks*, 177; Creighton, *Rites & Passages*, 185–187.
56. Quoted in Bolster, *Black Jacks*, 177, 4; and Creighton, *Rites & Passages*, 187.
57. Shoemaker, *Native American Whalers*, 66.
58. On the debates surrounding taxonomies and whale versus fish, see, for instance, Burnett, *Trying Leviathan*. For a brief overview of European American racist attitudes, see Belich, "Race"; Omi and Winant, "Racial Formations"; Gossett, *Race*; and Kendi, *Stamped*.
59. Diary of William Allen, *Samuel Robertson*, Log 1040, Nov. 9, 1843, Whaling Museum of the Old Dartmouth Historical Society, New Bedford, MA, quoted in Creighton, *Rites & Passages*, 158.
60. Diary of George Blanchard, *Pantheon*, December 26, 1842, Private Collection, Tom Bullock Jr. Courtesy of Tom Bullock Jr., Jane Blanchard Bullock, and George Blanchard, quoted in Creighton, *Rites & Passages*, 158.
61. W. Reynolds, *Private Journal*, 241. For additional examples of likening islanders to specific animals, see, for instance, Chappell, *Double Ghosts*, 63. On whites looking down on people of color in general, see, for instance, Cloud, *Enoch's Voyage*, 176, 214–215.
62. For more on the intersections of race and wildlife, see Powell, *Vanishing America*, 1–45. See also Nott and Glidden, *Types of Mankind*.
63. Shoemaker, *Native American Whalers*, 78–79.
64. Bolster, *Black Jacks*, 166–170; Creighton, *Rites & Passages*, 73–74.
65. Bolster, *Black Jacks*, 82–93.
66. Cloud, *Enoch's Voyage*, 52–53; see also Dolin, *Leviathan*, 264.

Whales' Teeth: A Niche Commodity of the Nineteenth-Century Pacific Sperm Whaling Industry

Nancy Shoemaker

NORTH ATLANTIC RIGHT WHALES were the primary target of the American whaling industry until around 1710 to 1720, when New Englanders began hunting sperm whales as well, transmuting certain parts of the whale into consumer commodities: oil tried out from body blubber, spermaceti wax found in sperm whales' heads, and ambergris (partially digested fecal matter that occasionally clogged up a sperm whale's innards or, if expurgated, could be discovered floating at sea or washed up on a beach).¹ Sperm oil and spermaceti, the former used in lamps and the latter in candles, fueled the eighteenth-century lighting revolution. By the mid-eighteenth century, a large whale fishery developed around the production of sperm oil and spermaceti, along with an industrial infrastructure of oil refineries, candleworks, and merchant middlemen.² Ambergris, due to its earthy odor resembling musk and civet and ability to fix scents in perfume, also became a staple product of the whaling industry. Its extraordinary rarity escalated its cost.³ Nineteenth-century New Bedford whaleships lucky enough to come across ambergris could earn \$10,000 to \$20,000 for a one-hundred-pound lump.⁴

Teeth became a marketable by-product of sperm whales, too, but they were never a driving force behind the growth of the sperm whaling business. Their history followed a different trajectory from oil, spermaceti, and ambergris. Teeth mainly circulated as objects of exchange in niche markets that valued them as blank templates

for cultural inscription. With an eye toward unpacking the complex, quirky workings of global capitalism, this chapter surveys the varied niche markets that developed in sperm whale teeth. On the one hand, global capitalism adopted systems for standardizing some things into interchangeable commodities distinguished by weights and measures and characterized by expendability (oil, spermaceti wax, and ambergris). On the other, niche markets assigned value based on more intangible, durable, and culturally informed attributes related to beauty, history, and meaning. Oil, spermaceti wax, and ambergris realized their value when consumed. Whales' teeth realized theirs when displayed and preserved.

Scholars, mostly anthropologists, have ruminated at length on the value of sperm whale teeth in nineteenth-century Oceania as part of a larger query into the culture, economy, and politics of exchange. Marshall Sahlins succinctly captured one way of thinking popular among ethnohistorians. "The first commercial impulse of the local people is not to become just like us, but more like themselves," Sahlins asserted in a 1992 article. Hence European trade did not diminish Indigenous desire for "commodities of social and ritual value" but instead magnified the significance of such "prestige goods." In Fiji, for example, greater access to whales' teeth through foreign commercial shipping networks stimulated demand for them and resulted in ceremonial exchanges. Without confronting Sahlins outright, Nicholas Thomas critiqued the polarization that Sahlins avowed—the juxtaposition between Us and Them, Europeans and Natives, modern and premodern, commodities and gifts, economics and culture—as a long-standing yet errant anthropological tradition. Thomas argued that in every society the meanings of things depend on context; that whales' teeth in Fiji's history were "entangled objects" with complex, variable meanings as commodities and as gifts; and that European collection of Indigenous ritual objects could similarly be read as claims to power, authority, and status.⁵

As entangled objects within Oceania and outside it, whales' teeth cannot be reduced to a simple dichotomy that pits a passionless, cosmopolitan capitalism against an Indigenous, ritualized, fetishistic, cultural particularity. The history of sperm whale teeth in the global marketplace had a more convoluted history. Both natives of Oceania and industrial whalers transformed them into things resonating with culturally significant meanings, things that made intangible emotions and beliefs tangible. Capitalist markets then developed to find

the advantage and put a price tag on these special objects that had sperm whale teeth as the base material.

Sperm whale teeth never became a commodity that industrial whaling marketed to European and American consumers. In his history of Nantucket, the Massachusetts island that dominated world whaling from the mid-eighteenth to the early nineteenth century, whaling merchant Obed Macy described Nantucketers' response to a sperm whale that landed on the beach in the early days of English settlement. It caused "considerable excitement" and heated arguments over who should possess "the prize." The townsmen boiled the blubber into oil at the tryworks set up for trying out right whales. They also collected the spermaceti for its reputed medicinal qualities, which suggests that they did not yet know how wonderfully this mysterious substance worked in candles. The teeth "were considered very valuable," Macy wrote without explanation. If so, why did the Nantucket whalers who deliberately hunted sperm whales later in the century not systematically collect the teeth as they did sperm oil, spermaceti, and ambergris?⁶

Mentions of sperm whale teeth in eighteenth-century newspapers confirm that no one involved in the American whaling industry thought that whales' teeth had value beyond display in a curiosity cabinet.⁷ A Boston newspaper, recounting a 1720 excursion from Nantucket that returned home with a sperm whale from sixty leagues offshore, reveals both the novelty of sperm whale hunting at the time and the expectation that teeth in the mouths of sperm whales might be as profitable as "whalebone" (baleen) in the mouths of right whales. The captured sperm whale "will make about a Dozen Barrels of Oyl, no Whalebone, and the Teeth seem to be like Ivory," the article reported, as though the ivory-like teeth might compensate for whalebone's absence.⁸ No market in sperm whale ivory developed, however, as the Atlantic sperm whale industry took off in the eighteenth century. Retailers' advertisements listed sperm oil, whale oil, whalebone, and sperm candles alongside the "teeth" of elephants and sea cows but offered no whales' teeth for sale.⁹ Ivory turners, the artisans who transformed these raw animal parts into something else, worked their craft in whalebone and elephant ivory but apparently had no use for sperm whale ivory.¹⁰ It could be that artisans thought these teeth inferior. In his microscopic comparison of animal ivories, T. K. Penniman noted that sperm whale teeth did not produce the same sheen as elephant

ivory and that the outer layer of cement characteristic of whales' teeth made carving them more difficult.¹¹

This was thus the state of the market for sperm whale products in the United States and Europe when the rush on Pacific sperm whales began in the 1790s. A Massachusetts family repatriated to London, the Enderbys, initiated the earliest whaling ventures into Pacific waters, with the 1789–1790 voyage of the *Emelia*. Half a dozen American vessels from Nantucket and New Bedford embarked for the Pacific the following year. The *Emelia*'s success prompted the Enderbys to send more vessels and in 1793 commissioned James Colnett on the *Rattler* to discover where in the Pacific Ocean and at what time of year sperm whales congregated.¹² A few years after the *Rattler*'s departure for the Pacific, Colnett published a narrative of the voyage and what may be the earliest, most accurate diagram of a sperm whale. He divided the whale into sections. The case held the spermaceti, the most valuable part. The diagonal lines across the whale's body demonstrated how whalers cut the blubber into large "blanket pieces" to lift onto the deck of the vessel preparatory to boiling. Ambergris might be "discover'd by probing the intestines with a long Pole." The teeth clearly visible in the whale's lower jaw, however, are described in the text only as a physiological feature, not as a merchandisable product akin to blubber, spermaceti, and ambergris.¹³

Although fascinated by sperm whale teeth, the earliest generations of New Englanders involved in sperm whaling had no use for them. They may have collected a few as novelties, but no subsidiary industry emerged to support their exploitation, processing, and sale, and no buyers created demand for them in American and European markets.

As foreigners entered the Pacific in greater numbers in the early nineteenth century to explore, trade, and extract resources, they noticed the prominence of whales' teeth in the material culture of many Pacific peoples. Especially in Fiji but also in Hawai'i, the Marquesas, and elsewhere, the warm, gold-white glow of polished animal ivory combined with the teeth's rarity made them high-status objects exchanged and displayed as symbols of divinity, truth, integrity, trust, wealth, and power.¹⁴ American commercial interests in the Pacific adapted to take advantage of this niche market. Just as Chinese dietary demand for birds' nests and *bêche-de-mer* (sea slugs) spawned American extraction of these items and the growth of a carrying trade



Figure 3.1. A. Arrowsmith published this version of Colnett's diagram in 1798. Courtesy of John Carter Brown Library. Accessed September 6, 2021. <https://jcb.lunaimaging.com/luna/servlet/detail/JCB~1~1~5601~8220002:Physeter,-or-Spermaceti-Whale—Draw#>.

between Pacific archipelagos and the China trade ports of Canton and Manila, sperm whale teeth now circulated in a market economy but with Pacific Islanders envisioned as the ultimate consumers.¹⁵ Early global capitalism, therefore, did not cause consumption patterns across regions to standardize. Instead, it proliferated a variety of marketable commodities to meet what merchants in global trade saw as the peculiar tastes of exotic peoples.

Indeed, from the perspective of Oceania, the teeth were the best part of a whale. Oil, the whale part most sought after in the United States and Europe, had no value. Pacific Islanders' easy access to

coconut oil made oils rendered from animal fat less appealing since tropical heat would quickly turn such oils rancid. William Mariner, an Englishman stranded in Tonga from 1806 to 1810, recounted how “the unusual sight” of a rotting sperm whale that had washed up at Vava’u attracted a great deal of attention, “their object being the teeth,” which Tongans cut into pieces one inch to four inches long, yet cut in such a way as to retain the shape of teeth. They strung these on necklaces worn by Tonga’s elites. Tongans also used small pieces of whale ivory as inlay in clubs and wooden head rests. The meat had some use but only for “the lower orders,” who “managed to make a meal of it.”¹⁶ The occasional beached whale provided Pacific peoples with their only access to whales’ teeth. They did not hunt whales themselves, not until large numbers of Pacific Islanders joined foreign whalships as crew members.¹⁷

Although many Pacific peoples shared in the high estimation of sperm whale teeth, how they incorporated these items in their material culture differed from archipelago to archipelago. Hawaiians created a variety of personal ornaments from them, the most distinctive and prized of which was the whale’s tooth featured in *lei niho palaoa* (*lei* meaning necklace, *niho* meaning tooth, and *palaoa* meaning sperm whale). Carved into a shape that looks like a hybrid fishhook and tongue, the sperm whale tooth was worn around the neck on a cord made from braided strands of human hair. Similar objects have turned up at archaeological sites but are usually derived from more abundant shell, coral, or wood. No doubt occasional whale strandings brought some ivory to the islands, but the majority of the *lei niho palaoa* in museums today undoubtedly owe their existence to foreign shipping.¹⁸

Because Hawaiians carved most of the tooth away, they appear to have favored whale teeth more for the luxuriant look and feel of the ivory material than for its association with whales. Moreover, many *lei niho palaoa*, despite being classified as such, were not made from sperm whale ivory. The hundred *lei niho palaoa* in the Bishop Museum’s online catalog include at least twelve made of walrus tusks and one made of elephant ivory.¹⁹ An early European description attesting to the desirability of ivory appears in British explorer George Vancouver’s account. In complaining about the theft of several knives while at the Hawaiian Islands in 1794, he said they were taken not “for their value as iron instruments, but for the sake of their ivory handles. These were intended to have been converted into certain neck ornaments that are considered as sacred and invaluable.”²⁰

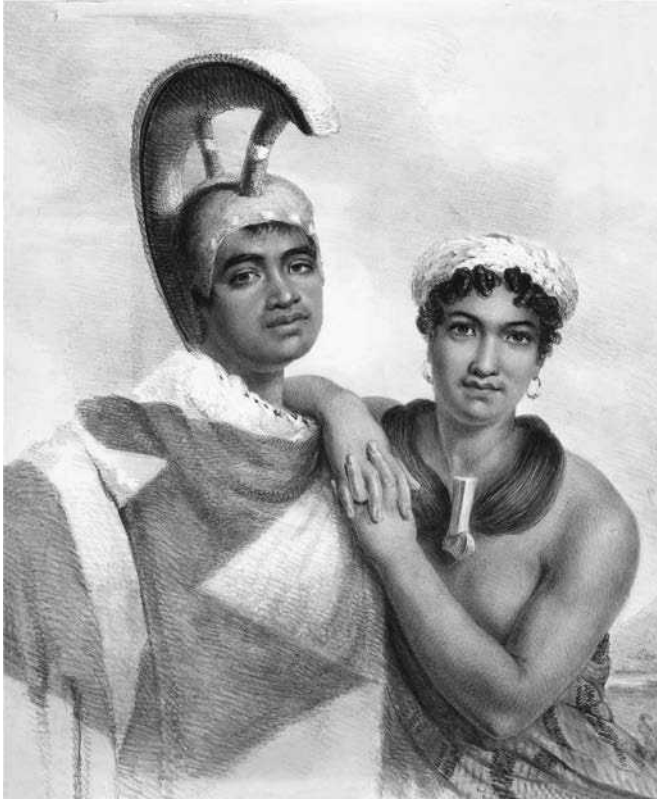


Figure 3.2. Lithograph of Boki and Liliha, based on artist John Hayter's painting of them in 1824 while in London with Liholiho (Kamehameha II), in the elite attire of the *ali'i* class. Liliha wears a *lei niho palaoa* around her neck. Source: Call number PP-96-2-002. Hawaii State Archives Digital Collections.

Like other foreigners in Hawai'i, Vancouver recognized the high value Hawaiians attributed to *lei niho palaoa* but did not delve deeply into the reason for their significance. The most obvious trait of *lei niho palaoa* was as treasured emblems of ruling authority for Hawaiian elites, the *ali'i*. This is the context in which whales' teeth usually appear in nineteenth-century documents of Hawaiian history. For instance, in the saga of Umi-a-Liloa and his rise to power on the Big Island of Hawai'i, published from materials collected by Abraham Fornander in the mid to late nineteenth century, the whale's tooth necklace that Umi wears throughout his travels, wars, and diplomatic

negotiations signifies the righteous, divine destiny guiding him in his eventual victory and rule over Hilo and Hamakua.²¹

With the arrival of China traders in the 1790s, sandalwood traders in the 1810s and 1820s, and whaleships beginning in 1819, teeth became an imported trade item along with cloth and muskets. Harvesting the teeth at sea, whalers used them as currency to pay for provisions.²² Teeth flooded the islands without saturating demand. The nineteenth-century Hawaiian historian David Malo remarked indirectly on European shipping as the source of an influx when he observed that *niho palaoa* “were not common in ancient times, and it is only since the reign of Kamehameha I [d. 1819] that they have become somewhat more numerous.”²³ By 1828, according to missionary Charles Stewart, these emblems of high status “formerly much worn by the high chiefs” were “now confined almost entirely to those of inferior standing.”²⁴ The new surfeit of teeth did not eliminate demand for them but may have caused their deflation as marks of distinction, the largest and most luminous being reserved for the *ali'i*. Regard for whales’ teeth did not dissipate over time. A *lei niho palaoa* featured as one of the royal symbols David Kalakaua wore at his 1883 coronation as king and, like *hula*, was a custom he revived during his reign.²⁵

At the Marquesas, sperm whale teeth were even more conspicuous as objects of veneration. US naval officer David Porter observed that Marquesans preferred sperm whale ivory over other kinds of animal ivory and over all other trade goods. The lower classes would accept any ivory, but high-ranking individuals expected the real thing. When headman Keatonui toured the vessel, he was most excited at seeing the parcel of sperm whale teeth Porter showed him: “he would not be satisfied,” Porter claimed, “until I had permitted him to handle, to measure and count them over and over.” When later asked whether he wanted anything he had seen on the ship, Keatonui chose a small whale’s tooth that he had especially admired.²⁶

Marquesans refashioned the teeth into mainly two types of objects: ear ornaments called *hakakai* and strings of teeth worn around the neck. The large disk of the *hakakai* appeared at the front of the ear; a spur through the ear held the piece in place. Tiny, fully formed *tiki* on many *hakakai* were a common element. The necklaces were either a strand of multiple small whales’ teeth (or larger teeth cut into smaller, toothlike shapes similar to what Mariner described at Tonga) called *taki ei hei*, or a single whale’s tooth pendant, *taki ei*. Anthropologist

Ralph Linton, who conducted fieldwork in the Marquesas in 1920 and 1921, stated that only men wore *ei* (in contrast, women wore crowns of strung porpoise teeth). He further noted that *ei* had “religious significance” but did not elaborate on what meaning they held as sacred objects.²⁷ Given that whales’ teeth necklaces were worn by men going into battle, they presumably signified martial potency. In the Marquesas in 1840, British naval officer Edmund Belcher ridiculed the assemblage worn by men heading off to a fight as a beaded headdress with a plume of feathers, a swath of tapa cloth around the waist, a musket in the right hand, a large woven fan in the other, and “a string of heavy whale teeth, with the points projecting forward.” He wondered, “How they are to fight thus rigged is incomprehensible.”²⁸ For Belcher, the necklace of whales’ teeth seemed the epitome of military inefficiency, but for the Marquesan men who wore them as armament, the teeth likely afforded an invisible power that strengthened them for war.

Comparable to the Hawaiian case is how sperm whale teeth in the Marquesas sustained significance despite their greater availability once sandalwood traders and whalers began importing them as trade items. Archaeologist Robert Suggs’ mid-1950s investigations of pre-European contact sites on Nuku Hiva turned up nearly two hundred whales’ teeth: mainly from small pilot whales and occasional sperm whales (cut into smaller tooth forms). Suggs also found imitation whales’ teeth whittled out of shells, which led him to conclude that, at some point in Marquesan history, the demand for teeth outstripped the supply. He speculated that foreign trade would have “cheapered” the teeth in Marquesans’ estimation, but given Belcher’s 1840 observations on Marquesan dress, rampant deflation in their value appears not to have happened or, if so, not for several decades.²⁹

In Fiji, a sperm whale tooth, or *tabua* (pronounced tambua), was and is an object of even greater adoration, and the tooth shape fundamental to its desirability. Although resembling necklaces in how the tooth was pierced and strung on a coconut-fiber cord, *tabua* were not worn on the body but instead stored in a basket or box until some life-course transition or political situation required a presentation gift. With a whale’s tooth in hand, Fijians could solicit allies to join in a war or assassinate a rival, beg forgiveness of a superior, or acquire a wife. As anthropologist Andrew Arno described their function, they were “cultural currency” that gained their affective meaning in the act of being exchanged.³⁰ Nineteenth-century visitors to Fiji recognized the emotive and social significance of a whale’s tooth. A shipwrecked

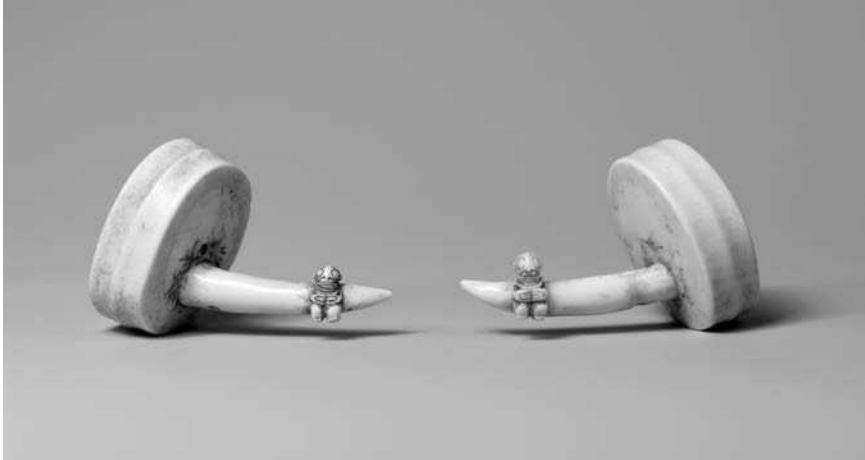


Figure 3.3. *Hakakai* (ear ornaments) made of sperm whale ivory. Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1979.206.1639a, b. Source: Art Resource, New York. © Metropolitan Museum of Art.

American sailor observed that “among the Polynesian savages it is as important a treaty article as wampum among our Indians,” and a British naturalist called them “crown jewels” and likened them “to what diamonds are with us.”³¹

Grasping the value of sperm whale teeth in Oceania, British and American sandalwood traders immediately exploited Indigenous demand. William Lockerby, a sandalwood trader in Fiji in 1808, explained their bargaining power to prospective investors in several pages of “Directions for the Fegee or Sandalwood Islands”: Fijians who had whales’ teeth laid “them up as graet riches as porshens for their Daughters & Making peace with their offened Supiriors.” Elephant or other ivory, if cut into the shape of a tooth, was to the Fijian equally desirable, Lockerby added, and for one tooth a trader could expect two tons of sandalwood cut and delivered. More than any other trade good, whales’ teeth were a necessity in Fiji.³² When the sandalwood rush migrated to the Marquesas a few years later, sandalwood traders had fully adapted shipboard protocols to meet Indigenous demand. On its passage from Valparaiso, Chile to the Marquesas in 1816, the crew of the Salem ship *Indus* busied themselves “forming whale’s teeth from ivory & preparing other articals of the ship’s trade.”³³ In the first two decades of the nineteenth century, as the Pacific sandalwood boom swept through Fiji, the



Figure 3.4. Nineteenth-century Fijian *tabua*. Catalog Number 1999.25. Courtesy of New Bedford Whaling Museum.

Marquesas, and Hawai‘i, sandalwood traders imported real and faux whales’ teeth into the islands in the thousands.

Once commercial shipping interests realized that Pacific Islanders wanted whales’ teeth, a new market for them emerged in eastern seaports in the United States. In the 1810s, New York newspaper advertisements offered cash for whales’ teeth and New York auction houses dealt in teeth along with sealskins, mother of pearl, and other newly arrived goods from the South Seas.³⁴ One seller pitched his offer explicitly to other merchants in promoting his two hundred pounds of whales’ teeth as “well worthy the attention of North West Traders,” in other words, ships involved in the China trade stopping for provisions at the Marquesas or Hawai‘i.³⁵

Despite this newfound awareness of a constituency eager to obtain whales’ teeth, the American market remained small and marginal because it was confined to Pacific traders. Teeth never became a big commodity like whale oil or whalebone. Traders and whaleship captains did not bother recording transactions involving whales’ teeth in the documents that measured voyage productivity, and whaleship owners reporting to customs officers on goods imported to the United

States at the end of a voyage continued to list only sperm oil, “head matter” (spermaceti), whale oil, and whalebone.³⁶ Thus, the Pacific whales’ teeth trade had little impact on the industry’s main objectives.

It was other Americans in the Pacific who needed teeth and depended on the whaling industry to supply them if they were to make any headway in bargaining with Pacific Islanders. Specific Pacific trades developed in which sperm whale teeth forefronted negotiations. Initially, it was the sandalwood trade that awakened the realization of a population eager to acquire sperm whale teeth, but the trade was short lived because the slow-growing tree was quickly depleted. The trade rose and fell in Fiji from 1804 to 1813, boomed and busted in the Marquesas in the 1810s, and lasted in the Hawaiian Islands into the 1820s.³⁷ Then, in the mid-1820s to mid-1850s, commercial interest in Fiji’s *bêche-de-mer* revived the trade as dozens of American ships, nearly all from Salem, Massachusetts, frequented the islands.³⁸

Salem’s *bêche-de-mer* traders knew full well the necessity of having a large cargo of whales’ teeth along with muskets, gunpowder, cloth, and axes.³⁹ The brig *Consul* left for Fiji in 1833 with one barrel of whales’ teeth weighing 317 pounds at a cost of \$0.18 per pound.⁴⁰ At two pounds per tooth, that adds up to almost 160 teeth at \$0.36 each. The number of teeth in a sperm whale’s lower jaw (the only place where it had teeth) varied by age, but forty-eight could be considered average, in which case this barrel held the teeth of more than three whales.⁴¹ The *Consul* sold one cargo of *bêche-de-mer* in Manila in 1835 and picked up additional trade goods for another trip to the islands, including two barrels of whales’ teeth costing \$0.50 per tooth and weighing 465 pounds and a basket of cheaper whales’ teeth, worth \$0.30 each and weighing seventy-four pounds altogether. In short, sperm whale teeth had proven so effective in the *Consul*’s trade negotiations that the brig picked up an even larger supply for the second leg of the voyage.⁴²

Other Salem vessels carried considerably more whales’ teeth from New England to Fiji. The *Gambia* in 1842 left Salem with 2,630 pounds of them.⁴³ Ship outfitters had to resort to different suppliers to acquire this many teeth given that they bought in small lots of fifty to a hundred pounds. Demand for teeth was high enough to inspire wholesalers who obtained them from whaleships returning to New Bedford and then sold them to Salem’s *bêche-de-mer* traders, many of whom waited until arrival in the Pacific to stock up.⁴⁴ Salem ship owner Stephen C. Phillips instructed Captain Joseph C. Winn Jr. to purchase

teeth from any whaleships the *Eliza* encountered on its passage to Fiji in 1833.⁴⁵ Traveling to Fiji in 1844, the brig *Gambia* stopped at Bay of Islands, New Zealand, for its whales' teeth.⁴⁶

For a brief period, then, sperm whale teeth became a commodity in US markets and subject to the same systems of quantification and measurement surrounding oil, whalebone, and ambergris. Merchants engaged in transactions involving "5000 gallons whale oil" and "50 boxes Spermaceti Candles" now advertised lots for sale of fifty whales' teeth, 100 pounds of whales' teeth, and three barrels of "large size whale teeth."⁴⁷ This vocabulary—dwelling on the number of teeth, their weight, and their size as an indicator of quality—signified their commodification.⁴⁸ In contrast to whales' teeth in Oceania, where aged teeth were appreciated for their rich color and polished feel, this brief surge of interest in US markets required that they be graded by quality and packaged by weight or container (in pounds or barrels), thereby translating their exchange value into a monetary equivalent.

At this point in the narrative of sperm whale teeth, it looks as though within the United States they became nothing more than commodities, interchangeable with each other and calculable by price. But the most famous manifestation of sperm whales' teeth was not the uses they were put to by Pacific Islanders but rather what nineteenth-century whalers did to them. As a template for scrimshaw, defined as the handiwork of industrial whaling laborers while aboard ship, whales' teeth enabled cultural expression similar to that of Pacific Islanders yet different in form and meaning. Now cherished relics preserved in museums and among collectors, scrimshawed teeth endure as cultural artifacts evoking a romanticized nostalgia for an antiquated industry crucial to European and American overseas expansion.

Specialists in the study of scrimshaw date its emergence as an art aboard whaleships to at least 1817, based on an etched tooth with a whaling scene and text that reports it as the London whaleship *Adam* at the Galapagos Islands. If this is indeed when whaling laborers began scrimshawing in their plentiful leisure time as they awaited sightings of whales, then it occurred about ten years after the industry developed a market in teeth targeting Pacific Islanders as consumers. Despite the coincidence in timing, no causality is apparent between the ornamental uses of teeth by both Pacific Islanders and Yankee whalers: neither one got the idea from the other. Scrimshaw expert Stuart Frank suggested that whalers only picked up scrimshawing

after the sandalwood rush had ended and teeth lost value as a trade item in Oceania, but the teeth continued to be a valuable trade item with Pacific Islanders, at least through the first half of the nineteenth century.⁴⁹

Surprisingly little commentary on scrimshaw appears in whaling records. One of the few American whalers to identify as a “scrimshoner” was Mortimer Camp in his memoir of a Pacific sperm whaling voyage in the early 1840s. He described it as engraving on “bone, whale’s teeth and corset [sic] boards, as we called them; they were for our sweet hearts at home.”⁵⁰ As his comment reveals, scrimshaw was a sentimental pastime for whalers lacking any profit-seeking intention. They whittled away at whales’ teeth, baleen, and whales’ bones to produce corset busks, swifts (yarn winders), pastry crimpers, inlaid boxes, and other knickknacks intended as voyage souvenirs and gifts for loved ones. Much scrimshaw had a feminized cast to it: the swifts, pie crimpers, and busks all evoked women’s work or dress. When the tooth shape was preserved to serve as the canvas for a drawing, often referenced were domestic spaces, such as parlors, or genteel women in fashionable outfits as appeared in magazines from the period. Scrimshawing, then, was more than just a way to kill time aboard ship; it became a contemplative act in which men away from loved ones on three- to four-year voyages embodied their emotional attachments to home through gift production.

The few comments on scrimshaw in whaling accounts do not say how whalers arbitrated who had rights to take possession of the teeth. Shipping contracts did not state outright whether the ship owners, captain, officers, and laborers in the forecabin each had a share in the teeth as they did in the more obvious products of the industry. Captains must have kept some of the teeth to use as barter with Pacific Islanders. In other cases, the crew probably divvied them up. In their rare mentions of scrimshaw, whalers appear to have had easy access to teeth and the whale’s skeleton. The latter would have been dumped into the deep as waste if not used for scrimshaw.

Even though whalers did not make scrimshaw to sell, they sometimes did sell the products of their craft, and a haphazard market in scrimshaw developed in ports that whaleships stopped at. J. F. Beane, who went whaling on the *Java* in the 1860s, gave one of the fullest accounts of scrimshaw. Even though whalers made these things “for sweetheart or wife,” binges on shore in ports of call enticed them to sell their creations for a pittance. Beane held on to some of his



Figure 3.5. Display of scrimshawed sperm whale teeth. Courtesy of New Bedford Whaling Museum.

“handiwork as an etcher on ivory”: two teeth from a whale caught off western Australia that made eighty-four barrels of oil and was “armed with fifty-two of the most perfect teeth I ever saw.”⁵¹ Frank Bullen also talked of scrimshawing by fellow crew members. He described the processing of the teeth. It first took some engineering to extract them from the whale’s gums and clean them. The teeth then went into a barrel filled with brine before being subjected to the knife, chisel, and file. They were then polished with oil. He did not scrimshaw himself but dealt in it in a small way by exchanging “an elaborate pastry-cutter carved out of six whale’s teeth” for a pound of tobacco with one crew member, later selling it to a shopkeeper in Dunedin, New Zealand.⁵² Even this selling of teeth constituted a niche specialty market rather than a commodity market because it was the artwork on the teeth that made them worth buying.

Today the value of scrimshawed whales’ teeth has skyrocketed. Classified as antiques and folk art, scrimshaw is now another commodity in the niche market. Indeed, the literature on the history of

scrimshaw seems directed entirely at museum curators and private collectors, the buyers and sellers of scrimshaw, and narrowly considers its history from within an art-world perspective. This literature identifies, or fails to identify, which “artists” produced which scrimshawed teeth and scrupulously tries to spot fakes. Scrimshaw traceable to particular “artists” can attain extraordinary returns when sold at auction.⁵³ A Frederick Myrick tooth dating to around 1830, valued at \$150,000 to \$200,000 on the PBS series *Antiques Roadshow*, garnered \$123,000 at auction in 2014. Another tooth carved by Nantucket whaler Edward Burdett, dating to the same period, sold at auction in 2017 for \$465,000.⁵⁴ The reason for the high valuation is the ability to link classic sperm whale teeth depicting whaling scenes to specific craftsmen who have been elevated to the status of artist.

Although not nearly so precious, Fijian *tabua* sold at art auctions can also reach high values, selling for a thousand dollars or more, in these specialized markets of art collectors and museums.⁵⁵ Whether industrial whalers or Pacific Islanders did the transforming, collectors coveting human-enhanced sperm whale teeth as cultural or artistic expressions are a new niche market that continues to treat them as desirable objects.

Sperm whale teeth as artifacts subjected to human transformation have been the subject of two discrete historiographies. Anthropologists of Oceania have seen them as important objects within Pacific cultures and fodder for ruminating on what things humans endow with value and for what reasons. In contrast, studies of scrimshaw have Yankee whalers at the center and a readership of curators and collectors who want to be able to discriminate between the authentic and the fraudulent and who view an individual artist, not a collective culture, as the producer of the artifact.

Yet both Pacific peoples and industrial whalers used the bone and ivory of whales as the basis for elaborate cultural expression. Even when they preserved the shape of the tooth, they did some altering of it by punching a hole in it for a cord or by polishing it. They kept, gave away, or sold these objects but did not destroy them. Using these kinds of symbolic and sentimental objects was a different kind of consumption from the commodified oil, spermaceti wax, and ambergris that was quickly expended to realize some other objective, such as lighting or scent creation.

The differential uses for and value of whale products—how oil, spermaceti, and ambergris became expendable commodities whereas teeth became treasured relics conveying a host of human emotions—continue to bear on the present day. Many countries prevent the sale of the industry’s classic commercial products—whale oil, spermaceti, and ambergris—through such measures as the US Marine Mammal Protection Act, International Whaling Commission mandates, and agreements reached under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). These systems prevent whale parts from being treated as commodities. Cultural artifacts of nineteenth-century Pacific Islanders and whalers, however, can be bought and sold as “Antique Parts” of sperm whales.⁵⁶

Even though ambergris has also been regarded as precious and can be said to acquire its extraordinary value from its power to evoke human emotions by titillating our sense of smell, it realized its value—like the more mundane and lower-cost oil and spermaceti—through a transformation that resulted in its destruction. Sperm whale teeth have had the opposite trajectory. The blank canvas of the whale’s tooth inspired people to transform it in ways that enhanced its value and called for its preservation. It was the meaning, not the transitory material benefits, of sperm whale teeth that made them objects of human desire of great worth in a variety of niche markets.

Notes

1. Nantucket folklore credits Christopher Hussey with bringing the first sperm whale back to the island for processing in 1712. See Macy, *History of Nantucket*, 36. Thomas Jefferson stated that American whalers caught their first sperm whale in the Azores in 1715. See his “Report on the American Fisheries by the Secretary of State, 1 February 1791,” Founders Online, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/01-19-02-0013-0014>. See also Dolin, *Leviathan*, 71–73.
2. For sperm oil and spermaceti’s qualities, market value, and subsidiary industries, see Macy, *History of Nantucket*, 69, 72, 128–137, 155; Thomas Jefferson, “Observations on the Whale-Fishery, 14 November 1788,” Founders Online, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/01-14-02-0064-0005>; Kugler, “Whale Oil Trade”; Davis, Gallman, and Gleiter, *Pursuit of Leviathan*, chap. 9; Zallen, *American Lucifers*, chap. 1; and Johnson, “Peculiarly Valuable Oil.” For more on refineries and candleworks, mainly for the nineteenth century, see Pease, Hough, and Sayer, *New Bedford*, 173–190. For the physiology

- and science of the spermaceti organ, where spermaceti wax is found, see Ellis, *Great Sperm Whale*, chap. 4; and Whitehead, *Sperm Whales*, 8–11.
3. Dugan, *Ephemeral History*, chap. 5; Dannenfeldt, “Ambergris”; Kemp, *Floating Gold*; and Stevenson, *Aquatic Products*, 247–252 (Stevenson usefully discusses other whale products as well).
 4. Tripp, “*There Goes Flukes*,” 80–81.
 5. Sahlins, “Economics of Develop-Man,” 12, 17; Sahlins, “Tristes Tropes”; Thomas, *Entangled Objects*; and Thomas, “Exchange Systems.” See also Melillo, “Making Sea Cucumbers.” Melillo is a historian who comes closer to Sahlins than Thomas in ascribing to each culture a fixed meaning for things exchanged. Most of the theoretical literature referring to whales’ teeth deals with Fiji because of the continuing importance of whales’ teeth (*tabua*) in Fijian culture, as discussed in Hooper, “‘Supreme Among Our Valuables’”; Serena Solomon, “In Fiji, Nothing Says ‘I Love You’ Like a Sperm Whale Tooth,” *New York Times*, April 11, 2017; van der Grijp, “*Tabua* Business”; Arno, “*Cobo* and *Tabua*”; and Tomlinson, “Passports to Eternity.”
 6. Macy, *History of Nantucket*, 32.
 7. For a sperm whale tooth in a curiosity cabinet, see “Mr. Dickman, Sir,” *Greenfield Gazette* (Massachusetts), February 28, 1798.
 8. “We are informed from Nantucket,” *Boston News-Letter*, May 23–30, 1720.
 9. “Extract of a Letter from Lisbon,” *Pennsylvania Journal* (Philadelphia), April 17, 1745 (“Elephants teeth”); “Imported in the last Vessels from Boston,” *Dunlap’s American Daily Advertiser* (Philadelphia), February 10, 1792 (“Sea Cow Teeth”); “Imported and for sale by Conrad Wecke[r]ly,” *Dunlap’s American Daily Advertiser*, December 2, 1794 (“Sea Cow and Elephant Teeth”); “Imported and for sale by Conrad Weckerly,” *Philadelphia Gazette*, March 29, 1796 (“Sea cow and elephant teeth”); and “For Sale, by E. Sigorney, & Sons,” *Columbian Centinel* (Boston), January 16, 1799 (“Elephant’s Teeth”).
 10. “Last Notice,” *Claypoole’s American Daily Advertiser* (Philadelphia), August 17, 1799.
 11. For example, see Barthelmess, “Scrimshaw Precursors,” 94; and Penniman, *Pictures of Ivory*, 27–28.
 12. Jackson, *British Whaling Trade*, 106–109; Stackpole, *Sea-Hunters*; Colnett, *Voyage to the South Atlantic*. For one account of the first American whale-ships to round Cape Horn, see Elijah Durfey, *Journal, Ship Rebecca* of New Bedford, 1791–1793, Log 50, G. W. Blunt White Library, Mystic Seaport Museum.
 13. Colnett, *Voyage to the South Atlantic*, 80–81.
 14. This chapter focuses on Hawai’i, the Marquesas, and Fiji; for sperm whale teeth as objects in other Pacific cultures see Sperlich, “Embodied Inter-Cultural Dialogues”; and Clunie, “*Tapua*,” 161–210, 211–224.
 15. For China trade niche commodities, see Fanning, *Voyages*, 455–464; and Delano, *Narrative of Voyages*, 100, 173.

16. Martin, *Account of the Natives*, 1:194, 196; see also Clunie, “*Tapua*.”
17. Lebo, “Native Hawaiian Seamen’s Accounts”; Lebo, “Native Hawaiian Whalers”; Lebo, “Two Hawaiian Documents”; Lebo, “Local Perspective”; Rosenthal, *Beyond Hawai’i*, chaps. 2–3; and Diamond, “Queequeg’s Crewmates.”
18. For an overview, see Kjellgren, *Oceania*, 318–319. The Bishop Museum, Honolulu, Hawai’i, lists one hundred *lei niho palaoa* in its ethnology database. See <http://data.bishopmuseum.org/ethnologydb/type2.php?type=palaoa&s=51> (accessed September 6, 2021). Twelve are in Oldman, “Collection of Polynesian Artifacts,” 72, plate 124. A March 2019 search in Google Images on “lei niho palaoa” turned up dozens of them in museums in the United States, New Zealand, Australia, the United Kingdom, and Israel and for sale by auction houses. For archaeology, see Kirch, *Feathered Gods*, 197.
19. Most of the *lei niho palaoa* in the Bishop Museum’s ethnology database do not specify the type of ivory. For walrus *lei niho palaoa*, see also Cammann, “Notes on Ivory.”
20. Vancouver, *Voyage of Discovery*, 3:16.
21. Fornander, *Fornander Collection*, 74, 180–184, 212, 220–224. See also Kamakau, *Ruling Chiefs*, 5–6, 15–17.
22. Mathison, *Narrative of a Visit*, 465; Kuykendall, *Hawaiian Kingdom*, 87–88; and Frank, *Ingenious Contrivances*, 11. For the first whaleships in Hawai’i, see Bullard, *Captain Edmund Gardner*, 34–36. For the sandalwood trade, see Bradley, *American Frontier*, chaps. 1–2.
23. Malo, *Hawaiian Antiquities*, 77.
24. Stewart, *Journal of a Residence*, 248.
25. Kamehiro, *Arts of Kingship*, 39–41.
26. Porter, *Journal of a Cruise*, 2:10, 25–28, 65, 126, quoted 2:28. Porter spelled Keatonui “Gattanewa.”
27. Kjellgren and Ivory, *Adorning the World*, 12, 71, 74–75; Linton, *Material Culture*, 340, 368, 427, 435; and Kjellgren, *Oceania*, 308. Linton says *ei*; fellow fieldworker E. S. Craighill Handy says *taki ei hei* and *taki ei*. See Craighill Handy, *Native Culture*, 290.
28. Belcher, *Narrative of a Voyage*, 2:318.
29. Suggs, *Archeology of Nuku Hiva*, 135–138 (“cheapened,” 136). See also Suggs, *Hidden Worlds*, 199–203.
30. Arno, “*Cobo and Tabua*,” 54–55. For the extensive historiography on Fijian *tabua*, see note 5 of this chapter.
31. Thompson, *Last of the “Logan*,” 39; and Seemann, “Remarks,” 51–62, quoted 61–62.
32. Lockerby, “Directions for the Feege or Sandlewood Islands,” Phillips Library, Peabody Essex Museum, also on Pacific Manuscripts Bureau microfilm reel 225. Readers should avoid the error-filled transcription in Dodge, “William Lockerby Manuscript.” See also Lewis Francoeur to John Dorr, August 6,

- 1809 (typescript), Dorr Family Papers, MSS. MH-21, Box 1, Folder 4, Peabody Essex Museum. For the Fiji sandalwood trade, see Im Thurn and Wharton, *Journal of William Lockerby*; and Shoemaker, *Pursuing Respect*, chap. 1.
33. Charles Forbes, *Journal*, April 5, 1816, Ship *Indus*, 1815–1817, Log 111, Peabody Essex Museum.
 34. “Whales’ Teeth,” *Public Advertiser* (New York), June 21, 1810; *New York Journal*, June 23, 1810; and “Auctions,” *National Advocate* (New York), April 26, 1817.
 35. “Whale Oil and Spermaceti Candles,” *Boston Commercial Gazette*, April 22, 1819.
 36. See Inward Foreign Manifests, New Bedford Collection District, Records of the US Customs Service, RG 36, National Archives at Boston. During the peak periods of the bêche-de-mer trade at Fiji, 1809–1814 and 1829–1833, the recorded imports were sperm oil, head matter, whale oil, and whalebone.
 37. Im Thurn and Wharton, *Journal of William Lockerby*; Ward, “An Intelligence Report,” 178–180; Dening, *Islands and Beaches*, 115–22; Hammatt, *Ships, Furs*; and Shineberg, *They Came*.
 38. Ward, “Pacific *Bêche-de-Mer*”; Shoemaker, *Pursuing Respect*; Clunie, “Manila Brig”; Dodge, “Fiji Trader”; Fabian, *Skull Collectors*, chap. 4; and Melillo, “Sea Cucumbers.”
 39. See the list of ideal trade goods itemized by one Salem merchant in John B. Williams to Henry L. Williams, August 7, 1846, and October 23, 1848, Williams Papers, MH-238, Box 3, Folder 4, Peabody Essex Museum.
 40. “Invoice of Merchandize shipped by P. J. Farnham & Co. on board the Brig Consul,” Isaac Needham Chapman Papers, Mss. 184, Box 2, Folder 1, Peabody Essex Museum.
 41. For whale jaw physiology, see Beale, *Natural History*, 79–80, 92–96; forty teeth in one whale, fifty-six in another, in Bullen, *Cruise of the Cachalot*, 53, 82.
 42. “Sundries Shipped by Peele Hubbell” (1835), Chapman Papers, Box 2, Folder 1, Peabody Essex Museum.
 43. “Invoice of Merchandise shipped by S. Chamberlain & Son, Benj. Cox, George West, George West, Jr. ¼ each on board the Brig Gambia. Benj. Wallis. Master. for Pacific Ocean for a/c & risk of the shippers & consigned to said Master,” July 21, 1842, Benjamin Cox Papers, Mss. 168, Box 1, Folder 4, Peabody Essex Museum.
 44. John Kehew (a New Bedford marine store outfitter) to Henry L. Williams, January 29, 1845, Williams Papers, Box 2, Folder 5, Peabody Essex Museum, regarding “a small lot of Whales Teeth which shall probably get.” According to a receipt dated June 22, 1844, Benjamin Cox bought ninety teeth from Charles W. Mead. Wood and Brownell of New Bedford appear at the bottom of the receipt, Cox Papers, Box 1, Folder 4, Peabody Essex Museum. See also receipts from Melendy & Davis, J. Lilly, and G. Wheelwright attached to

- “George West in a/c with S. Chamberlain & Son,” January 30, 1841 (for brig *Gambia*, 1840–1842), Benjamin, George, and John West Papers, MH-235, Box 6, Peabody Essex Museum; receipt from Charles Hoffman, “Barque Zot-off,” July 14, 1844, Cox Papers, Box 1, Folder 7; numerous small lots from different sellers in “Account of Disbursements,” Ship *Leonidas* (1839–1840), Phillips Family Papers, MH-4, Box 4, Folder 2, Peabody Essex Museum.
45. S.C. Phillips to Joseph Winn Jr., May 23, 1833, Winn Papers, MH-329, Peabody Essex Museum.
 46. Entry dated June 25, 1844, Eustis Bacon Diary, Baker Library, Harvard Business School.
 47. “Trunks, Ivory & Whetstones,” *Mercantile Advertiser* (New York), August 17, 1820; “Whale Oil & Bone,” *American* (New York), January 3, 1825; and “Whale Teeth,” *North American* (Philadelphia), April 16, 1840.
 48. For the evolution of raw materials into abstract, standardized commodities, see Cronon, *Nature’s Metropolis*, chap. 3.
 49. Frank, *Ingenious Contrivances*, 12–13; West and Credland, *Scrimshaw*, 46.
 50. Camp, *Life and Adventures*, 109.
 51. Beane, *Forecastle to Cabin*, 116–117, 172.
 52. Bullen, *Cruise of the Cachalot*, 83–84, quoted 84.
 53. Frank, *Ingenious Contrivances*; West and Credland, *Scrimshaw*; and Frank, *Dictionary*.
 54. Alan Katz, “Fred Myrick Scrimshaw Tooth, ca. 1830,” *Antiques Roadshow*, June 7, 2014, <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/roadshow/season/19/santa-clara-ca/appraisals/fred-myrick-scrimshaw-tooth-ca-1830--201402A50> (accessed September 7, 2021); and Madeleine List, “\$465K Sale Price for Scrimshaw Art Breaks Record,” *Cape Cod Times*, July 24, 2017, <https://www.capecodtimes.com/news/20170724/465k-sale-price-for-scrimshaw-art-breaks-record> (accessed September 7, 2021).
 55. At a Skinner Auctioneers and Appraisers event in May 2018, a “Fijian Whale Tooth, Tabua” sold for \$1,476. See <https://www.skinnerinc.com/auctions/3099B/lots/41> (accessed September 7, 2021).
 56. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, “Protected Species Parts,” August 6, 2018, <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/national/protected-species-parts> (accessed September 7, 2021).

Newspaper Stories Promoting Local Nineteenth-Century Shore-Based Whaling within the Hawaiian Archipelago

Susan A. Lebo

“WHALES, BAY WHALING.” “Whaling Off Maui.” “Whaler Extraordinary.” “A Sperm Whale Taken.” “Sperm Whaling Off Honolulu.” “There She Blows.” “Got a Whale.” “First Returns.” From the 1850s to the 1870s, riveting headlines and accompanying stories appeared in local news columns in four English-language Honolulu newspapers: the *Polynesian* (1840–1841, 1844–1864), the *Friend* (1843–1910), the *Pacific Commercial Advertiser* (1856–1884), and the *Hawaiian Gazette* (1865–1918).¹ These accounts generally promoted entrepreneurial whaling by small local parties in bays, channels, and along coasts frequented by humpback and sperm whales. They announced sightings of whales, and reported the pursuits, strikes, kills, losses, and returns of the whaleboat crews launched from shore. Some also provided reports from or about pelagic whalers sighting or taking whales in the same areas as shore parties while sailing from one island port to another, or while engaged in a short cruise in among the eight main Hawaiian islands—Hawai‘i, Maui, Kaho‘olawe, Lāna‘i, Moloka‘i, O‘ahu, Kaua‘i, and Ni‘ihau—or within the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands, also known as the Leeward Islands—the small islands and atolls of the Hawaiian island chain located northwest of Kaua‘i and Ni‘ihau.

The stories collectively are the most comprehensive source of information about shore-based whaling activities within the Hawaiian

archipelago.² Their importance reflects the absence of archaeological evidence of these activities and the paucity of information available in other sources, including journals, logbooks, and government records. They include reminiscences, first-person observations, captains' reports, and other information provided at the ports.³

The newspapers reveal that Indigenous Hawaiians did not hunt whales but did use whales that stranded or beached. The stories confirm that Hawai'i was not a destination for pelagic whaling, unlike "off Japan" or "off the Line" or "off the coast of California." Instead, whaling captains visited Hawai'i to take on water and provisions, ship and discharge crew members, and transship their whaling catches and trade. However, when whales were sighted, some lowered their whaleboats and met with success. Shore-based whaling among the islands was transient and not in itself economically sustainable. Instead, it existed in tandem with the Honolulu-based pelagic fleet, captains, seamen, vessels, equipment being interchangeable from one season to the next. In contrast, larger, more sustainable shore-based whaling stations, with permanent buildings and processing areas and equipment, were strategically established near major whale fisheries or "grounds." Frequently, these stations occurred in areas with long, rich histories of Indigenous whaling, including Japan, New Zealand, California, and the Arctic, among others. Significantly, like Hawai'i, the Indigenous communities in these areas contributed significantly to the diverse history and success of individual shore whaling stations.

The newspaper accounts reveal that small shore-based enterprises operated at strategic locations on several islands between the late 1840s and the early 1870s. They describe shore-based parties launching whaleboats from only three islands—along the leeward coast of the island of Maui, from the leeward coast of the island of Hawai'i and Hilo Bay on the windward coast, and along both the leeward and windward coasts of the island of O'ahu. Additionally, reports of migrating whales identify sightings of both pods and solitary sperm and humpback whales and many accounts encourage or applaud local entrepreneurial engagement in small-scale shore-based whaling. These stories occurred alongside short narratives of pelagic whaling within the Hawaiian archipelago by both foreign and local vessels and lengthy editorials promoting pelagic whaling, particularly commercial investment in a local-based fleet at the port of Honolulu.

Collectively, these four newspapers provide stories and editorials invaluable for better understanding the nature and duration of local-based whaling within the Hawaiian archipelago, including both shore-based whaling and pelagic cruises for whales, seals, sharks, or turtles among the islands by vessels owned and fitted out at the port of Honolulu. This chapter emphasizes accounts in which the owner or captain is identified. Rather than a strictly chronological presentation, the selected stories are interwoven to provide a historical narrative loosely organized under the headings shore-based whaling and pelagic whaling, recognizing that some individuals engaged simultaneously in both.

Shore-Based Whaling

The first editorial exposing the potential of shore-based whaling appeared in 1841. The first story to identify an individual engaged in shore-based whaling dates to 1848. The issuance of charters by the Hawaiian government to private individuals for the express purpose of taking whales began in 1847. The surviving records indicate that the Privy Council of the Kingdom of Hawaii (1845–1893) reviewed and approved two petitions for the exclusive right to take whales off a specified section of coastline. One was for a portion of the leeward coast of O‘ahu, the other for a section of the leeward coast of Maui.⁴

News stories identifying specific individuals engaged in shore-based whaling document the involvement of both Indigenous Hawaiians and resident foreigners. They describe in greatest detail parties that operated on the leeward side of the island of Maui. These parties launched one or more small whaleboats from shore and, when successful, hauled the dead whales onto the beach, where they processed them and boiled the blubber in large iron trypots; the rendered oil was sold. The stories reveal that the parties targeted both individual and “schools” of sperm and humpback whales, and most enterprises likely involved minimal investment—one or two whaleboats and trypots, and a small crew. Several accounts indicate crew were “native” and at least one of the Indigenous Hawaiian parties is described as more interested in harvesting their whale catch for meat than for oil. None of the stories mention shore stations with buildings. Several reports documented individual parties as having chartered a yacht, sloop, or schooner for a short pelagic cruise within the archipelago and one party that undertook a cruise to Panama.

In late May 1841, the *Polynesian* published a letter to the editor penned by a resident at Kohala on the island of Hawai'i. The resident asserted that hundreds of Indigenous Hawaiians came from all over to process a drift whale. Some cut off blubber to eat while others boiled pieces in small iron pots and stowed the oil in calabashes. Several barrels of oil were filled. The writer also proffered the idea that the potential existed for skilled individuals with a few "boats, &c." to undertake a profitable shore-based business pursuing and processing whales for oil.⁵ Significantly, stories in the *Hawaiian Gazette* and the *Pacific Commercial Advertiser* published three decades later reveal that Indigenous Hawaiians continued to harvest drift whales in the 1870s for meat or oil or simply sold the beached whales for money.⁶

In 1848, the *Polynesian* published the first article about Hawaiian government charters granting recipients exclusive rights to take whales along specified sections of coastlines. The story appeared in the May 20 issue and revealed that James Hough of Lahaina, on the island of Maui, had acquired "a few months earlier" a charter for "the exclusive right of fishing for whales" at Honuaula, on the leeward side of the island. The story described Hough as having succeeded in taking a sperm whale, and as a result of difficulties in "cutting in" and getting the "blubber" ashore, only managing to obtain about thirty barrels of oil, worth about \$800.⁷ Government records indicate that his "charter of incorporation" was for the Honuaula Whaling Company and that his business partner was Henry Fennes. The ten-year charter, granted in 1847, ensured the right to legal redress for any infringements to the "exclusive" fishery and required the company to comply with all "orders from the Department of Finance," including requests to inspect the company's boats and vessels, to provide the Ministry of the Interior "a correct quarterly account of the number of whales and oil-yielding fish which may have been taken," and to deliver "one thirtieth part of the oil taken" using casks obtained from the government.⁸

The newspapers provide no stories about early shore-based enterprises documented in other sources. In 1847, John Freeman received a charter from the Hawaiian government several months before Hough and Fennes did. Freeman's charter granted him exclusive whaling rights from Pu'uloa (Pearl Harbor) to Diamond Head on the island of O'ahu.⁹ Keokiko reportedly was employed from 1849 to 1859 at an unnamed shore-based enterprise at Keka'a on the leeward side of Maui. An enclosed area was used to keep the dead whales away from

sharks until they could be tried out in large pots set along the beach.¹⁰ Last, in 1858, E. M. Mayor received permission from R. C. Wyllie, lessee of the entire island of Kaho‘olawe, to establish a station on the island to take whales in the “coming season.”¹¹

A January 1, 1855, story in the *Friend* described two “mates of whaleships” as having “bought boats and whaling tackle . . . to engage in humpback whaling at Kalepolepo Bay” on the island of Maui.¹² Government records indicate that on December 25, 1854, C. J. Clark and H. Sherman received fishing rights for one year to take whales from Mā‘alaea Bay, Maui.¹³ On April 1, 1855, the *Friend* reported Captain Sherman had killed three humpbacks.¹⁴ In late 1856, the *Polynesian* reported the men as having chartered the schooner *Haalilio* with the intention of fitting out “for the sperm whale business in the neighborhood of these islands.” The schooner was a regular inter-island trader to Kona, Hawai‘i.¹⁵ In early 1857, the *Pacific Commercial Advertiser* reported that the *Haalilio*, under Captain Sherman, had struck and lost a large humpback cow off Kawaihae, Hawai‘i, but was successful in taking another humpback whale in the same area. The schooner later secured a humpback cow and calf off Lahaina.¹⁶ On May 2, the *Polynesian* described the schooner at Lahaina boiling out another whale, whose species was not identified.¹⁷

Two newspaper stories identified shore-based enterprises operated by Indigenous Hawaiians on Maui. One appears in an 1858 issue of the *Polynesian*, the other in an 1866 issue of the *Hawaiian Gazette*. Both enterprises were located at or near Lahaina. The *Polynesian* describes the enterprise operated by Kakainahaole and his wife as including an all “native crew” from Honolulu. On March 1, 1858, the crew killed a cow and a calf in “sight of the town.” The same day, a bull was killed by crew from the American whale ship *Sharon* under Captain King. Reportedly, Kakainahaole was in Honolulu at the time and, thus his “wife had taken charge of the business and went in the boat herself, superintending the capture and saving of the whales.”¹⁸ This story provides the only known English-language reference to Kakainahaole’s wife or any woman actively participating in the taking of whales.¹⁹

The *Hawaiian Gazette* published a letter to the editor in March 1866 in which the writer described Hema as one of several Indigenous Hawaiians who had fitted out boats for humpback whaling off Lahaina and “the seas adjacent.” He reported that several foreign residents also had fitted out for shore-based whaling. Hema’s boat caught a whale,

estimated as likely to yield twenty-five barrels of oil. However, he lamented that “yesterday, I in company with others took a ride out to the place where they had stranded the monster. We found that the people were laying out a feast on whale beef. About one-fourth of the blubber was on the beach, and the rest still on the whale.” Further, the casks had not been cleaned and readied and the men exhibited no inclination to “get the blubber into them before the oil ran out on the beach.”²⁰

Several *Pacific Commercial Advertiser* stories in March 1866 identified O. J. Harris and Pat Shaw among the other parties engaged in humpback whaling between Lahaina and Kalepolepo. That month, Shaw’s crew killed and beached a whale about five miles east of Lahaina that yielded “a thousand gallons, more or less.”²¹

Other stories indicated that Harris likely operated an enterprise in the Lahaina area for more than a decade. The *Pacific Commercial Advertiser* indicates that Harris had “captured a large bowhead” in Kalepolepo Bay on April 8, 1862, and had erected tryworks at the bay for “boiling out” the whales he secured. It was estimated that the captured whale would yield about fifty barrels of oil.²² A March 1863 letter in the *Polynesian* stated that the men took a large humpback whale off Lahaina and that the sloop was seen on March 25 “trying out the oil, laying at anchor.”²³ On May 14, 1863, a *Pacific Commercial Advertiser* story relayed that Captain Harris on the sloop *Laanui* had conducted a whaling cruise to the “windward islands” [Northwestern Hawaiian Islands].²⁴ Accounts in the *Pacific Commercial Advertiser* and the *Friend* reported that the *Laanui* arrived with a catch of seventy barrels of oil at Honolulu harbor from the Windward Islands on May 12, 1863.²⁵ Under the headline of “Humpback Oil,” the *Polynesian* stated that the oil was “now on sale by BOLLES & Co.”²⁶

Five years later, the *Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, *Hawaiian Gazette*, and *The Friend* announced that O. J. Harris and James Dawson purchased the schooner *Emeline*, long engaged in the Hawai’i Island coasting trade. They fitted the vessel out “for sperm whaling” and sailed on March 3 or 4 in 1868 for a cruise on the *Emeline* and among the Galapagos Islands.²⁷ Two stories published in November that year reported the schooner *Emeline* at Panama in November 1868 with two hundred barrels of sperm oil onboard.²⁸ A story published in 1869 in the *Hawaiian Gazette* reveals that after arriving at Panama, the *Emeline* was chartered by a party from California searching for pirate treasure at Cocos Island. When the *Emeline* returned to Panama on August 25,

1869, Captain Dawson declared the sloop to be in an unseaworthy condition. No mention was made of O. J. Harris.²⁹

Harris is next identified by name in a *Pacific Commercial Advertiser* story titled "Bay Whaling," which was published in February 1872, and states that "A shore party from Lahaina, with O. J. Harris as captain, were [was] also reported as having 'struck ile.' Success to home enterprise."³⁰

In 1869, the *Hawaiian Gazette* and the *Pacific Commercial Advertiser* revealed that Captain Thomas Spencer operated a shore-based enterprise at Hilo Bay. The *Hawaiian Gazette* noted that Spencer sent a whaleboat out and secured a "60 barrel" whale.³¹ Two weeks later, the *Pacific Commercial Advertiser* reported that Spencer's men had killed a calf but that it had sunk. They also killed a large cow-whale but had to cut from it. Later, the whale was sighted by an individual or party in a canoe from "one of the plantation landings." It was towed to the bay for boiling out and was expected to yield sixty barrels.³²

In 1870, stories in the *Hawaiian Gazette* and the *Pacific Commercial Advertiser* described Thomas Welcome Roys' enterprise on Maui. In January 1870, Captain Roys erected tryworks at Olowalu, about four or five miles from Lahaina.³³ The *Hawaiian Gazette* reported on February 2 that the schooner "Annie has been fitted out for a whaling cruise about the Islands, under charge of Capt. Roys . . . for the purpose of proving that Roys' guns are what is wanted to insure [sic] a whaling voyage o [sic] success."³⁴ Further, the men secured two whales using "Captain Roy's [sic] new whaling guns manufactured by Mr. Hopper," of Honolulu.³⁵ Reportedly this was the first time such guns were used in Hawai'i.³⁶ Several stories in the *Pacific Commercial Advertiser* estimated the whales would yield fifty or sixty barrels of oil; another account expected them to average forty barrels each.³⁷ A second story in the same newspaper indicated that the catch was a single whale.³⁸ The *Hawaiian Gazette* reported that the schooner *Annie* entered Honolulu harbor with seventy barrels of humpback oil on March 29, 1870.³⁹

Another story in the *Pacific Commercial Advertiser* may refer to Roys' shore-based enterprise but this remains uncertain as the party is not named. The account indicates that two whaleboats launched from shore and a whaleboat lowered from the American ship *Champion*, sailing under Captain Pease, captured a whale off Hilo in March 1870:

One day last week a whale boat went out in pursuit of whales which have been seen frequently from the shore. It was not long

before one was made fast to . . . The whale darted off with the boat in tow . . . The chase continued through the night, and early next morning the boat was seen still in tow rushing through the water like a steam plow. Another boat from shore went off, followed by one from the ship *Champion*, and the latter succeeded in killing the animal, which was towed into the harbor and turned out sixty barrels, which was divided equally between the ship and the shore party. The latter then towed the carcass ashore and tried it out, obtaining fifteen barrels more, giving them forty-five barrels of oil for their labor, worth \$1200.⁴⁰

Other news stories described shore-based parties for which the name of the owner or captain was not known as a “native” party or crew.⁴¹ Still others described them as among several in pursuit of a particular group of whales at or near a specific location.⁴² For example, *The Friend* announced in 1855 “that some enterprising men had established a whaling post at Kalepolepo” and had “succeeded in capturing three humpbacks.”⁴³ In April 1857, the *Pacific Commercial Advertiser* published several stories describing “native” crews fastening to humpback whales off Lahaina or in Kalepolepo Bay.⁴⁴ The following spring, the same newspaper carried a story titled “Bay Whaling at Maui” in which their correspondent at Lahaina reported that “it will be seen that there are no less than five shore parties in the whaling business from Lahaina and vicinity. Success to their enterprise.”⁴⁵

An 1861 story in the *Pacific Commercial Advertiser* announced, “Bay Whaling—From Lahaina, we hear that six whales have been captured in Kalepolepo Bay. The sloop *Live Yankee* is engaged in the service.”⁴⁶ No additional information about this enterprise was found.

The *Hawaiian Gazette* and the *Pacific Commercial Advertiser* published the last shore-based whaling stories in 1873 and 1874. They revealed that unnamed parties were fitting out at Lahaina to pursue humpback whales and it was hoped their efforts would pay.⁴⁷ The March 7, 1874, edition of the *Pacific Commercial Advertiser* published a story titled “A Whale,” which announced that a native fishing in a canoe near the Lāna’i shore, opposite Lahaina, discovered a dead whale, which he towed to shore. The story also purported that the humpback whale had been “struck by Mr. Luke Keegan’s party of Lahaina, a few days before. It was sold on the spot for \$50, and would be taken over to ‘the city’ to be tried out.”⁴⁸

Pelagic Whaling

The newspapers revealed four short pelagic whaling cruises within Hawaiian waters by local shore-based parties. These chartered vessels, which were not considered part of the Honolulu-based fleet, involved the sloops *Live Yankee* (1861) and *Laanui* (1863) and the schooners *Haalilio* (1856) and *Annie* (1870). Of these, three involved pelagic cruises off Maui or the island of Hawai'i, or both, and one to the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands. Each took sperm or humpback whales. The Honolulu-based fleet dominated all other pelagic activities within the Hawaiian archipelago.

Newspaper headings such as “Still Another Hawaiian Whaler and Imports at Honolulu from French Frigate Shoal” disclose the fluidity of the Honolulu-based fleet as many vessels were refitted several times, alternating between being fitted out for inter-island coasting, whaling, sharking, trading, exploring, or salvaging, among others. They reveal that the Honolulu-based vessels that conducted pelagic cruises among the Main Islands targeted sperm and humpback whales in sharp contrast to the cruises to the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands which targeted seals, sharks, and turtles. Although these latter cruises do not represent “whaling” cruises, they do provide critical context to understanding pelagic hunting during this period within the archipelago.

Stories of Honolulu-based pelagic whaling reliably documented five cruises—the schooner *William H. Allen* (1867), the yacht *Henrietta* (two in 1872), the brig *Kamehameha V* (1872), and the schooner *Giovanni Apiani* (1873), and incorrectly identified one as the schooner *Maria* (1860). The *William H. Allen* cruised off the island of Hawai'i, the *Henrietta* (February-March 1872) and *Giovanni Apiani* off the island of Maui; the *Henrietta* (April 1872) and *Kamehameha V* cruised off the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands. These four each returned with at least one whale.

In February 1860, the *Pacific Commercial Advertiser's* report titled “Whalers Off Hawaii” indicated that three whaling vessels were cruising off Kona. “A boat came ashore on the 27th and procured some fowls and goats, and the natives reported one as the *Maria*. The Captain had his wife and child with him. No report of the oil was given.” Other accounts on the same page indicate the *Maria* was actually engaged in the inter-island coasting service between Honolulu and Lahaina.⁴⁹ In November 1860, the *Pacific Commercial Advertiser*

reports the schooner *Maria*, under Captain Molteno, had departed for bay whaling off the coast of California.⁵⁰

In December 1867, the *Hawaiian Gazette* and the *Pacific Commercial Advertiser* both announced that the schooner *Alberni* had been purchased by Messrs. M. Pico, J. Perry, and Captain Joseph R. Spencer, and would sail under the command of Captain Spencer. The *Alberni* was renamed the *William H. Allen*. The *Hawaiian Gazette* stated that she was “being fitted out for a whaling and trading voyage to the Arctic” while the *Pacific Commercial Advertiser* indicated she would “cruise off Hawaii for sperm whales, till spring, and then go north.”⁵¹ The *Pacific Commercial Advertiser* reported she returned in September 1868 from a cruise off the Bonin Islands with three hundred barrels of sperm oil.⁵²

The *Pacific Commercial Advertiser* reported Captain Wood’s account of the cruise of the Hawaiian brig *Kamehameha V*, Wood, to the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands. The brig departed from the port of Honolulu in June 1872 and on July 24 reached the island of Lisianski, where the men discovered the wreck of the North German brig *Wanderer*, out of Hamburg. During the cruise, they saw sperm whales once and took one, which yielded about forty barrels. The *Kamehameha V* reached Honolulu on August 31. The brig’s reported catch consisted of eighteen casks of sperm oil blubber, seven casks of shark oil, five casks of seal oil, two casks and one bale of shark fins, one cask and one box of turtle shells, and one cask of fish.⁵³ A report in the *Hawaiian Gazette* indicated that the brig had no tryworks on board, that the sperm whale likely would make thirty barrels, and that she had on board “12 casks of shark and seal oil.”⁵⁴ The *Friend* also published a version of Captain Wood’s account and describes the catch as one whale, forty barrels, and “a lot of tortoise shell, shark oil and fins, etc.”⁵⁵

A February 14, 1872, notice in the *Hawaiian Gazette* titled “For a Cruise” announced that the yacht *Henrietta* had been fitted by her owners “for shark-fishing and will cruise along the leeward side of the Maui coast about two months.” It also reported that her crew included two expert whalers, Messrs. Wells and Gillie [Gilley], that the *Henrietta* had on board “a whaleboat, with bomb-guns, irons, and a complete set of whaling-craft,” making them well prepared should they encounter humpback whales, known to be numerous in the vicinity of their proposed cruising ground.⁵⁶

Two weeks later, the same newspaper reported that while on a “sharking cruise” around Mā‘alaea Bay in Maui the *Henrietta*’s men

had seen a whale but did not have the opportunity to strike. Additionally, no whales had been captured off Maui.⁵⁷ The *Pacific Commercial Advertiser's* issue published the same day, however, reported the *Henrietta*, under Captain Gilley, as having “struck three whales since leaving” Honolulu. They had secured one on Saturday, which they “tried out” at Ukumehame, Maui [near Olowalu]. It was estimated to yield about fifty barrels, a value of about \$1,000. Of the other two, one sank and one was lost, and they were seen on Monday, fastened to a whale in the channel between Moloka‘i and Lāna‘i.⁵⁸ The *Pacific Commercial Advertiser* published several more stories. In March, it reported the yacht as having secured a whale in Mā‘alaea Bay.⁵⁹ It also reported that the inter-island coaster *Moikeiki* had transported to Honolulu a catch of forty-five barrels of oil, arriving on March 29.⁶⁰

The *Pacific Commercial Advertiser* published a notice reporting that the *Henrietta* had turned to Honolulu from its “sharking and whaling cruise” in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands.⁶¹ No report detailing the cruise or catch was found. On February 22, 1873, it announced that Mr. Charles Long had fitted out the schooner *Giovanni Apiani* as a whaler, and that the schooner would sail “next Tuesday” for a whaling cruise off the coast of Hawai‘i. Further, upon her anticipated return in April, she would be fitted for a cruise to the Arctic Ocean to search for whales or missing explorer Sir John Franklin.⁶² In March, the *Hawaiian Gazette* reported the schooner’s crew had taken a humpback whale “in the neighborhood of Maui.” The *Pacific Commercial Advertiser's* story simply described their success as having “taken a whale off Lanai.”⁶³ The *Friend* reported the *Giovanni Apiani* departed on March 1, returned on March 30, and left again on April 15, bound for the Arctic.⁶⁴ The *Hawaiian Gazette* indicated the schooner’s catch was sixteen barrels of humpback oil.⁶⁵ The *Pacific Commercial Advertiser* reported fifteen barrels of whale oil.⁶⁶

News stories of other Honolulu-based pelagic activities documented five cruises that took Hawaiian monk seals (*Monachus schauinslandi*), sharks, or turtles in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands during the 1850s and 1860s—the bark *Gambia* (1858, 1859), the schooner *Kamehameha IV* (1859), the sloops *Emma* (1860) and *Louisa* (1861), and the schooner *Malolo* (1867). Each reported catch from French Frigate Shoals and each resumed or were refitted for the inter-island coasting service, for guano mining, or whaling or trading cruises to destinations outside Hawai‘i. Of these five Honolulu-based cruises, only the *Gambia* and *Kamehameha IV* overlap both in time and activities,

including salvage of the wrecked ship *South Seaman*.⁶⁷ They also are the only two that conducted multiple cruises to the Leeward Islands.

The *Polynesian* and *Pacific Commercial Advertiser* suggest that the bark *Gambia*, under Captain Brooks, conducted at least three cruises to French Frigate Shoals in 1859: approximately March 9 [10] to April 14, April 22 [or 26] to August 6 [or 7], and September 2 to September 30; the days vary slightly across papers.⁶⁸ The *Polynesian* indicated that the *Gambia* left on March 9 and reached French Frigate Shoals on March 10. Another party was reported to be “sealing on the neighboring islets and appeared to be doing well.” The *Gambia*’s men saw two large sperm whales on the return passage, “but the weather was too rugged to attempt to fasten to them.” The *Gambia* arrived at Honolulu on April 14 with a reported catch of “14 turtles and a quantity of seal oil.” Another notice in the same issue identified their catch as “1,650 galls [gallons] oil, 150 seal skins, 14 turtle.”⁶⁹

The next departure notice appeared in the April 23, 1859, issue of the *Polynesian*. It announced that the bark *Gambia* cleared the port on April 22 for “sealing and general catches.”⁷⁰ The same newspaper announced the bark’s arrival from a three-month cruise among the “islands westward of this group” on August 6, with “240 bbls [barrels] seal oil, etc.,” and in a second notice, under the heading “Memoranda,” with “240 bbls. seal oil, 1500 skins, a quantity of shark’s fins and oil, etc.”⁷¹

On September 3, 1859, the *Polynesian* reported the bark *Gambia* had cleared the previous day for a cruise to French Frigate Shoals and that the schooner *Kamehameha IV*, under Captain Keyte, had sailed August 27 for the same destination.⁷² The newspaper also indicated that the *Gambia* had been chartered to proceed to “bring up the remainder of the saved articles from the wreck of the *South Seaman*.”⁷³ The *Gambia* returned to Honolulu on September 30, 1859.⁷⁴

In March 1859, the *Pacific Commercial Advertiser* published several articles on the schooner *Kamehameha IV*, under Captain Foss, and the wreck of the ship *South Seaman*, under Captain Norton. On March 30, the paper stated that the schooner had sailed to French Frigate Shoals to take possession and to file a claim in Washington, DC, for guano mining rights. Captain Norton’s account includes the circumstance of the loss of the *South Seaman* and reports that some of the men returned to Honolulu aboard the schooner *Kamehameha IV*. Captain Foss’s account notes the numerous seals and turtles found there and that the “schooner will be engaged in procuring seal oil, after

she returns from rescuing the sailors of the *South Seaman*. They have trypots and other necessary to process the seals, each of which yields about one barrel of oil.⁷⁵ Another article in the same issue reported "Sale of the Wrecked Ship," that the wreck of the *South Seaman*, with stores, and so on, was purchased at auction by the owners of the schooner *Kamehameha IV*, and that a portion of the schooner's party were left on island.⁷⁶ The *Pacific Commercial Advertiser* reported on April 28, under the headline "From the Wreck of the South Seaman," that the schooner brought twenty-eight crewmen from the *South Seaman*, and about forty of the 125 barrels of seal oil that had been tried out. Also brought were a number of turtles, which will be sold at auction. Under the heading "Imports," forty-one barrels of seal oil were reported, along with salvaged items.⁷⁷

In late May 1859, the *Polynesian* reported the decision rendered in an Admiralty Court case related to the salvaging of the ship *South Seaman* and the "quantity of seal oil" procured at French Frigate Shoals. The court ruled that the libellants, which included thirteen Indigenous Hawaiians from the schooner *Kamehameha IV*, were entitled to a share of the salvage and the seal oil catch. They were awarded "three-tenths of the value of 70 barrels, -2205 gallons, of seal oil, at the agreed price of 37½ cents per gallon." This story is the only newspaper record of this catch.⁷⁸

On August 2, 1860, the *Pacific Commercial Advertiser* announced "Sharking Extraordinary." This article reported the return to Honolulu of the sloop *Emma*, under Captain Stenneck, from a cruise around French Frigate Shoals in which "she has taken about 800 sharks," noting that the Chinese consider shark fins to be a choice delicacy.⁷⁹ The paper's notice under the heading "Imports" identified the sloop's catch as "600 lbs sharks' fins, 20 brls seal and shark oil."⁸⁰ The *Polynesian* provided additional details, indicating that the sloops' nearly three-month cruise yielded a catch of "9½ bbls of seal oil, 10½ bbls of sharks' liver oil, and 400 lbs of sharks' fins for Chinese customers in this market." Additionally, the price of sharks' fins is "about 20 cents per pound, or \$26.60 per pecul, for which the above lot was sold. Thirty-five cents a gallon has been refused for the seal oil."⁸¹

On July 13, 1861, the *Polynesian* reported the return of the sloop *Louisa*, under Captain Borres, from a sealing cruise of almost four months to the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands. She saw no vessels and her catch was forty-five barrels of seal oil. She visited French Frigate Shoals, Laysan Island, Lisianski Island, the Pearl and Hermes Group, and

Middlebrook Island [Midway Atoll].⁸² The *Pacific Commercial Advertiser* printed two notices on July 18, 1861. The first reported the sloop had returned from Middlebrook Island with forty barrels of seal oil. The second indicated the sloop's cruise was to French Frigate Shoals and her cargo of 1,300 gallons of seal oil was "taken from that island."⁸³

In May 1867, the *Pacific Commercial Advertiser* announced under the heading "Wrecking" that the schooner *Malolo*, under Captain Bent, would depart shortly for French Frigate Shoals to salvage the bark *Daniel Wood*, which had been purchased at auction by Messrs. George Emmes & Co. The schooner had on board several "native divers" to help recover items from the ocean floor outside the reef.⁸⁴ The following month, the same newspaper provided an account titled "Cruise of the *Malolo*." It reported the schooner had departed Honolulu on May 21, identified the firm as Pfluger & Emmes, and indicated the firm had chartered the schooner. They were unsuccessful in locating the wreck, but before leaving from Honolulu on June 1, took "on board seventy turtle—with which the shoal abounds." The article further noted that the turtles attracted an immense number of sharks, which swarmed about the shoals, and that a shark-fishing expedition was talked of, "which will, without question, prove remunerative" as shark fins and shark liver oil were of commercial value, not to mention that shark hunting was "the rarest of fun known to sportsmen."⁸⁵ The *Hawaiian Gazette* reported that the schooner arrived during the "height of the turtle season" and obtained seventy turtles, of which about fifty were brought to Honolulu alive. They also caught two seals, which yielded about one barrel of oil. Some of the turtles were to be shipped via the *Bernice* to San Francisco.⁸⁶

Concluding Remarks and Future Directions

This study examines maritime stories in four newspapers—*The Friend*, *Hawaiian Gazette*, *Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, and *Polynesian*—published between the early 1840s and early 1870s. These papers described local shore-based whaling activities between 1841 and 1874 and Honolulu-based pelagic hunting of whales, seals, or sharks within the archipelago between 1849 and 1873. The stories illustrate the nature, extent, and potential to expand narratives about these local-based maritime activities within the archipelago, activities frequently ignored or treated as a footnote in examinations of nineteenth-century whaling, sealing, and shark hunting in the Pacific.

The stories revealed that shore-based whaling in the archipelago involved small enterprises with a few whaleboats and trypots and no substantial investment in actual “stations” or buildings. Most operated for a season or two, and a few chartered a sloop or schooner for a single pelagic cruise within the archipelago. A single enterprise conducted a cruise to Panama. Both Indigenous Hawaiians and foreign residents operated shore-based enterprises employing primarily Indigenous Hawaiian crews. The news accounts also indicate that the Honolulu-based fleet engaged almost exclusively in pelagic whaling elsewhere in the Pacific. The cruises conducted within the Hawaiian archipelago primarily targeted seals and sharks, fewer than half taking whales.

Other English-language newspaper stories have the potential to expand the examination of whaling and other marine hunting activities through the end of the nineteenth century, particularly the Honolulu-based pelagic hunting of seals and sharks. For example, the *Daily Bulletin* and the *Daily Herald* published stories on sharking expeditions to French Frigate Shoals conducted by the schooner *General Siegel*, under Captain Nelson, in the late 1880s and the schooner *Kaalokai*, under Captain Walker, in the early 1890s, among others. Additional stories describe Japanese and other foreign sealing, sharking, and bird hunting activities in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands.

Last, largely unexamined but important are Hawaiian-language newspaper stories, particularly narratives penned by Indigenous Hawaiians and relating the author’s personal experience or a broader shared cultural perspective. Other stories describe individuals or events associated with nineteenth-century shore-based whaling along island coastlines or within channels, or Honolulu-based pelagic whaling in the Arctic on other Pacific whaling grounds. Many of the whaling reports provide information similar in nature, format, and content to accounts published in English-language newspapers, including lists of whaleship arrivals, departures, and catches, or whaling news from the fleet. Particularly important are accounts adapted specifically for an Indigenous Hawaiian audience, by either the deletion of some details presented in the English-language newspapers or the insertion of commentary that reframes the focus or emphasis.

For example, *Ka Hae Hawaii* published four first-person stories concerning three whales taken off the leeward side of Maui in March 1858.⁸⁷ Each provides details not found in the story published in the *Polynesian*.⁸⁸ However, collectively, the stories indicate that

J. H. Kaikainahaole and his wife had a shore-based whaling enterprise near Lahaina. Their crew consisted of Indigenous Hawaiians and one individual from Bora Bora. During her husband's absence, Mari Kaikainahaole participated in the hunt. The crew struck three whales and secured two that they took to Lahaina and engaged other whaleships to process. Sharks were also taken. The third whale was claimed by the American whaleship *Sharon*, under Captain King. The two whales yielded 1,012 gallons of oil, which was shipped to Honolulu and sold in Kaikainahaole's fish market. Last, those who ate the whale meat reported that it tasted delicious. Additional stories place these shore- and Honolulu-based pelagic whaling stories in a broader fishing context, both among the Indigenous Hawaiian and foreign resident communities.

Notes

1. The newspaper data are supplemented, where missing or inconsistent among sources, with information (such as registry, captain's name, voyage catch) available in the Honolulu Harbormaster records. See Hawaiian Government, 1842–1894, Series 104, Volumes 1–4, 5 Folio, 6–7, Hawaii State Archives. Where appropriate, place names have been standardized with modern English- and Hawaiian-language gazetteers and diacritic spellings. Nineteenth-century spellings are retained in all quotations. Riggings, hailing ports, and captain's names of American vessels have been inserted where missing and standardized using Lund, *Whaling Masters and Whaling Voyages*. Vessel data are presented using the following format: registry, rigging, vessel name, and captain's name (for example, Hawaiian bark *Desmond*, under Captain Gilley).
2. Lebo's "Hawaiian Perspective" examines the same four English-language newspapers to provide a local perspective on Hawai'i's pelagic whaling history.
3. See reminiscence about first whaleships to visit Hawai'i in the *Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, January 21, 1858, 2(30): 2.
4. The Privy Council was a constitutionally created body of advisors to the sovereign (king or queen) of the Kingdom of Hawai'i. Petition for John Freeman to take whales off Diamond Head, May 26, 1847, Foreign Office & Executive Records, Series 421, Privy Council, Records, Vol. 2T, August 21, 1846–June 28, 1847, Hawaii State Archives; petition for a charter to James Hough and Henry Fennes, October 25, 1847, Interior Department, Miscellaneous, October 1847, Hawaii State Archives; petition for a charter to James Hough and Henry Fennes, October 28, 1847, Foreign Office & Executive Records, Series 402, Chronological File, 1790–1849; 1847: October 26–30, Hawaii State Archives; petition for a charter to J. Hough and Henry F_ [Fennes], October 28, 1847,

- Foreign Office & Executive Records, Privy Council, Minutes, Vol. 3A, July 1, 1847–December 28, 1849, Hawaii State Archives; charter for an exclusive privilege to taking whales to James Hough, November 1, 1847, Interior Department, Miscellaneous, November 1847, Hawaii State Archives; petition to take whales in Kamaalea Bay, December 25, 1854, Foreign Office & Executive, Series 421, Volume 9, December 15, 1854–December 17, 1854, Privy Council Minutes, Hawaii State Archives.
5. *Polynesian*, May 29, 1841, 1(51): 203.
 6. *Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, July 9, 1857, 2(2): 2; *Hawaiian Gazette*, February 1, 1871, 7(3): 3; *Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, March 7, 1874, 18(35): 3; *Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, May 20, 1876, 20(47): 3; and *Hawaiian Gazette*, February 28, 1877, 13(9): 3.
 7. *Polynesian*, May 20, 1848, 5(1): 3.
 8. Petition for a charter to James Hough and Henry Fennes, October 25, 1847, Interior Department, Miscellaneous, October 1847, Hawaii State Archives; petition for a charter to James Hough and Henry Fennes, October 28, 1847, Foreign Office & Executive Records, Series 402, Chronological File, 1790–1849, Hawaii State Archives; petition for a charter to J. Hough and Henry F_ [Fennes], October 28, 1847, Foreign Office & Executive Records, Privy Council, Minutes, Vol. 3A, July 1, 1847–December 28, 1849, Hawaii State Archives. See Jones, “Whaling in Hawaiian Waters,” 20.
 9. Petition for John Freeman to take whales off Diamond Head, May 26, 1847, Foreign Office & Executive Records, Series 421, Privy Council, Records, Vol. 2T, August 21, 1846–June 28, 1847, Hawaii State Archives; and Jones, “Whaling in Hawaiian Waters,” 20.
 10. Fornander, “Kumumanao No Kekaa/Relating to Keaa,” in *Fornander Collection*, 5:542–543.
 11. E. M. Mayor to R. C. Wyllie, Letter, May 8, 1858, Manuscript Collection M-162, Papers Re: Kahoolawe Island (1858–1859), Hawaii State Archive; and Jones, “Whaling in Hawaiian Waters,” 20.
 12. *The Friend*, January 1, 1855, 4(1): 2.
 13. Privy Council, *Minutes*, December 25, 1854; and Jones, “Whaling in Hawaiian Waters,” 20.
 14. *The Friend*, April 2, 1855, 4(4): 28.
 15. *Polynesian*, December 20, 1856, 13(33): 130.
 16. *Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, March 19, 1857, 1(38): 2; and April 30, 1857, 1(44): 2.
 17. *Polynesian*, May 2, 1857, 13(52): 207.
 18. *Polynesian*, March 6, 1858, 14(44): 348.
 19. For another account, see Baldwin, *Journal*.
 20. *Hawaiian Gazette*, March 10, 1866, 11(8): 2.
 21. *Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, March 2, 1868, 11(35): 3; and March 10, 1866, 10(35): 2.

22. *Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, April 17, 1862, 6(42): 2.
23. *Polynesian*, March 28, 1863, 19(48): 3.
24. *Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, May 14, 1863, 7(43): 2.
25. *Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, May 14, 1863, 7(43): 2; and *The Friend*, June 1, 1863, 12(6): 48.
26. *Polynesian*, May 30, 1863, 20(5): 3.
27. *Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, February 1, 1868, 12(29): 3; *Hawaiian Gazette*, March 4, 1868, 4(7): 3; and *The Friend*, April 1, 1868, 17(4): 32. See also *Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, April 4, 1868, 12(34): 2.
28. *Hawaiian Gazette*, November 11, 1868, 4(43): 3; and *Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, November 14, 1868, 13(20): 2.
29. *Hawaiian Gazette*, October 6, 1869, 5(38): 3.
30. *Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, February 24, 1872, 16(35): 3.
31. *Hawaiian Gazette*, March 17, 1869, 5(9): 3.
32. *Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, March 30, 1869, 13(38): 3.
33. *Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, February 26, 1870, 14(35): 3.
34. *Hawaiian Gazette*, February 2, 1870, 6(3): 3.
35. *Hawaiian Gazette*, February 2, 1870, 6(3): 3; *Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, February 26, 1870, 14(35): 3; and *Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, March 5, 1870, 14(36): 3.
36. *Hawaiian Gazette*, March 2, 1870, 6(7): 3.
37. *Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, February 26, 1870, 14(35): 3; and March 26, 1870, 14(39): 3.
38. *Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, March 5, 1870, 14(36): 3.
39. *Hawaiian Gazette*, March 30, 1870, 6(11): 31.
40. *Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, March 26, 1870, 14(39): 3.
41. *Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, April 2, 1857, 1(4): 2; April 9, 1857, 1(5): 2; and April 23, 1857, 1(43): 2.
42. *Polynesian*, May 20, 1848, 5(1): 3; *Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, March 9, 1872, 16(37): 3; and *Hawaiian Gazette*, March 13, 1872, 8(9): 3.
43. *Friend*, April 2, 1855, 4(4): 28.
44. *Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, April 2, 1857, 1(4): 2; April 9, 1857, 1(5): 2; and April 23, 1857, 1(43): 2.
45. *Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, February 18, 1858, 2(34): 2; see also Baldwin, *Journal*, 1858.
46. *Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, April 18, 1861, 5(42): 2.
47. *Hawaiian Gazette*, February 19, 1873, 9(6): 3; and *Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, February 22, 1873, 17(34): 3.
48. *Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, March 7, 1874, 18(35): 3.
49. *Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, February 9, 1860, 4(37): 2.
50. *Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, November 1, 1860, 5(17): 2; see also November 8, 1860, 5(18): 2.

51. *Hawaiian Gazette*, December 25, 1867, 3(49): 3; and *Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, December 28, 1867, 12(24): 3.
52. *Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, September 19, 1868, 13(12): 3.
53. *Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, September 7, 1872, 17(10): 2.
54. *Hawaiian Gazette*, September 4, 1872, 8(34): 2.
55. *Friend*, October 2, 1872, 21(10): 81.
56. *Hawaiian Gazette*, February 14, 1872, 8(5): 3.
57. *Hawaiian Gazette*, February 28, 1872, 8(7): 3.
58. *Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, February 24, 1872, 16(35): 3; and March 23, 1872, 16(39): 3.
59. *Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, March 23, 1872, 16(39): 3.
60. *Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, March 30, 1872, 16(40): 3.
61. *Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, February 24, 1872, 16(35): 3; March 23, 1872, 16(39): 3; March 30, 1872, 16(40): 3; and May 11, 1872, 16(46): 3.
62. *Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, February 22, 1873, 17(34): 2.
63. *Hawaiian Gazette*, March 19, 1873, 9(9): 3; and *Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, March 22, 1873, 17(83): 3.
64. *The Friend*, April 1, 1873, 22(4): 29; and May 1, 1873, 22(5): 37.
65. *Hawaiian Gazette*, April 2, 1873, 9(12): 3.
66. *Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, April 5, 1873, 17(40): 2.
67. See *Polynesian*, January 29, 1859, 15(39): 3; *Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, April 28, 1859, 3(44): 2, 5; *Polynesian*, August 27, 1859, 16(17): 3; and *Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, October 15, 1859, 4(20): 2. Cruises by the *Kamehameha IV*, under Captain Keyte, for vessel salvage or guano are not included in this chapter.
68. Among others, see *Polynesian*, March 12, 1859, 15(45): 3; *Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, March 10, 1859, 3(37): 2; and April 28, 1859, 3(44): 5.
69. *Polynesian*, April 16, 1859, 15(50): 2.
70. *Polynesian*, April 23, 1859, 15(51): 2.
71. *Polynesian*, August 13, 1859, 16(15): 3.
72. *Polynesian*, September 3, 1859, 16(18): 3.
73. *Polynesian*, August 27, 1859, 16(17): 3.
74. *Polynesian*, October 1, 1859, 16(22): 2.
75. *Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, March 31, 1859, 3(40): 2; see also April 28, 1859, Supplement, 3(44): 6.
76. *Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, March 31, 1859, 3(40): 2.
77. *Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, April 28, 1859, 3(44): 2.
78. *Polynesian*, May 28, 1859, 16(4): 4.
79. *Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, August 2, 1860, 5(5): 2.
80. *Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, August 2, 1860, 5(5): 2.
81. *Polynesian*, August 4, 1860, 17(14): 2, 3.
82. *Polynesian*, July 13, 1861, 18(11): 2, 3.
83. *Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, July 18, 1861, 6(3): 2.

84. *Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, May 18, 1867, 11(46): 2.
85. *Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, June 29, 1867, 11(52): 2.
86. *Hawaiian Gazette*, June 26, 1867, 3(23): 2.
87. Translations by Kepā Maly and Trisha Kehaulani Watson. *Ka Hae Hawaii*, March 17, 1858, 2(51): 203; March 24, 1858, 2(52): 206; March 24, 1858, 2(52): 207; and April 21, 1858, 3(3): 12.
88. *Polynesian*, March 6, 1858, 14(44): 348.

Japan

Birth of a Pelagic Empire

Japanese Whaling and Early Territorial Expansions in the Pacific

Jakobina Arch

FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF NINETEENTH-CENTURY American whalers, the wide-open hunting grounds of the Pacific were bounded by a puzzlingly fortress-like Japan. Although the whalers did not need to enter Japanese territorial waters to hunt (the Japan Ground was in the open Pacific to the east and north of Japan in the Sea of Okhotsk), the unwillingness of the Tokugawa government to allow foreigners into most of their ports led to Melville's 1851 observation in *Moby Dick* that "if that double-bolted land, Japan, is ever to become hospitable, it is the whale-ship alone to whom the credit will be due."¹ Sure enough, one of the major points Commodore Perry made when he pushed to open Japan's ports to trade in 1853 was that American whalers needed to be able to resupply without being attacked by Japanese people trying to enforce restrictions on foreigners.²

From the early nineteenth-century Japanese perspective, whaling was an enterprise bounded by the distance one could reasonably tow a whale carcass to shore using small rowboats. The Japanese were initially quite surprised by the increasing numbers of foreign ships coming within sight of their shores from the late eighteenth century through the nineteenth. Historically, foreign contact had come to Japan from the south or west, not from the open Pacific Ocean. Western whaling ships and China-bound American merchant ships were a new presence, but—more important—came from a new direction, slowly reorienting Japanese attention to the possibilities of the whole

Pacific. As a sign of this reorientation, echoing Melville's prediction, Nagaoka Moriyoshi, a diplomat, peer, and influential member of the Japanese government, claimed in 1885 that "knowledge of the use of whales drives the wealth and power of the nation."³ For people like Nagaoka, the emergence of a modern Japanese whaling industry would go hand in hand with the development of modern fisheries to create a strong, internationally competitive Japan in the new Meiji era (1868–1912).

Whaling thus played an important role in Japanese expansion, whether for the Tokugawa shogunate or for the Meiji government: it offered not just necessary resources for an expanding empire, but also political possibilities for nonmilitary competition within the global imperial context. The transformation of coastal whaling groups founded in the early seventeenth century into a more modern pelagic whaling industry occurred as Japan was wrestling with its place in global nineteenth-century politics. Because American whalers were so prominent in the political push to open Japan to foreign trade, Japanese whaling became a space for growth of Japanese political power, which led to the pelagic empire described at its mid-twentieth century height by William Tsutsui.⁴

The turbulent nineteenth century culminated not just in rapid Westernization and modernization of Japan from the start of the Meiji era in 1868, but also in the growth of a newly militarized Japan as an expanding modern empire.⁵ The role of whaling in that transformation shows how Japan's new attention to the open ocean would culminate in the industrialization and massive expansion of all Japanese fisheries into global waters in the early twentieth century. However, even though nineteenth-century American whaling provided an initial model for Japanese whaling expansion away from the coasts, the timing of this expansion with the modernization of global whaling meant that the entrance of Japanese interests into the wider Pacific was a messy and sometimes unpredictable process. Focus on some of the earlier stages of the shift in interest to new whaling grounds clarifies not just the methods paralleling military support for Japanese expansion in general, but also the contingencies that drove the leap to Antarctic and global whaling on a different timing than other whaling nations of the nineteenth century. The interactions between whalers, whaling grounds, and ocean-based imperial expansion in and around Japan in the mid-nineteenth through the early twentieth centuries also highlight the complexity of the concept of territory when

applied to maritime spaces. Just as new nation-states were solidifying their control over terrestrial boundaries, they were pushing for greater common access to global waters. Japanese imperial development took advantage of the argument for open marine territory even as they pushed to make a space for terrestrial colonial claims in Asia.

Changes in Japanese Coastal Whaling

The early modern whaling industry in Japan operated under a system of whaling groups, under which each group was its own business and generally operated out of a specific village location with a functional beach for whale processing. For the most part, each group brought whales back to a beach with processing sheds and equipment ready to render it down to a multitude of commercial products, including meat, oil, fertilizers, baleen for springs, and gut for strings. Just as the American whaling industry was composed of individual whaling ships, the Japanese industry comprised a variety of individual or loosely related whaling groups.⁶ Such groups relied on the coordinated efforts of dozens of small open rowboats to capture whales, at first by harpooning them, and then starting in the late seventeenth century by driving them into nets set in open water and harpooning the whale after it became entangled.

Most organized whaling groups in Japan did not operate for a continuous period. At any given time, however, many whaling groups were operating concurrently among the scattered islands of the Saikai or Western Sea area of northwestern Kyushu, along the shores of Tosa Bay on the southern coast of Shikoku, and along the Kumano coast in what is now Wakayama and Mie Prefectures. Thus, although the loss of individual whaling group records makes it difficult to estimate the total number of people involved in whaling by the nineteenth century, clearly many thousands of people were part of this shore-dependent form of early modern Japanese whaling. These areas in the western half of Japan were prime locations because they lie along coastal migration routes for right, humpback, and gray whales (see figure 5.1). All three species followed the path of the Kuroshio and Tsushima currents on their way between winter feeding and summer breeding grounds. Because the currents are closest to the Japanese islands in the west (the Kuroshio veers into the Pacific approximately around Tokyo and the Tsushima is closest to Japan as it passes Kyushu) few whaling groups operated outside this half of the country.

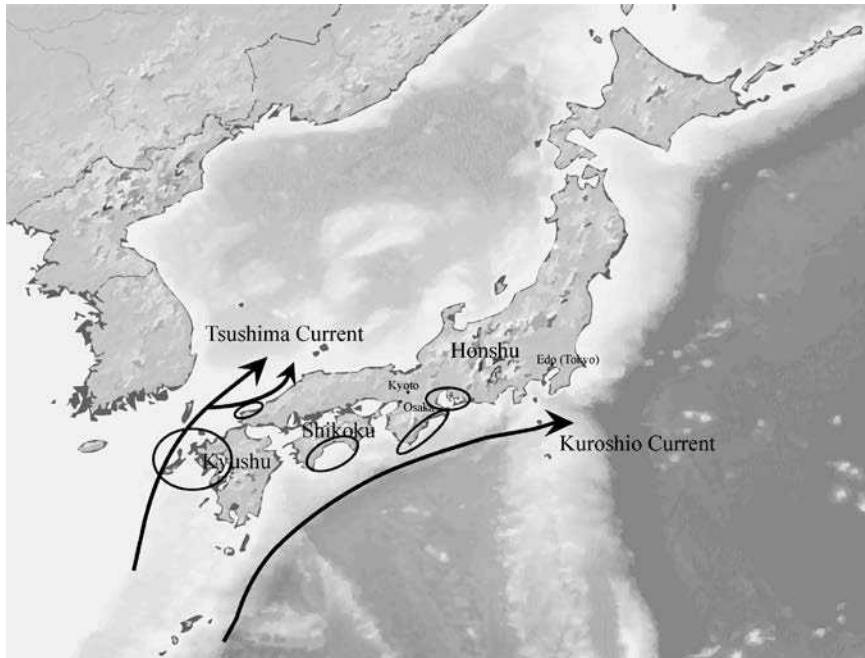


Figure 5.1. Locations of coastal whaling groups along the Kuroshio and Tsushima currents (arrows), from the mid-seventeenth through nineteenth centuries. Map by the author.

Under the pressures of competition and changing whale availability, by the early nineteenth century some whaling groups were considering moving to new grounds, especially ones farther north. However, they soon had to contend with decimation by American whaling in the 1830s through the 1850s of the same whale populations (particularly right whales) they relied on. As catches declined, most Japanese coastal whaling groups collapsed or shifted to new forms of whaling by the end of the nineteenth century.⁷ Thus by the early 1900s the Japanese industry involved a variety of whaling companies operating modern harpoon gun whaling on the Norwegian model, all of which merged into one government-supported monopolistic corporation in 1909 using the same iron-hulled whaling ships and a system very similar to the pelagic whaling of other modern industrial whaling nations, working out of a much smaller number of ports than before.⁸

Until the major political reorganization of 1868, coastal whaling was closely entwined with the locally (rather than nationally)

distributed power of the domains, each led by a lord focused on the prosperity of his own territory. Founding and operating a whaling group was expensive, both in equipment and in the daily rice stipend given to whalers. It was as much a big business as nineteenth-century American whaling, just operating in a different sphere. Its economic importance meant that whaling groups were often closely linked to governments, either under domainal oversight and loans to struggling whaling groups, or with regional or domainal income from the taxes and fees paid by whaling groups.⁹ Governments could also be invested in territorial control of the areas used by whaling groups, particularly in Kyushu, where whaling operations shared a complex intersection of different domainal boundaries.¹⁰ Such ties meant that, as the international political situation shifted over the course of the nineteenth century, whaling offered new opportunities for political leverage from the Japanese side as well as from the American.

Early forms of coastal whaling were generally not a tool for claiming territory outside existing government boundaries. Whaling was instead a tool for the enrichment of a specific domain, a way to get the most out of resources within that domain's territory that could be harvested and marketed to support the domainal lord. By the 1820s, the work performed by whaling groups explicitly included guarding precious marine resources for the benefit of powerful people within the domain. As the fishermen with the most warlike gear, whalers were the closest thing to a naval force operating in the Tokugawa peace. During this period, domains were known as *kuni*: a word that now means country or nation, a shift indicative of the degree of independence lords had within the shogunal system. As potential rivals for power began to include not just neighboring domains but also ships from outside Japan, a focus on the success of individual domains became much more difficult to maintain—and not coincidentally, whaling groups also started running into more trouble staying solvent. As the idea of the *kuni* shifted from individual domains to the nation-state of Japan in the Meiji period, the ways that whales as a natural resource could support that unit also shifted.

The shogunal system collapsed during the 1868 Meiji Restoration in part because of external pressure from foreign powers that the shogunate had proven unable to control. The business of whaling thus began to offer a tool for newly national interests within and

outside of Japan.¹¹ The rapid expansion of American whaling into the Pacific and its involvement with Perry's push to open Japan to global trade helped drive Japan toward its political shift into Meiji modernization. Pelagic whaling on the American model therefore offered the potential for a new industry along the lines of silk factories or steel mills, to be copied and adapted by Meiji-era imperial planners to help Japan compete on the global stage. Similarly, pelagic whaling with engine-driven ships and then, after the 1920s, factory ships along the Norwegian model presented another opportunity to rework the Japanese whaling industry within a competitive global market in an era of nationalism and imperialism. Whaling's early ties to Japan's increasingly militaristic expansion of empire played a role in shaping the Japanese empire's footprint, particularly on the ocean (see figure 5.2).

Whaling and Northern Expansion

One early attempt at expansion beyond the regular whaling areas of the Tokugawa period into more colonial spaces came under pressure of Russian expansion on Japanese interests in the north around the turn of the nineteenth century. The early modern Japanese state projected economic authority into the northern borderland territory of Ezochi before expanding politically into the area that would become the modern prefecture of Hokkaido.¹² Officials in the shogunate had long been aware that Ainu-inhabited Ezochi was a buffer zone between Japan and other political interests. When Russian exploration around the Kuril Islands in the eighteenth century led to the first official Russian embassy to Japan in 1792, the shogunate became increasingly worried that Russia might gain a foothold in the far north, supplanting Japanese interests.¹³ Plans to strengthen claims on the land and control the area more directly included setting up a whaling operation out of a new base established in the far north. The shogunate sent two harpooners from Hirado in 1800 to survey Ezochi and try to find a site for a whaling group. After a twenty-five-day survey, they gave up on the idea as prohibitively expensive because they saw no right whales, only the thinner and less-profitable humpback whales, and did not find a good site to set the deep nets used in their version of coastal whaling.¹⁴

The Hakodate magistrate appointed by the shogunate in 1802 still hoped for reinforcement from soldiers and fishermen who could

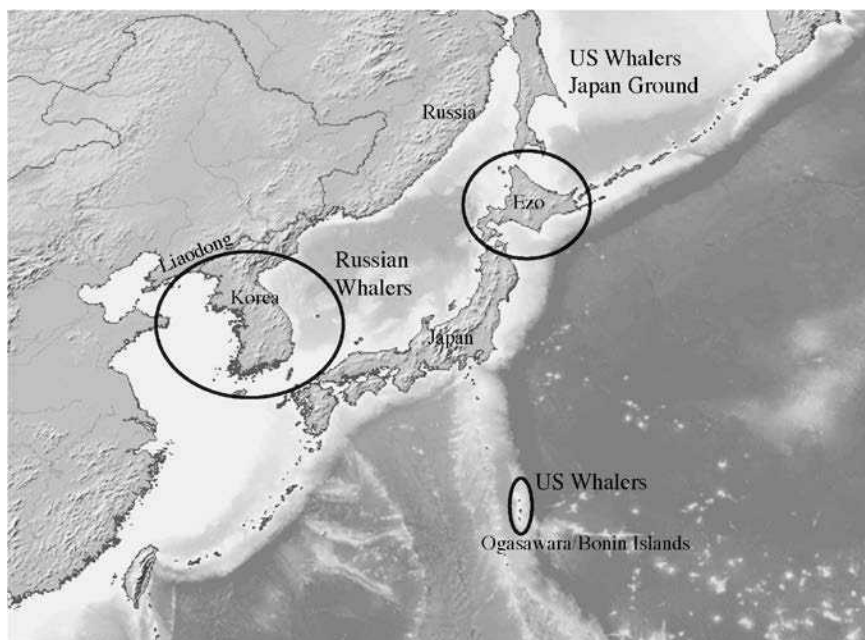


Figure 5.2. The pressures of American and Russian whaling shaped the footprint of the Japanese empire. Circles indicate new Japanese whaling locations between 1850 and 1910. Map by the author.

come colonize the area Russians were threatening to claim for themselves. Under orders from his own domainal lord further south, a whaling group leader named Daigo Shinbei Sadaaki went with the new magistrate to try whaling off the far northern islands of Ezo with three other whalers. He was the fifth head of the Daigo whaling family, which was unusual in operating a whaling group off the Bōsō peninsula focused on harpooning beaked whales. These whalers therefore did not use the net whaling technique most others did in Japan. They still required a beach to which they could bring the whales for processing, but perhaps they had hopes that the difficulty the Hirado whalers had with net placement could be avoided. Their plans are unclear, because Sadaaki had to be evacuated south after only two months of surveying, and he died the following year.¹⁵

It was not until fifty years later that anyone returned to consider founding a whaling group as a claim on territory in the north. In 1854, the eighth head of the Daigo whaling family, Daigo Shinbei Sadatsugu, was ordered by the Hakodate magistrate to inspect

whaling and fishing possibilities. With the magistrate, he and three other whalers circumnavigated the whole of Ezochi and discovered a region they thought would be suitable for trying out American-style whaling gear. Before they could do anything, the shogunate's plans changed, and he returned home instead.¹⁶ It is likely that his note home about "American-style gear" referred to the early form of harpoon gun known as a bomb lance then being developed by Americans, rather than fully ship-based American whaling.

By 1862, Nakahama Manjirō had begun a fully American-style whaling operation out of Hakodate. The Hakodate magistrate's office recorded support for foreign whaleships to come into the harbor so that locals could observe and learn their techniques.¹⁷ Either his promising work or some indications of potential success with the earlier Daigo whaling ventures led their domainal lord in 1863 to once again command the head of the Daigo house to go north, although this Daigo Sanbei focused on the potentially lucrative trade in salmon and kombu seaweed instead. It was not until after the Meiji-era dissolution of the domainal system in favor of prefectures that the Daigo family's attempts at fishery colonization ended along with the disappearance of governmental backing. The Bōsō whalers' family experience shows how essential political support was for expansion into the far north, an area that seemed quite bountiful for foreign whaling ships but for which Japanese coastal whaling was not suited.

In the same way that Russian explorers prompted Japanese attempts to firm up boundaries in the north around the beginning of the century, by the mid-nineteenth century foreign whaling ships became highly visible competitors for local resources, driving attempts at Japanese preemptive claims. Under this influence, later attempts to found whaling bases in Ezochi/Hokkaido introduced the possibility of using Western whaling techniques rather than traditional Japanese net whaling: an early sign of the eager adaptation of Western ideas and technologies central to the Meiji imperial project.

The Meiji government continued to back whaling operations based out of Hokkaido, more successfully than the Tokugawa-period attempts did. Their last attempt combined the ideas of northern defense and territorial claims via Japanese presence with the notion of expansion of existing whaling operations to expand the resource base for the Meiji state. The operation was under the supervision of the Nihon Teikoku Suisan (Imperial Japanese Fisheries) company's whaling division, run by a soldier from Ishikawa Prefecture and

using Ishikawa net whaling techniques rather than modern Western ones. Because net whaling was inherently coastal and reliant on migratory populations of whales that were dying out under intense whaling pressure throughout the Pacific, by the early 1900s this whaling group was forced to cease operations.¹⁸ As the dramatic decline in migratory whale populations following the mid-nineteenth-century arrival of American whalers in the Japan Grounds added further pressure to Japanese whaling, government concern about competition with foreign powers combined with whalers' need to find new, more plentiful whaling grounds beyond the tentative expansion in the north.

Sea Power, Empire, and Japanese Whaling

The two options for expansion of Japanese whaling to new grounds in the late nineteenth century were, first, finding new territories for shore stations or, second, trying to fully transition to pelagic whaling methods practiced by foreign competitors. Interestingly, the first option led to entanglement with colonial expansion, but not necessarily because whalers explicitly planned to push the boundaries of Japanese territorial claims. Because whaling was an expensive endeavor, new groups needed financial backing, and the government (whether of the domain, shogunate, or Meiji state) offered possibilities for the necessary funding if whalers' needs intersected with political ambitions. The second option, though it did eventually develop into modern Japanese whaling, required a delicate balancing act between wholesale adoption of foreign techniques and a growing nationalist consciousness focused on increasing Japanese power and international standing. A closer look at examples of these two pathways to increased Japanese presence in more distant waters shows the complexity of whaling's role in the early stages of Japan's pelagic empire.

The first solidly successful example of colonial expansion entwined with Japanese whaling's successful operation in waters beyond Tokugawa Japan's coastal territories was around Korea. These waters became a new whaling ground because they were full of the fin whales that were too fast to be caught by anything but the modern whaling technology developed in Norway at the end of the nineteenth century. Russian and Japanese whalers were invested in finding ways to make claims while these whales were still plentiful. By 1880, a fleet of Russian whalers was pursuing fin whales in the waters near Korea. Like many whaling ships,

these Russian whalers had a multinational crew under Russian captains and Norwegian gunners, including not just Japanese but also Korean, Chinese, German, and Russian crewmen.¹⁹ The oil was sold to England, but the meat was salted or canned and sold in Nagasaki by Japanese whale meat merchants. Even though they may have hired people from around the world, the companies and captains running the ships were used to promote national or imperial interests. Because the Russian whaling fleet was importing many tons of fin whale meat to Japan, Japanese whalers started planning ways they could enter the competition and, in an era of increasing nationalism, prevent the profits of domestic whale meat sales from going to another country's company.²⁰ They were particularly successful at this after they gained nearly the entire local Russian whaling fleet as spoils from the Russo-Japanese War in 1905, when the ships were given by the Japanese government to a whaling company based out of Nagasaki.²¹ By 1909, the Osaka-based whaling corporation Tōyō Hogeī (Oriental Whaling) held without contest the major whaling stations in Busan, Jangjeon, Sinpo, and Geoje Island, from which they shipped whale meat and baleen to be sold in Fukuoka.²²

In an even more direct demonstration of the close ties between imperial territorial expansion and the ability to exploit resources in such territories, Japan first claimed whaling territory on the western side of the Korean peninsula after they gained a concession on the Liaodong peninsula in 1895, following the Sino-Japanese war. The Nippon En'yō Gyogyō (Japan Deep-Sea Fishery) whaling company then launched operations in the waters around the Korean and the Liaodong peninsulas, shipping whale meat and skin to Kyushu with Japanese government support.²³ Earlier efforts had not had the same governmental backing. In 1877, a man named Moroki Sennosuke took some of the Taiji whaling group's boats, equipment, and men and set up a net whaling base in Busan similar to the one that had been operating in Taiji on and off since the late 1600s.²⁴ His expansion was necessitated by declining whaling operations off the Kumano coast, and was not directly linked to governmental ambitions surrounding Korea or a desire to lay claim to territory per se. However, the presence of Japanese whalers in Korea and their familiarity with whales in the waters around Busan may have supported a sense of the potential for whaling companies moving in with imperial expansion after military victories.

These examples show the importance of colonial expansion to nearby Korea, but do not entirely explain Japan's pelagic expansion, given the short distance and shared seas between Korea and Japan.

Attention was also shifting to the open ocean even before the final transition to pelagic whaling with early expansion efforts into the Pacific. With the help of the same Nakahama Manjirō who had tried American-style whaling around Hakodate, the Japanese government also attempted to set up whaling around the Ogasawara or Bonin Islands in the face of pressure from American whalers arriving from the open Pacific.²⁵ This combined the desire to claim territory through whaling presence with the adoption of foreign, offshore whaling techniques. Manjirō was a major proponent of American-style whaling in Japan, which would also help Japanese sailors acquire the general ship-handling skills that they would need to build up a merchant marine or navy capable of competing with foreign powers.²⁶

As noted earlier, nothing much came of Manjirō's attempt to promote whaling in the north. Instead, after writing a proposal to the shogunate explaining how whaling could benefit the country, Manjirō received a whaling order in 1859.²⁷ Within a month, he sailed on the schooner *Ichiban Maru* for the Bonin Islands.²⁸ Although technically part of shogunal territory, the islands had been claimed by Britain in the early nineteenth century and then colonized in 1830 by a mixed group of Americans, Europeans, and Hawaiians after being "rediscovered" by an American whaling captain in 1824. This colony became a major supply port for whalers in the western Pacific, given that Japan itself was not open to foreign trade. By 1859, after Commodore Perry's visit and the subsequent opening of six treaty ports in Japan, news about the colony came to Japanese officials through reports from ships transiting via the Bonin Islands. The government could no longer ignore the incursion onto a territory getting far more use from foreigners even though Japan technically claimed it.²⁹ Manjirō's expedition was part of a revived Japanese interest in these islands. Unfortunately, Manjirō's first trip was cut short by a typhoon. Although he did go out whaling again in 1863, they caught only two sperm whales in the vicinity of the now-renamed Ogasawara Islands before the difficulty and expense of dealing with the foreign presence on the islands caused the shogunate to temporarily give up on the idea of a colony there.³⁰

The writings of Fujikawa Sankei provide another example of wholesale promotion of modern pelagic whaling along foreign lines in the transition period between Tokugawa and Meiji Japan. In the early years of the Meiji era, he focused on the development of Japanese fisheries, including the establishment of fisheries schools in Tokyo and

Osaka and a company for whaling promotion.³¹ As part of this goal, he also wrote *Hogei zushiki* (Whaling Schema) to explain the benefits of and current state of knowledge about whaling. His text focused on marine resources as national resources, no matter how far from the nation's terrestrial holdings they might be. It thus shows how construction of a modern nation and empire following the changes in international relations in the Pacific could dramatically change the role of whales and whaling in Japanese society.

Fujikawa's goal was to open the seas to Japanese use on the model of other nations already commanding marine resources. Therefore, he referenced Western whaling in the Pacific in ways that Tokugawa-period whaling sources, focused on describing more nearshore practices, did not. The idea of building a stronger nation appears repeatedly in the prefaces and demonstrates his focus on marine resources as national resources, shared with the eminent men he convinced to write prefaces for him, such as Nagaoka Moriyoshi. The nearshore whaling and other specialized fisheries of the Tokugawa period set the boundaries of Japan only a few miles from shore. People like Fujikawa envisioned a much broader scope for Japanese power, pushing out into the deeper ocean just as "Western people, while whaling, stride 10,000 *ri* across the ocean," a stride that had already brought them into contact and competition with Japan.³² He showed a distinct awareness that the strength of modern Japan would come from being able to maximize their use of pelagic (and not just coastal) marine resources.

Under such encouragement, by the 1870s and 1880s corporations began forming to hunt whales with the new technology of the bomb lance.³³ Ultimately, none of the versions of bomb lance, American or Japanese, were particularly effective, in part because aiming well from the shoulder standing on the pitching bow of a small whaling boat was nearly impossible. It was not until the Norwegian Svend Foyn developed a harpoon gun mounted on the bow of a larger (more stable), engine-driven ship that such weapons revolutionized whaling around the world. A Japanese steamship equipped for whaling in the Norwegian style managed to catch a total of three fin whales in their inaugural cruise around Tsushima in 1899, but failed to catch any when they tried three other fishing grounds, including around Busan in Korea. In 1906, another ship operated by the Tōyō Gyogyō company managed to successfully catch fin whales, after they made a point of hiring a Norwegian gunner for three years to teach their employees how to operate the equipment.³⁴ Such new whalers were less attached to older

techniques and locations, making it easier for them to shift to a new offshore environment chasing new species of whales. This was particularly true when they were able to use some of the equipment taken from other empires, such as Russia, as well as their permits for shore processing stations in Korea, operating in the marine areas that were increasingly coming under Japanese control under military expansion.³⁵

Whaling the Pacific Ocean and Beyond

Whaling is one of the largest natural resource extraction projects yet pursued in and around Antarctica, and its initial development around the turn of the twentieth century was closely linked to imperial competition.³⁶ The global shift to Antarctic whaling was complicated by the fact that overexploited northern species—such as the right and bowhead whale—were not abundant in the south, so it also took a shift in technologies that allowed for hunting new, faster, target species—such as fin and blue whales—to make Antarctica attractive. That whaling nations such as Britain, Norway, and the United States were already operating far from their home ports may have made it much easier for them to contemplate whaling in distant Antarctica than it was for Russia or Japan, who were able to operate modern whaling ships along the edges of their imperial borders.

The argument for Japan's delayed entry into Antarctic whaling has previously relied not on the dynamics of imperialism, however, but on technological change. Whaling historian Bjørn Basberg characterized the development of Japanese whaling by mirroring other analyses of Japanese modernization, centering on the process of adoption of foreign technology.³⁷ He argued that the focus of Japanese whalers on meat rather than oil limited their expansion to Antarctica until "freezing technology was sufficiently developed to allow for the long voyage from Antarctica."³⁸ The whaling crisis of 1931 led to suspended operations for Britain and Norway, after which they restructured their fleets to keep only the newer factory ships, making the older ships available for purchase in Japan. Basberg claims that it was at this point of technological confluence that the Japanese were able to enter the Antarctic whaling industry. Although the availability of the necessary technology was obviously an important factor in the timing of Japan's entrance, Basberg did admit that the Japanese focus on oil production in their early years of Antarctic whaling was not due to technological constraints in preserving meat so much as

it was to the need for foreign currency “used for the import of goods used for war preparation.”³⁹ This point should be emphasized far more strongly. After all, had there been enough interest earlier in joining the whaling operations in Antarctica, Japanese whalers could have pushed to do so with suboptimal technology. Because they were not particularly focused on bringing back meat from Antarctica once they began operations there in 1935, the excuse that they were waiting for refrigeration technology does not hold much explanatory power.⁴⁰

One way to understand the Japanese rise to prominence in the Antarctic whaling industry during the 1930s is to reconsider the assumption that resource acquisition must follow territorial control. Maritime empires have historically been understood as reliant on control of shipping and sea lanes, allowing for trade between far-flung regions to funnel colonial resources back to the center of the empire.⁴¹ But Antarctic whaling provides a different example of how we might conceive of a maritime empire. The ocean’s living resources rarely remain fixed within a particular human territorial boundary. Antarctica is an extreme example of the more flexible options available to empires exploiting marine resources rather than terrestrial ones. With the rise of offshore, shipboard processing in Antarctica, an opportunity arose for a new maritime imperialism centered on who could extract the most from the ocean without being concerned about colonizing nearby land to do so. Government and economic interests in whaling close to Japan’s home islands during their earliest stage of imperial development were tied to territorial claims because such whaling generally involved shore processing stations. However, many of those claims did not unfold as hoped, and these failures may have made the option of nonterritorial whaling more attractive, especially as the fight to expand Japan’s empire in other arenas took more government attention into the 1930s.

That the gradual outward boundary-pushing of the Japanese empire included developing new territories for whaling may explain, perhaps counterintuitively, why it took so long for Japanese whalers to join other nations’ ships and claims to territory and resources in Antarctica. With initial attempts at expansion focused on more nearby waters, even a shift to pelagic whaling using the formerly Russian whaling ships acquired after 1905 did not require moving far out into the open ocean—especially when most of the open Pacific waters had already been overexploited by foreign whalers. Because the success of Japanese whaling expansion away from earlier coastal sites involved not just finding new places to hunt the same species, but also adopting

modern technologies to catch new species like fin whales, plenty of previously unhunted whales were to be found in the more convenient waters around Korea for Japanese whalers to harvest first. Although this harvest was not as coastal as Tokugawa-period whaling, it still used shore processing stations along with the pelagic flensing ships.⁴²

The Japanese government had plenty of other expensive projects to deal with in the earliest stages of Antarctic whaling competition just after the start of the twentieth century. Until Antarctic whaling could more directly promote Japanese imperial interests, whaling corporations made do with pursuit of stocks closer to home. Whaling nations already in the Antarctic quickly recognized the need for catch limits to prevent destruction of whale populations. But while other nations were thinking about starting to preserve Antarctic whale stocks, Japan was successfully operating multiple industrial fisheries in waters around the world, and this pelagic empire was increasingly important for generating foreign exchange—whether through canned fish or whale oil.⁴³ From the Japanese perspective, joining an agreement to limit their catches while large amounts of whale oil were still being extracted could be seen as far too similar to the unequal treaties they had been forced to sign when Commodore Perry arrived in 1853 to open their country to trade.⁴⁴ This difference in perspective on the value of investment in Antarctic whaling may have led Japanese whalers to prefer operating in waters over which they had more territorial claims.

This steady push outward from nearby waters to ever more distant spaces for marine resource harvests was not unique to whaling, but instead part and parcel of changing environmental and political relationships throughout Japan, both over the course of the Tokugawa and into the modern transition.⁴⁵ Around the start of the twentieth century, fisheries were one of the major areas of growth for Japan. They not only provided food for a growing population, but also offered an opportunity to move some of that growing population out into colonial or future territories. This meant a ready excuse for the presence of naval vessels echoing Perry's tie to whalers' protection of a half-century before, and new markets in foreign ports echoing the earlier opening of treaty ports within Japan.⁴⁶ For many fisheries, moving farther offshore from the Japanese home islands with new technologies like trawlers also avoided competition with coastal fishermen who were using older technologies to harvest increasingly stressed nearshore fish populations.⁴⁷ Although whaling had been at the forefront of nineteenth-century attempts to expand the reach of

Japan both politically and economically, the mid-century collapse of whale stocks under pressure from American whalers had already put many whaling groups out of business by the time the Norwegian bow-mounted harpoon gun offered a solution in the form of fin and blue whales found in deeper ocean waters. Thus competition with local coastal whalers was much less of an issue for early whaling corporations than it was in the transition period of other fisheries offshore, and they did not need to push all the way to Antarctica until Japan's pelagic empire was well under way in the 1930s.

Antarctic whaling's history therefore must be considered not just technologically, but also within the global political context of the early twentieth century as imperial bodies running out of untouched territories and resources jockeyed for power. The development of new technologies for extraction of marine organisms such as whales uncoupled the link between territory and available resources and offered new options for expansion of maritime empires when very little land was left untouched by other imperial interests. This explains why ownership claims for the ocean did not truly begin expanding until much later, with the rise of the Economic Exclusion Zone in the late twentieth century, long after the height of the rush for terrestrial colonial spaces. Imperial powers had a vested interest in keeping the open ocean and its highly mobile whales and fish free for exploitation even as they focused on competing for other natural resources by claiming the land from which they were harvested.

Although Japan's Antarctic whaling has been the major focus in the contemporary global whaling conversation, Japanese whalers did not leap to the far reaches of the Southern Ocean and leave Pacific whaling entirely behind. In the context of the ebbs and flows of whaling grounds over the course of the nineteenth century and into Japan's imperial era, Antarctica was just one of the increasingly distant areas into which Japanese whalers ventured to hunt whales. From the early seventeenth-century origins of organized whaling in Ise and Mikawa Bays, coastal whaling groups spread steadily down the coast toward southern Shikoku and Northern Kyushu, also founding a more isolated set of whalers to the northeast on the Bōsō Peninsula. By the start of the nineteenth century, imperial expansion of foreign powers pushed the government to consider supporting whalers' expansion to Japan's problematic northern borders. After the mid-nineteenth century, they were also considering whaling to the southeast, around the Bonin Islands. By the end of the nineteenth century, they were operating to the west

around the Korean peninsula, adding new processing stations in Korea and in northern Japan.⁴⁸ Throughout this history, whalers frequently relied on government support to maintain their capital-intensive groups or corporations and therefore were entangled in political issues surrounding territorial claims. After beginning Antarctic whaling in 1935, Japanese whalers also expanded their whaling grounds to include the North Pacific in 1940, and continued catching a small number of coastal whales throughout this period.⁴⁹ Whaling's political relevance varied throughout this expansion, but it was never wholly apolitical. Whaling was thus an uneven but continuous contributor to the gradual, but likewise not always steady, creation of Japan's pelagic empire.

Notes

1. Melville, *Moby Dick*, 95.
2. For more on Perry and whaling, see Abel, "Ambivalence of Whaling."
3. Nagaoka, "Hogei zushiki jo," December 1885 preface to Fujikawa, *Hogei zushiki*, vol. 1, 5b.
4. Tsutsui, "Pelagic Empire."
5. For more on nineteenth-century Japan, see Jansen, *Cambridge History of Japan*, vol. 5.
6. Arch, *Bringing Whales Ashore*.
7. Arch, "Meat to Machine Oil."
8. Watanabe, *Japan's Whaling*, 13, 26.
9. Arch, *Bringing Whales Ashore*, particularly chap. 3.
10. Kalland, *Fishing Villages*, 189.
11. Beasley, "Foreign Threat."
12. Walker, *Conquest of Ainu Lands*.
13. See Wells, *Russian Views*, 1–13.
14. Mori and Miyazaki, "Bunka 5, Ōtsuki Seijun," 71–73.
15. Yoshihara, "Bōnan hogei," 29.
16. Yoshihara, "Bōnan hogei," 30.
17. Iwasaki and Nomoto, "Nihon ni okeru kita no kai no hogei," 178–179.
18. Iwasaki and Nomoto, "Nihon ni okeru kita no kai no hogei," 178.
19. I Son'e, "Kankoku no hogei bunka," 264–281.
20. Kondō, *Nihon engan hogei no kōbō*, 196.
21. I Son'e, "Kankoku no hogei bunka," 268.
22. Kishimoto, *Shimonoseki kara mita Fukuoka*, 19.
23. Watanabe, *Japan's Whaling*, 12–13.
24. Hamanaka, *Taiji chōshi*, 442–443.

25. Many books have been written in Japanese about Manjirō. The major English-language translation of his story is Ikaku, *Drifting toward the Southeast*.
26. Nakahama, *Watakushi no Jon Manjirō*, 196–201.
27. Reproduced in Kawasumi and Tsurumi, *Nakahama Manjirō shūsei*, 817.
28. Kublin, “Ogasawara Venture,” 189.
29. Kublin, “Ogasawara Venture,” 189.
30. Nakahama, *Watakushi no Jon Manjirō*, 209–227.
31. *Nihon jinmei daijiten* + *Plus*, digital edition in Kotobank, <https://kotobank.jp/word/藤川三溪-1105192> (accessed September 8, 2021).
32. One *ri* was approximately 2.4 miles, but ten thousand was often used simply to denote incredibly large amounts. Fujikawa, *Hogeï zushiki*, vol. 1, 13a.
33. See Watanabe, *Japan’s Whaling*; and Kondō, *Nihon engan hogeï no kōbō*, 182–183.
34. Fukumoto, *Nihon hogeï shiwa*, 220; and Kondō, *Nihon engan hogeï no kōbō*, 206.
35. For a discussion of the difficulty traditional whalers could have in shifting their targets and techniques, see Arch, “Meat to Machine Oil.”
36. The other major natural resource exploited in Antarctica was seals, hunted for fur and oil especially in the nineteenth century. See Busch, *War against the Seals*.
37. Although modernization theory in general is less prevalent than it used to be, in histories of science and industry it still lingers. For example, in Low, *Building a Modern Japan*.
38. Basberg, “Convergence or National Styles?” 269.
39. Basberg, “Convergence or National Styles?” 271.
40. Watanabe, *Japan’s Whaling*, 45.
41. Works that focus on the importance of trade networks and commerce in maritime empires include Schroeder, *Shaping a Maritime Empire*; O’Connell, *Men of Empire*; and Frost, *Global Reach*.
42. Watanabe, *Japan’s Whaling*.
43. Tsutsui, “Pelagic Empire.” The Japanese began canning operations in 1905 for king crab in Hokkaido and 1910 for salmon in Kamchatka, with tuna and sardines quickly following. Yoshiaki, “History of Fish Marketing.”
44. The issue of treaty revision was one of the driving forces shaping the politics of the 1880s in Japan, leading up to the promulgation of the Meiji Constitution. See Iriye, *Japan and the Wider World*.
45. For other examples, see R. Wilson, “Placing Edomae”; and Rüegg, “Mapping the Forgotten Colony.”
46. Granados, “Japanese Expansion,” 121–123.
47. See, for example, Muscolino, “Fisheries Build Up”; and Chen, “Japan and the Birth.”
48. For more on the difficulties of whaling’s expansion within northern Japan, see Holm, “Living with the Gods.”
49. Watanabe, *Japan’s Whaling*, 45.

Precursors of the Japanese Pacific Pivot

Drift Whales, Ainu, and the Tokugawa
State along the 1850s Okhotsk Arc

Noell Wilson

WHEN A DRIFT WHALE BEACHED on the Okhotsk Sea coast of Ezo Island (Hokkaido) in December of 1856, Shunoashi, a local Ainu who was an Indigneous liason with the Japanese, reported the carcass to nearby Tokugawa officials.¹ With a wound sixty centimeters square on the head and tail, in the report's assessment due to an orca attack, as was common, the dead animal had drifted into the mouth of the Onishi River, some twenty kilometers north of the nearest Japanese stationed at Saroro.² The whale was twenty-seven feet long, larger than most drift whales in the area, so the resident Ainu population and Japanese alike must have been thrilled with the arrival of extra protein for the winter season even as the three or four days of processing, work shouldered by Ainu labor, occurred in temperatures below freezing. As the Tokugawa reclaimed direct management of Ezochi from 1854, Japanese control of drift whale processing emerged as a core tool for projecting new leadership over both Indigenous populations and maritime products on the Okhotsk Arc border. These developments revealed whales' accelerating emergence as a critical marine resource that would facilitate Tokugawa Japan's pivot from an Asian to a Pacific nation.³

Ainu, not Japanese, were the primary actors in nineteenth-century Ezochi whaling. From the 1840s, this maritime crescent stretching

eastward from Sakhalin, across northern Ezo to the Kuril Islands—what I refer to as the Okhotsk Arc—emerged as a space where Western whaling vessels frequently shipwrecked. Ainu were generally their first human contact on land. Dating back several centuries, the Ainu—as an extension of Okhotsk culture—had populated not only Ezo proper and the Kuril Islands, but also Sakhalin Island, and continued to serve as intermediaries between the sea and the colonizing Japanese in the nineteenth century.

The mid-nineteenth century intersection of domestic and global whaling drove Japan's so-called Pacific turn, including in Ezochi, which is often overlooked in histories of expanding Tokugawa maritime engagement.⁴ During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Tokugawa shore-based whaling had developed along the Sea of Japan and Pacific Ocean coasts in the southern half of the main Japanese archipelago as local capture methods developed in a handful of specific locations.⁵ By the mid-nineteenth century, the incremental depletion of near-shore stocks by both Japanese whalers and Western vessels plying the Pacific led Tokugawa authorities and private entrepreneurs to explore whaling grounds in both the south, near the Ogasawara and Bonin Islands,⁶ and to the north in Ezochi, pushing whaling activities beyond the Sea of Japan and proximate coastal waters into the wider Pacific of these more distant latitudes. In 1856, the year of Shunoashi's report, seven Western whaling vessels entered the newly opened treaty port of Hakodate. By 1859, that number would increase to thirty-six vessels, establishing Hakodate as the most important entrepôt for Western whalers in the Northern Pacific.⁷ The expanded presence of whaling vessels in Ezochi waters following Hakodate's opening also signaled the promise of this region's "rich whaling grounds" for Japan's own whaling prospects.⁸ This new environment of increased contact with Western whalers focused the attention of Tokugawa officials stationed in Ezochi on whales, even beached ones, as an important maritime resource to be exploited and controlled. Although Ezochi would not develop its own deep-water, active whaling enterprises until the Meiji period (1868–1912), the immediate goal of officials in the 1850s was to reclaim portions of whales washed on shore.

Connecting Ezochi drift whale harvesting in the 1850s to a broader evolving Japanese interest in pelagic whaling allows us to consider the interrelationship of Ainu, Japanese, and Western whaling, conventionally examined as unconnected activities. Thus this story is not merely an analysis of the influence of Japanese policy on Ainu practice, but

also a narrative of how the presence of Western whalers in the North Pacific shaped treatment of Indigenous peoples. In the South Pacific, at least one scholar connects an increase in the number of drift whales harvested by the Indigenous Māori of New Zealand with nearby Western whaling vessels that returned whale carcasses to the ocean after collecting their blubber, remains that often drifted to shores of Māori settlements.⁹ But though the advent of Western ships at midcentury in New Zealand waters (where the new British colonizers exercised only fledgling authority) increased Māori drift whale hauls, in Ezochi, the same presence seems to have had an opposite effect, diminishing Ainu access to drift whales. Thus drift whale history helps excavate the role of the Ainu in connecting Japan to the Pacific world, particularly on the Okhotsk coast, when their contributions to Japan's development as a maritime nation are often overlooked.

Conceiving of the Okhotsk Arc space—the intersection of the Sea of Japan, the Okhotsk Sea, and the Pacific Ocean—as a unified maritime zone allows us to reconceptualize Ezo drift whale policy as a tool for regulating, indeed expanding, the northern border of the Tokugawa world. Tokugawa documents generally refer to this area as Ezo-chi, meaning roughly “greater Ezo lands,” which includes Sakhalin and the Kurils in addition to the main island of Ezo. But the concept of the Okhotsk Arc replaces a focus on land with an emphasis on water by linking the various landmasses of Ezochi as parts of a common, integrated maritime region. It also reflects the vitality of this oceanic crossroads of the North Pacific between Ezo and Sakhalin, where the warm Tsushima current from the Sea of Japan rushed through the Soya Straits, colliding with the colder, and less saline, waters flowing southward along western Sakhalin to create a rich feeding ground for whales.

In Alison Bashford's words, the arc was a “terraqueous” space in which maritime zones, and their contents, were claimable territory, but more importantly where human interaction with sea-dwelling creatures occurred on both land and in the water.¹⁰ Previous histories of nineteenth-century Tokugawa whaling have focused on active harvesting of animals captured in the water by Japanese whalers along the Pacific shoreline of the core Japanese islands or along the Sea of Japan. The few existing studies of Indigenous whaling in Ezo focus on the island's southern coast, location of the treaty port at Hakodate, which hosted hundreds of Western whaling vessels across the nineteenth century.¹¹ The Okhotsk Arc framing of this chapter reinserts the

northern coast of Ezo, as well as Sakhalin and the Kurils, as a critical site of Ezochi whaling culture, underscoring the central role of Ainu actors in connecting their Japanese occupiers to the sea.¹²

Tokugawa oversight of Ainu drift whale processing along the Okhotsk Arc of the late 1850s was an integral element of Tokugawa policy to entrench Japanese domination in a region perceived to be threatened by Russia. Tokugawa concern over northern border security accelerated from 1853 with the Russian occupation of Aniwa Bay in southern Sakhalin.¹³ Two years later, the Shimoda Treaty established the international boundary with Russia between the Kuril Islands of Etorofu and Uruppu, confirming Japanese control over the maritime space of the southern portion of that archipelago.¹⁴ By 1856, the Tokugawa controlled southern Sakhalin, too, as a result of treaty arrangements when Russia withdrew from Sakhalin during the Crimean War. Across two years of negotiations, the Japanese secured their Okhotsk Arc territorial boundary through diplomacy. Carefully constructing a policy of managing drift whales marked the expropriation of natural resources as part of efforts to entrench political and cultural authority not only over Indigenous peoples but also in proximate maritime spaces.

In the late nineteenth century, drift whale management by Japanese officials in Ezochi linked Tokugawa Japan with a new maritime space, the Okhotsk Sea, as the nation reconfigured its relationship with water spaces connecting it to a broader Pacific Ocean world. Incorporation of the Okhotsk Arc into the official Tokugawa realm expanded Japanese interest in, and knowledge of, the Okhotsk Sea as a new critical connection to North Pacific “seas” beyond the Sea of Japan that helped bridge Japan’s engagement with the Pacific at large.

Origins of an Okhotsk Arc Whale Culture

In the archival record, the majority of Ezochi drift whale reports from the 1850s originate along the Okhotsk Arc (the coast of Sakhalin, Ezo and the Kuril Islands forming a crescent at the southern end of the Okhotsk Sea), placing this region at the center of Tokugawa engagement with whales on the northern border. This geographical cluster of drift whale sightings reflects a much longer history of Ezochi whaling culture concentrated on the Okhotsk Sea coast. The prevalence of historical place names related to whales along the Okhotsk Arc, labels that included the Ainu words for whales such as *funbe* or *tsunai*,

points to the importance of whales, such as the site near modern-day Abashiri known as Tonaiushiyama, or “the place where whale meat was transported.”¹⁵ Not only were toponyms referencing whales more frequent along the Okhotsk Arc than in other parts of Ezochi. They were often directly related to drift whales, with meanings such as “river or swamp where whales wash up.”¹⁶ That shipwrecked American whalers marooned in this very region of Sakhalin, the Kurils, and the northern part of Ezo Island more than any other area of Japan, reveals the treacherous nature of weather patterns and absence of precise navigational charts, but also the abundance of whales in these waters.¹⁷ These encounters, where Ainu were usually the initial humans to interact with the stranded Western seamen, first defined the southern Okhotsk Sea maritime zone as an interface connecting Ezochi to pelagic Pacific whalers. Tokugawa awareness of this region as particularly whale rich, however, had been growing since the early seventeenth century.

Observations in a wide variety of Japanese and European travel journals reveal that Ezochi became well known as a source of trade items produced from whales, and as a site of drift whale landings, from the early 1600s. The first written record of Ezochi whale products appears in the 1621 report of the Sicilian Jesuit Priest Girolamo de Angelis (1567–1623), thought to be the first European in Hokkaido, in which he noted that Ainu had brought dried whale meat and whale oil to Matsumae, the warlord castletown at the southern tip of Ezo.¹⁸ The early importance of whale product commodification in southern Ezochi was also evident in a 1711 Hakodate edict stating that those who stole drift whales would be imprisoned.¹⁹ By 1712, Japanese journals were also recording whale products from the Kuril Islands, known as “remote Ezo” (*oku Ezo*), including whale oil and stone baked whale meat from Etorofu (Iturup), identified as gifts presented to the Tokugawa Shogun. These items were produced from drift whales, which “generally arrived between November and January,” likely also the source of the local baleen batons used as weapons on the island.²⁰ By 1784, the neighboring Kuril island of Kunashiri was also identified as a source of whale oil.²¹ Not only Japanese officials and adventurers but also Westerners continued to comment on whale products from the southern Okhtosk region, observations that begin to include Sakhalin Island from the late 1700s. When the French explorer Jean-Francois Prouse sailed through the Okhotsk Sea in the summer of 1787, he noted the availability of whale oil and included

one of the most detailed descriptions known of whale oil extraction on Sakhalin. He described a process that involved letting a drift whale carcass begin to rot on a slope in the sun and only then collecting the oil, which dripped into pouches made of tree bark or fur seal hide. He also remarked on the singular profusion of whales on the east coast of the island (the Okhotsk Sea side), but the absence of whales in the Sea of Japan to the west.²²

At the turn to the nineteenth century, just as Western whaling vessels first rounded Cape Horn to enter the Pacific Ocean, travelers along the southern Okhotsk Arc continued to comment on the profusion of whales. While surveying the North Pacific in 1796, British naval officer William Robert Broughton noted that the ocean around Shikotan Peninsula, in southeast Ezo, and neighboring Kunashiri Island was “well stored with whales.”²³ Travelers in Sakhalin also remarked on its whale culture. Matsuda Denjūrō, a Tokugawa official sent to survey the Ezochi maritime region in the early nineteenth century, noted drift whales numerous times in his account of southern Sakhalin near the port of Shiranushi. In his telling, the Ainu became particularly excited at the cutting of a drift whale’s penis. In another instance more than thirty Ainu died after eating drift whale meat.²⁴ His journals were some of the first to connect Sakhalin and the Kurils as end points of an interconnected Okhotsk Arc with a profusion of whales. Matsuda’s subsequent reports from Etorofu Island in the Kurils commented on the production of trade items from drift whales, including salted meat slabs wrapped in straw or preserved in barrels, both shipped to the home island (*honkoku*), likely Honshu but perhaps Ezo. Validating interest in the Kurils as a potential shore whaling outpost, he observed that anywhere between five and ten drift whales could float in per year, ranging in length from twenty-seven to sixty feet.²⁵ Matsuda’s writings reveal that he understood Sakhalin and the Kurils as ends of a common Okhotsk Arc, united as a region of drift whale beachings.

Reports of Kuril seas teeming with whales, and the abundance of whale trade items there, generated Tokugawa attempts to plant shore whaling operations in Etorofu and expand the economic benefits of whaling, enjoyed by the local Ainu, to the Japanese.²⁶ In the late 1700s, when the Tokugawa dispatched administrators to survey this newly annexed archipelago, officials were pleased to observe whales in “great numbers, spraying seawater,” which could justify creating a whaling group.²⁷ Drift whale products from the Kuril Islands of both Kunashiri and Etorofu helped Matsuda identify the

promising economic possibilities of a shore whaling operation. Conditions in the Kurils seemed promising enough that the Shogunate ordered two whaling specialists from Hirado domain's Masutomi shore operations in Kyushu to visit the southern Kurils in 1796 and evaluate their potential as a whaling ground.²⁸ Both geography and ocean conditions, however, yielded a grim assessment. Although the Masutomi experts reported sighting numerous humpbacks, no Pacific right whales appeared during their visit, the species they had hoped to find not only because it was large, but also because it rendered high quality oil. In addition, net whaling seemed all but impossible given the strong currents in the area resulting from the violent exchanges of water between the Sea of Okhotsk and Pacific Ocean through narrow straits. Rough seas in the Nemuro Straits between the Kurils and mainland Ezo would also complicate the transport of whale products to market, a hurdle Kyushu whalers did not have to confront on their home shores.²⁹ As well, because the majority local Ainu population used small boats crafted from a single tree, even a modest whaling operation would require transporting larger whale boats to the area, a major expense. Whaling historian Jakobina Arch suggests that precisely during this period, whaling operations in southwest Japan had begun to see a decline in catches, so the potential of new whaling grounds in northern Ezochi must have been an attractive prospect, yet the hurdles in Etorofu were too high.³⁰

The promise of new Pacific whaling hauls remained so attractive that six years later, in 1802, the Tokugawa again attempted to plant a whaling operation in the Kuril Islands. This time they imported experts of the Godaigo cooperative from the Boso area on the Pacific Ocean coast just northeast of the Tokugawa capital at Edo. Godaigo whaling techniques seemed a better fit for southern Okhotsk geography than those of the Masutomi. The Boso group used a harpoon method that could be executed from boats in the deep ocean off the Kurils, in contrast to the shore net method of the Masutomi group, which was better suited for shallow waters.³¹ The Godaigo also targeted a specific species of whale, the Cuiver's beaked, which was known to frequent the Kuril waters. Although ultimately a failure, this second attempt marked the first time officials proposed active whaling as a tool for introducing the Ainu to Japanese customs from the home islands. The Indigenous population would be critical to shore whaling efforts in the Kurils because they numbered some 1,100 on Etorofu in 1800 relative to only a handful of Japanese.

Efforts in Ezochi to establish active whaling operations shifted south from the Okhotsk region to Hakodate and nearby Funka Bay in the 1850s as officials realized the overwhelming challenges of the extreme distances and harsh environment separating the Kurils from mainland Ezo. Even as these initiatives moved southward, the Okhotsk Arc persisted in travel journals as the very Ezochi region that observers highlighted for its abundance of whales. In the summer of 1854, just as Hakodate first welcomed Western whalers, Matsuura Takeshirō, an explorer accompanying the Hakodate magistrate on a tour of the region under his new oversight, sketched a well-known image of Kushunkotan Harbor in southern Sakhalin with a pod of spouting whales, a scene right in the middle of Aniwa Bay, where the rich Tsushima current flows into the Okhotsk.³² The newly appointed Hakodate magistrate, Muragaki Norimasa, sailing on the same vessel to survey the vast territories under his management, was so moved by the number of whales around the Soya Strait that he penned a poem in his diary.³³ The prevalence of travelers' reports recounting flourishing Okhotsk Arc whale populations and products, as well as multiple Tokugawa plans to plant whaling operations in Etorofu, suggest that this maritime region—sandwiched between Sakhalin and the Kurils—had more vibrant whaling stocks than other proximate waters. Thus this Okhotsk Arc, at least in the archives, produced the highest frequency of drift whale reporting in all of Ezochi.

Drift Whales on the Okhotsk Coast of Ezo Island

Drift whale reports from the Okhotsk coast of Ezo Island in the 1850s revealed a new interest of the Japanese state in claiming whales discovered by Ainu.³⁴ As Jeffrey Bolster observed of eighteenth-century New England, the “dispossession” of Indigenous people’s access to drift whales was not merely the product of declining beachings due to increased offshore fishing, but also the result of colonizer government appropriation.³⁵ Similarly, from the early nineteenth century, the Tokugawa began to require drift whale reports for all of Ezochi. And, starting in 1854, with their direct administration of the region, Japanese officials promulgated detailed rules expropriating drift whale products that were previously the exclusive property of the Ainu.

In the 1850s, drift whale discovery, processing, and distribution generally worked as follows. Seaside Ainu residents sighted a beached whale, reported it to Japanese authorities for inspection by local

officials, processed the carcasses, and then loaded oil and salted meat on coastal trading ships for transport to Hakodate. In return, the Japanese officials granted the Ainu one-third of the carcass, and in most cases an allotment of rice as partial compensation for the days spent preparing the carcass and boiling the flesh.

The drift whale document trail in the Okhotsk Arc emerges on November 12, 1856, at the Ainu village of Enrumiiko, where Tokugawa officials inspected a thirty-eight-foot whale partitioned with the customary third turned over to the indigenous population. The report speculated that the animal had apparently been injured and killed by an orca before being further ravaged by sharks. The processing yielded about 150 gallons of oil and seven barrels of crackling. The managing officials reported the oil to be of good quality with no smell or smoke when burned, and suggested that this high caliber by-product should demand a price of at least two *ryo* gold per twenty-gallon barrel when sold in Hakodate.

With increasing numbers of Western whalers visible in Ezochi waters from the 1850s as Hakodate opened as a provisioning port, Japanese officials posted in Ezo became newly interested in the economic benefits of whaling. Even the low-ranking Japanese authors of the drift whale report requested permission to talk with Western whalers anchored in Hakodate about both the equipment used on whaling vessels and their methods of oil extraction. Their report justified the one-third distribution of the whale to the Ainu as a practice following the “custom seen in ancient texts, which is the law of the core Tokugawa realm” (*naichi*, or inner lands).³⁶ In applying drift whale policy from the core Tokugawa islands to Ezo proper and Sakhalin, these new regulations firmly integrated the Ezochi region into the Tokugawa legal realm.³⁷ That the officials felt compelled to explain the logic of their appropriation suggests that this practice was either new or being newly questioned by the Ainu. This distribution in kind differed from the custom in more commercialized regions of the main Tokugawa islands, where the beached carcass was sold at auction and one-third of those profits were then distributed to households of the village where the animal had washed ashore.³⁸ But given that the authors of this report cited the current price of whale products in the Hakodate market, they were attuned to the animal’s nature as a profit-bearing commodity.

Along the Okhotsk Arc, the harsh climate of an unprotected shoreline pounded by Siberian winds, however, made winter inspections especially challenging for both Japanese and Ainu. The beaching of a

whale in November, when most cetacean species would have already migrated south for the winter, suggested that this animal might have been sick or injured and unable to join the annual fall migration, or even a stray bowhead, which generally did not travel as far south as Ezo. The extreme cold and snow made traveling so arduous that Hosono Gozaemon, the senior Monbetsu official in charge of drift whale inspections, declared that an old injury made it impossible to complete the journey and that his assistant would carry out the inspection solo.³⁹ The following year, when a drift whale landed at nearby Horonai, the inspector Itsumi Shōjūrō took thirteen days to travel the twenty miles from his office in Monbetsu because of blizzard conditions and constant whiteouts. In his report, Itsumi observed that the winds and snowfall were so overwhelming that “even Ainu would be unable to make headway,” and those accompanying him, likely as porters for baggage, were exhausted.⁴⁰

Such winter landings constituted a significant obstacle to processing carcasses. But another hurdle that likely discouraged the Japanese from pursuing strict drift whale oversight earlier was the widely scattered settlement pattern of Ainu villages. The whale cleaning was executed almost entirely by the Ainu who made up 96 percent of the Soya administrative region (the Ezo Island Okhotsk coast) population. In 1855, the total Soya region population consisted of forty-five Japanese and 1,137 Ainu. In comparison, the population in the Otasutsu administrative district on the Sea of Japan coast (on the west coast of Ezo proper) consisted of thirteen Ainu and 703 Japanese, essentially a reversal of the numbers on the Okhotsk Sea coast.⁴¹ Ainu villages, or *kotan*, generally included only four to five houses, leaving few individuals in any single location to clean a whale. In winter, many coastal residents moved inland to hunt, leaving the shoreline settlements with even fewer residents than during the summer fishing season.

Returning to the whale beached in 1856, twenty-eight people processed the whale, twenty-two men and six women, including four Japanese farmers and twenty-four Ainu.⁴² Most villages—Monbetsu, Omu, Tōfutsu, Tokoro—contributed one or two laborers, Shokotsu contributed four, Sawagi seven, and Saroro eight. That seven people came from Sawagi is logical because the whale beached only a few kilometers away, and Saroro was only about twenty-four kilometers south, but Tokoro was four times that distance at one hundred kilometers and Tōfutsu only slightly closer. This widely dispersed population hindered amassing adequate numbers of workers to clean a whale.⁴³

As the Tokugawa worked to more tightly integrate the Okhotsk coast and its inhabitants into the realm, compensation for Ainu labor highlighted how the Japanese leveraged drift whale processing as a cultural assimilation practice. Some sources record that local Japanese officials did not remunerate Ainu for their labor beyond the one-third portion of the whale carcass granted them. However, other documents record that the Ainu in Ezochi received unrefined rice (*genmai*) as compensation, not the white rice given to the Japanese laborers.⁴⁴ In spite of its superior nutritional content, not recognized at the time, unpolished rice was viewed as the less desirable grain for human consumption and thus a lower form of compensation. Even when Ainu workers received rice allotments, such as happened in a January 1858 case, they could be granted one-sixth the per-person amount given to the Japanese workers, or, on a different day, granted 70 percent of the Japanese portion. Where Japanese seem to have consistently followed the one-third practice, which was codified as an official rule, the size of rice allotments granted Ainu appears to have changed at the whim of the presiding Japanese officials. However, in one instance, Japanese officials raised the question of whether Ainu who had “Japanized” (*kizoku*, or returned to Japanese customs, such as adopting Japanese hairstyles or Japanese names) should also be granted the larger, white rice allotments distributed to Japanese laborers.⁴⁵ Across the drift whale documents of this Monbetsu/Soya region coast, only one Ainu laborer, Sanpei, appears with a Japanese name, so it seems that acculturation policies were very slowly taking root in the region.⁴⁶

Japanese drift whale management integrated coastal Ainu communities into Tokugawa legal culture but also transformed their whale products into ones more similar to those created in the main Tokugawa islands. In addition to oil and meat consumed as community food stuffs, Ainu had historically created five trade items from whales to exchange with the Japanese, including oil, stone baked whale, stick portion whale (small pieces of dried jerky), paddle whale (large, paddle-size portions of jerky), and salted whale.⁴⁷ These whale products, along with an array of other items such as sea otter pelts, sea cucumbers, and reed mats, were traded to the Japanese for imported goods such as rice, sake, salt, tobacco, and metal objects.⁴⁸ A list of Ezo commercial products from the early eighteenth century, *Ezo shōkoko kikigaki*, identifies a series of whale products from this Soya/Monbetsu coast, including baked whale and

whale oil from the seaside village of Yūbetsu and similar items sold at the Soya outpost from Urayashibetsu and Tokoro, on the southern Ezo Okhotsk coast.⁴⁹ As historian Kikuchi Isao points out, in an indigenous culture without large metal pots for boiling flesh to collect oil, the Ainu extracted oil by baking the whale pieces on large rocks (similar to the Sakhalin method). The remaining meat was then hung and dried, and called stone baked whale.⁵⁰ This method created Ezo whale trade items labeled in diaries as “unusual” and “curious” by travelers from central Japan who were likely more accustomed to products created by boiling. However, these unfamiliar Ezochi processing methods also made the trade items they yielded coveted for their novelty. Whereas previously stone had been central to Ainu whale processing for baking, in addition to hanging raw sheets of blubber to dry in the sun, Japanese control of drift whale processing introduced large pots for boiling flesh in larger quantities to accelerate the processing.⁵¹ This technological shift introduced the new by-product of fritters or crackling, which was a remnant of blubber left after rendering the oil. The transition in processing also changed the language used to count portions of whale products. Whereas previously these goods had been classified as reams, sticks, and bundles of smaller portions, shipping records from the mid-nineteenth-century record salted whale and dried portions of jerky as being sent in barrels. Under Japanese oversight, drift whales linked the Okhotsk coast to the Tokugawa administrative center at Hakodate with the shipment of a narrower variety of products, reducing the previous six to just two main items—oil and salted whale meat.

One particular cargo vessel, the *Chōja-maru*, transported most of these goods from the Soya region to Hakodate. This single masted sailing ship of the Kashiwaya merchant family, who held a monopoly on sea transport between the Okhotsk coast and Hakodate, was forty-three feet long with a 135-ton carrying capacity and a crew of eleven. In favorable weather, it could cover the round trip journey between Hakodate and Abashiri (on the southern Okhotsk coast) in a month, as it did between May and June of 1858, or at a more leisurely pace the voyage could stretch to three months.⁵² Whale products, viewed as an increasingly attractive source of revenue given the stories of profit shared by Western whalers in Hakodate, were part of the commercial draw pulling coastal trading ships to the outer reaches of the Tokugawa realm.⁵³

Drift Whales on the Northern Rim of the Tokugawa Okhotsk Arc: Sakhalin

Sakhalin Island, too, at the northwest tip of the Tokugawa Okhotsk Arc, provided a steady stream of drift whale reports during this period in the late 1850s. The Matsumae clan, which had managed Ezo-chi before the 1854 resumption of Tokugawa direct rule there, had opened a trading post at the southern Sakhalin port of Shiranushi in the 1790s. This clearing house for exchange with the Santan peoples of the Amur region in continental Asia became the Tokugawa administrative outpost for drift whale oversight in Sakhalin.

The first record we have of drift whale policy executed in Sakhalin in this period appears in May of 1857, a reminder to officials at Kushunkotan port (in Aniwa Bay, at the southern tip of the island) that the distribution of drift whales should continue following existing custom. One-third would be delivered to the Ainu, as on the Soya/Monbetsu coast, and the remainder divided equally among three individuals: the local Tokugawa representatives, the resident merchant in charge of trade, and the Hakodate magistrate.⁵⁴ Because most Tokugawa officials posted here withdrew southward to mainland Ezo for the winter, these instructions were likely directed at men newly dispatched to Sakhalin for the summer trading season, just as the winter ice broke, allowing sea mammals to again drift into shore. That details about the distribution of the carcass appears in multiple drift whale documents of the late 1850s suggests that this policy might have been newly instituted or that local officials had ignored it and were in need of an official reminder to give Ainu their due, especially as the Ainu population was in decline because of disease and overwork. The first drift whale that year arrived in a small coastal village in June and judging from the injuries had been attacked by an orca.⁵⁵ The next reports arrived in December, when an Ainu man named Karashi reported a dead whale beached at another nearby village, and a third came ashore along the same coast close in January.⁵⁶ Revealing the centrality of trade to Tokugawa interests in Sakhalin, these reports were stamped by the merchant office at Shiranushi, which handled transport of the processed whale items to Hakodate. By the end of 1859, Shiranushi officials would report six more drift whales, each a landing that solidified a pattern of beachings across the Okhotsk Arc, extending westward the hundreds of miles from the Kurils, to the Ezo Okhotsk coast and ultimately to Sakhalin.⁵⁷

The rich marine life of the southern Okhotsk Sea had long drawn Western whalers to the area. Although recent studies underscore American pelagic whaling in the northern Okhotsk region in pursuit of bowheads, drift whales floated into southern Sakhalin Island shores as coastal residents watched US whalers sail by.⁵⁸ Interspersed with 1857 Sakhalin drift whale documents is notice of an American whaler anchoring at the port of Kushunkotan, on southern Sakhalin, for three days in mid-July to gather water. This report reveals not only that US whalers often ignored Japanese requests to come ashore at approved harbors (such as Hakodate), but also that Tokugawa shore guards posted at the Soya outpost as early as 1848 had watched what were probably US ships pursue whales in these same Straits.⁵⁹

Conclusions

The Okhotsk coast at the heart of this story is home today to the port city of Abashiri (population thirty-eight thousand), the northernmost whaling harbor in Japan, just south of Sawagi village, mentioned in the drift whale vignette.⁶⁰ Still home to a sizable Ainu population, Abashiri's whaling history is a politically fraught topic because the city functions as a base for the government's scientific whaling fleet even today. Highlighting the indigenous experience of whaling in Hokkaido dismantles the dominant cultural narrative that twenty-first-century Hokkaido whaling continues a long-standing tradition of Japanese whaling. Research that excavates this indigenous agency undermines the Japanese government's current position that Hokkaido whaling preserves a distinctly Japanese maritime culture.⁶¹ This preoccupation, however, obscures the significance of Ezochi/Hokkaido whaling not merely as Japanese whaling, but also as a broader Pacific practice.

Analysis of drift whale oversight in the northern reaches of the Tokugawa realm helps us reconceptualize Japanese engagement with maritime space in the 1850s. The documentary trail of drift whale reports along the 1850s Okhotsk Arc reveals a new attentiveness by the Tokugawa to both recording and appropriating beached whales as a vehicle to control its northernmost maritime border. From one perspective, this practice was just another example of Japanese expropriation of natural resources harvested by the Ainu, in addition to herring, and mirrored Europeans' claim to beached whales in native lands along the North American Atlantic coast two centuries earlier.⁶² However, its execution along the Okhotsk Arc in this particular decade

revealed a new state interest in the commodification of whales. In the main Tokugawa archipelago, organized shore whaling initiatives had emerged organically in response to local subsistence needs and then through entrepreneurs, but with minimal government intervention beyond that of local officials. In Ezochi, as Tokugawa officials increasingly interacted with Western whalers following the opening of Hakodate in 1855, extracting profits from whales emerged as a priority. Actors at the time were not yet aware, but mastering the details of processing and valuing whale products was a preparatory step for accumulating the knowledge to profit from broader Pacific pelagic whaling initiatives in the Meiji period.

Notes

1. I follow the convention of referring to the Tokugawa territories north of the main island Honshu as Ezochi (greater Ezo lands), using the term of mid-nineteenth-century Japanese documents. Ezo Island refers to the modern day island of Hokkaido whereas Ezochi also includes southern Sakhalin Island and the southern Kuril Islands, both considered part of the Tokugawa sovereign realm. These two regions are also critical components of the Okhotsk Arc concept that frames this chapter.
2. “Sawagi temae aza Wonishi e yorikujira ni tsukitodoke (1857),” transcribed and reprinted in Shōichirō, “Monbetsu basho shoken kakitsuke I,” 42–43.
3. In “Mapping the Forgotten Colony,” 113, Rüegg claims that Tokugawa expansion into the Pacific began with the 1862 colonization of the Ogasawaras. However, Ezochi history reveals how that process had begun several decades earlier in 1807, when the Tokugawa shogunate first placed the island of Ezo under its direct control. For details of how this oversight influenced the Ainu, see Irish, *Hokkaido*, 53–54.
4. For example, Hellyer’s important work *Defining Engagement*, about the emergence of Tokugawa engagement, focuses on diplomatic relations instead of broader maritime activity and barely mentions Ezo. For the influence of Western pelagic whaling on Ezo history, see Wilson, “Western Whalers in 1860s’ Hakodate.”
5. Arch, *Bringing Whales Ashore*.
6. Rüegg, “Mapping the Forgotten Colony,” 26.
7. The 1855 numbers are from *Hakodate shishi tsūshi hen*, 52. These 1859 Hakodate US whaler figures are from Notehelfer, *Japan through American Eyes*, 251. This table of Hakodate port activity is an excerpt of his letter of October 29, 1860, published in the *New York Daily Tribune*, December 29, 1860, 6. In 1859, the count was twelve US merchant ships and thirty-six US whalers, for a total of ninety-one ships in Hakodate, including twenty-six Russian men of war.

8. Steven Ivings focuses on the access to proximate whaling grounds of Western whalers stopping in Hakodate. However, the presence of these ships also sparked the interest of local Japanese, previously uninvolved in whaling, in harvesting the cetaceans so lucrative for foreign ships. Ivings, "Trade and Conflict," 105.
9. Cawthorn, *Maori, Whales and "Whaling,"* 1–15.
10. Bashford, "Terraqueous Histories."
11. Histories of Ainu whaling have largely focussed on the singular, occasional active whaling practices of communities in Funka Bay, along Ezo's southern shore. A prominent example is Takemitsu, *Funka wan Ainu no hogeï*.
12. In Japanese, the most comprehensive works are Kazuma, "Bakumatsuki Ezo-chi ni okeru hogeï gyōno kito ni tsuite," and Kyōichi, "Edo kōki Ezochi ni okeru hogeï kaitaku." In English, Jakobina Arch's *Bringing Whales Ashore* briefly touches on Ezo, but the author's primary focus is the shore whaling zones within the core Tokugawa islands.
13. For details of the Aniwa Occupation, see Plutschow, *Philipp Franz Von Siebold*, 85.
14. 1855 Treaty of Shimoda: "Henceforth the boundary between the two nations shall lie between the islands of Etorofu and Uruppu. The whole of Etorofu shall belong to Japan; and the Kuril Islands, lying to the north of and including Uruppu, shall belong to Russia." *Treaties and Conventions Concluded Between Japan and Foreign Nations*. The treaty did not specifically address the three southernmost islands of Iturup, Shikotan, and Kunashir, but at the time both nations seemed to agree that these islands were sovereign Japanese territory.
15. Uchida Motoki, Itō Seiichi, and Watanabe Takeshi, "Ezochi Abashiri chihō Ainu chimei shūseki" (Compilation of Ainu placenames in the Abashiri area of Ezochi), 142, Hokkaido University Library collection. In *Ainu denshō banashi shūsei*, Inaba Katsuo traces the origin of multiple place names with reference to whales along the Okhotsk Sea coast of Hokkaido.
16. Uchida, Itō, and Watanabe, "Ezochi Abashiri chihō Ainu chimei shūseki."
17. The first two recorded shipwrecks were the *Lawrence* (1846, Kurils) and *Trident* (1849, Sakhalin). The most extensive treatment of these incidents in English can be found in Sakamaki, *Japan and the United States*.
18. Quoted in Matsumoto Azusa, "1820 dai no Akkeshi basho ni tsuite," *Hokudai shigaku*, 50 (2010/12), 98.
19. Kazuma, "Bakumatsuki Ezochi," 79n3.
20. "Etorofu tō hyōchaku ki," in Miyamoto, Haraguchi, and Higa, *Nihon shomin seikatsu shiryō shūsei*, 4:9–10.
21. "Ezo chi, Ken 1-12 (1784)," in *Shin Hokkaidō Shi*, vol. 7, shiryō 1 (Sapporo: Hokkaidō, 1970), 314.

22. Perouse, *Ra Perūzu Taiheiyo shūkōki*, 2:324. Mamiya Rinzo, the famous Japanese cartographer of Sakhalin, also commented on the abundance of whales in Aniwa Bay from spring to mid summer during a trip there in 1811.
23. David, *William Robert Broughton*, 76, 83.
24. “Hokuidan,” in Miyamoto, Haraguchi, and Higa, *Nihon shomin seikatsu shiryō shūsei*, 4:124, 126. The editor’s note 40 states that this body part was known for its restorative properties. A July 1858 invoice to the Hakodate trade office also notes one whale penis, cut into six portions, which may reveal a particular interest in this whale part on Sakhalin.
25. “Hokuidan,” 100.
26. The few scholars of Ezochi whaling generally frame their analyses as studies of the surrounding maritime region as a whole without disaggregating it into specific zones. Close scrutiny of the sites considered for whaling operations reveals that the early target area was primarily eastern Ezochi, including the Kuril Islands, on the southeast border of the Okhotsk Sea.
27. Quoted in Kazuma, “Bakumatsuki Ezochi,” 78.
28. Kyōichi, “Edo kōki Ezochi,” 5–13.
29. Kazuma, “Bakumatsuki Ezochi,” 84. Other contemporary sources from the southern Kurils also reported sighting blue whales. See Isao, *Etorofu tō*, 109.
30. Arch, *Bringing Whales Ashore*, 73.
31. For a discussion of whaling in the context of larger plans for Tokugawa economic development of Etorofu (Iturup) in the early nineteenth century, see Isao, *Etorofu tō*, 107–109, and for population figures, 186. Only twenty-nine Ainu resided in Tannemoui village, the proposed site of a whaling headquarters, so an operation on the scale of those in Hirado would have required hiring from other areas of the island.
32. Suzuki and Takeshirō, *Karafuto nikki*, 20–21.
33. Entry for July 20 (Kaei 7.6.26), *Dainihon komonjo*, 345.
34. A search of the online database of the Hokkaido Prefectural Archives for the term *yorikujira* (drift whale) among documents from the 1850s produces eighteen hits in the three years between December 1856 and November 1859, ten for the Ezo Island Okhotsk coast and eight for southern Sakhalin Island (<http://www.archives.go.jp/english/links/index.html>).
35. Bolster, “Putting the Ocean,” 34.
36. Ogawa, “Monbetsu basho shoken kakitsuke I,” document #3, 44. Original document, reprinted, after transcription.
37. Azusa, “Kinsei Ezochi,” 8. Whether drift whale reports were required from the Kuril Island territories is unclear. None remain in the archival record from the 1850s.
38. Kalland, *Fishing Villages*, 183–184; and Mitsuhiko, “Edo jidai Shōnai.”
39. Ogawa, “Monbetsu basho shoken kakitsuke I,” document #3 and #4, 44–45.
40. Ogawa, “Monbetsu basho shoken kakitsuke I,” document #2, 56: “Etanko shirari to mōsu saki e yorikujira.”

41. Akihisa, “Edo jidai no Monbetsu ryō no hanashi,” 29–30.
42. Ogawa, “Monbetsu basho shoken kakitsuke I,” document #6, 47: “Yorikujira kiritori dojin jinbetsusho.”
43. Toshikazu, *Ainushi no jidai e*, 94.
44. Ogawa, “Monbetsu basho shoken kakitsuke I,” document #9, 49: “Yorikujira shinjōsho banke todokesho tomo rakute unun.”
45. Ogawa, “Monbetsu basho shoken kakitsuke I,” documents #3 and #4, 57: “Yorikujira no gi ni tsuki hōshi sōrō kakitsuke.”
46. Ogawa, “Monbetsu basho shoken kakitsuke I,” document #6, 47: “Yorikujira kiritori dojin jinbetsusho.”
47. Stone baked whale is the meat remaining after the oil has been extracted, then dried. Stick portion is the meat of drift whale cut into strips and dried, “so that it is as hard as stone” (1799, Matsuda Denjūrō, *Hokuidan*, cited in Isao, “Ishiyaki kujira ni tsuite,” 94). Paddle whale is portions of dried whale as large as an oar/paddle. This version of dried whale was used a relief food in Matsumae during the Tenmei (1782–1788) famine.
48. For a comprehensive list of goods Ainu acquired from Japanese trade in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, see Shunsuke, “Kinsei Ezochi kōeki nōto.”
49. Isao, “Ishiyaki kujira ni tsuite,” 94.
50. Isao, “Ishiyaki kujira ni tsuite,” 94. This definition of rock baked whale as dried meat created as a by-product of Ainu oil extraction is that of Matsumiya Kanzan, a Confucian scholar who toured Ezo in the early eighteenth century, who also noted whale, but specifically stone baked whale and stick whale (*kai kujira*), as trade items produced in Ezo. See Miyamoto, Haraguchi, and Higa, *Nihon shomin seikatsu shiryō shūsei*.
51. John Braiginton-Smith and Duncan Olive note that Cape Cod indigenous groups, too, had no large metal vessels means to try oil until the arrival of Europeans in New England. *Cape Cod Shore Whaling*, 88.
52. Chart of *Chojamaru* voyages by day, *Matsumae chōshi*, 350–351.
53. For a map of Ezo with trading posts, see Akihisa, “Ainu no ‘Jibun kasegi,’” 202.
54. Hokkaido Prefectural Archives, Boshō 11.
55. Hokkaido Prefectural Archives, Boshō 24.
56. Hokkaido Prefectural Archives, Boshō 24.
57. Hokkaido Prefectural Archives, Boshō 42, 52, 69.
58. For an example of the emphasis on the northern Okhotsk region, see Deal, *Law of the Whale Hunt*.
59. Hokkaido University Northern Studies Collection, Okadaira ke 035, “Onso-bagashira onyakujū goyō tehikae,” entry from sixth month, twentieth day, year Kaei 1 (1848).
60. A summary of Abashiri’s role in modern Japanese whaling can be found in Kalland and Moeran, *Japanese Whaling*, 19–23.

61. The question of whether Ainu history is Japanese history is a long debated topic that David Howell explores synthetically in “Is ‘Ainu History’ ‘Japanese History’?” His ultimate answer is yes. In *Bringing Whales Ashore*, Arch also provides a compelling argument for how the history of core Tokugawa era shore whaling operations refutes the government’s defense of current whaling policy as a continuation of long-standing custom.
62. Bolster, *Mortal Sea*, 70.

The Different Currents of Japanese Whaling

A Case Study of Baird's Beaked Whale Foodways in the Kanto and Tohoku Regions

Akamine Jun

WHALING HAS BEEN A CONTROVERSIAL POLITICAL ISSUE for the last half century. A major point of dispute is the “traditional” practice of whale meat consumption in Japan, which is often debated in terms of modern popularity and historical relevance. According to the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries of Japan, four thousand tons of whale meat was consumed in the country in 2016. Statistically speaking, the annual consumption per capita of whale meat in the same year was therefore only 31.5 grams. This number is very small relative to consumption of pork (19.7 kilograms), chicken (18.3), beef (9.5), or seafood (45.6).¹ Based simply on annual consumption per capita, whale meat cannot be considered a *national* Japanese foodstuff. However, individual communities across the Japanese archipelago continue to hunt and consume whales today, via foodways inherited from previous generations. These include both communities currently engaged in coastal whaling and those that did so in the past.

Although Japan's special permit whaling (SPW) in the Antarctic Ocean has drawn the most attention, coastal commercial whaling in Japan is one of three types: small-type coastal whaling of beaked whales and pilot whales using harpoon guns, spear-hunting of certain species of dolphins and pilot whales, and drive-hunting of certain species of dolphins and pilot whales. Small-type coastal whaling requires

permission from the Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, the quotas, hunting season, and duration being regulated by the central government. The other two types of dolphin and pilot whale hunting require permission from the prefectural governor, but this discussion is limited to the first category.

Small-type coastal whaling is conducted by vessels of up to forty-eight tons equipped with fifty millimeter bore harpoons. This method is currently used in five ports, a single vessel operating out of each: Abashiri (Hokkaido Prefecture), Hakodate (Hokkaido Prefecture), Ayukawa (Miyagi Prefecture), Wada (Chiba Prefecture), and Taiji (Wakayama Prefecture).² As of 2018, the maximum number of whales permitted to be taken per year is sixty-six Baird's beaked whales (*Berardius bairdii*), seventy-two short-finned pilot whales (*Globicephala macrorhynchus*), and twenty false killer whales (*Pseudorca crassidens*). Figure 7.1 tracks the actual number of whales caught by coastal whaling vessels since a commercial moratorium on hunting great whales was established by the International Whaling Commission (IWC). As the graph makes clear, minke whales were the main target of coastal whaling before the IWC moratorium. However, after the moratorium took effect in Japan in 1988, the main target species shifted to Baird's beaked whales.

Conventional studies across various disciplines have focused their research on the whaling operations of fleets with factory ships in the Antarctic Ocean, but only a small number have studied the diversity of whaling in Japan's coastal waters. Coastal whaling in Japan has a long and diverse history and has evolved differently depending on geography, ecology, and whale species. An examination of the diverse Japanese whale foodways, from hunting to consumption, is necessary for a deeper understanding of the whaling issue. This chapter focuses on coastal whaling in Chiba Prefecture, where the main target species is the Baird's beaked whale, and illustrates how the locally favored method for consuming this toothed whale is to produce *tare*, which is dried meat seasoned with soy sauce and sake. The meat of Baird's beaked whale has no market beyond the local community because of its dark color and distinct gamy flavor. The whale's thick blubber is the only exception and is sought after in the northeast part of Japan for making soup.

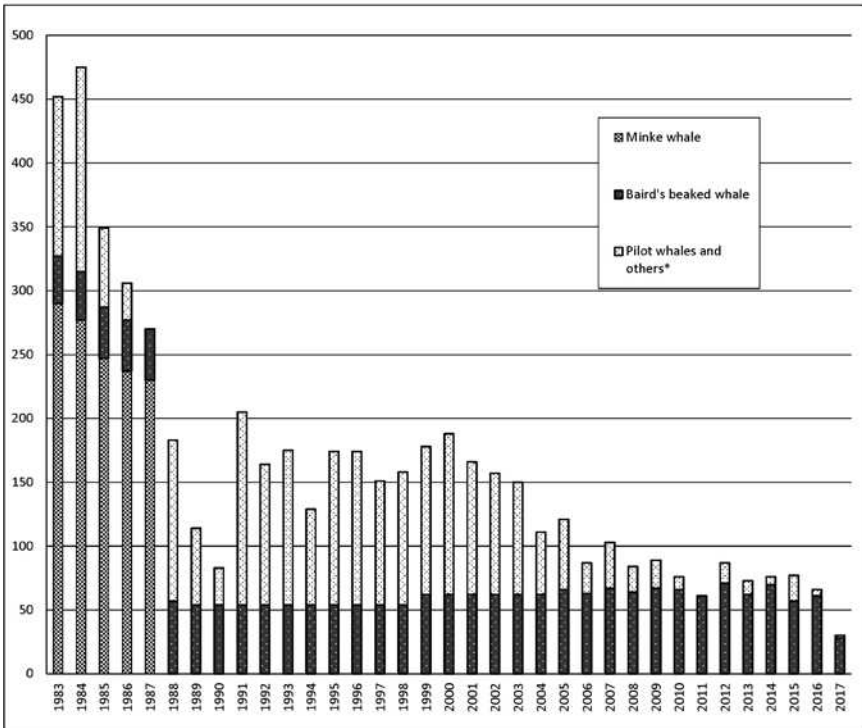


Figure 7.1. Catches by small-type coastal whaling vessels and number of coastal whaling vessels in Japan: 1983–2017. The number may include pilot whales, false killer whales, and Risso’s dolphins. Source: Annual Result Report, Japan Small-Type Whaling Association.

Beyond the “Super Whale”

In the early 1990s, Norwegian social anthropologist Arne Kalland coined the term “super whale” to criticize emotional, unscientific arguments that combined the characteristics of separate species of cetacean into a single imaginary anthropomorphic creature:

Environmental and animal welfare activists often speak about *the whale* in the singular. We are told that *the whale* is the world’s largest animal, that it has the world’s largest brain, that its brain is large in comparison to body weight, that it is social and friendly, that it sings, that it has its own child care system, and that it is threatened, etc. It is true that the *blue whale* is the world’s largest

animal and that the *sperm whale* has the world's largest brain (although it is small in comparison to the animal's size), but most of the other assertions are difficult to prove. Those that do hold some truth are rarely true for more than one or two of the more than 75 different whale species which exist. When one speaks about *the whale* they are combining all the characteristics found among the various species, such that *the whale* has them all. But such a whale does not exist; it is a mythical creation, a "super whale" [emphasis in the original].³

Kalland raises a valid point about the diversity of marine species and their multifaceted relationships with human beings.⁴ The super whale concept criticizes how antiwhaling campaigners trivialize this diversity. Conversely, supporters of Japanese whaling also take a similarly oversimplified view. Echoing Kalland's critique, I call this the "reverse super whale" discourse. It includes claims that whaling and eating whale meat are long-time Japanese traditions dating back to inhabitants of the Japanese archipelago who hunted cetaceans some six thousand years ago. It also encompasses Japanese whaling history from the seventeenth century, during which numerous commercial whaling parties were established and used almost every part of the whale in their operations, consuming not only meat, blubber, and intestines but also using bones and baleen for industrial purposes. Whalers during this time would also hold memorial services for the whales they hunted. Also lumped in are whaling activities after World War II, when Japan became dependent on whale meat as a source of animal protein, and other more modern whaling activities.

Each claim about Japanese whaling is independently true. However, distinct differences exist, depending on the whale species involved and its relationship with the people that interact with it. According to the Institute of Cetacean Research, eight families and forty species of cetaceans appear in the waters around Japan.⁵ This constitutes approximately half of the eighty-five species that exist globally. The reverse super whale discourse has included no discussion of particular whale species, ecologies, whaling grounds, whaling techniques, processing techniques, or manners of consumption. In actuality, such factors have greatly changed in connection with the shifting ecological and political economies around whales and whaling. For instance, the inhabitants of the Japanese archipelago,

surrounded by both warm and cold currents, have long had plentiful opportunities to hunt and interact with whales. As is evident from the Mawaki ruins in the Noto Peninsula in Ishikawa Prefecture, cetaceans have been hunted in the region for more than six thousand years. The Mawakians specifically targeted two small species: Pacific white-sided dolphins (*Lagenorhynchus obliquidens*) and short-beaked common dolphins (*Delphinus delphis*). A local study found that the two species made up 91 percent of 286 excavated skulls.⁶ Traditional whaling developed in the western part of Japan much later, in the seventeenth century, and modern whaling became popular in the eastern part of Japan only in the early twentieth century. Although rich whale meat foodways developed in the western part of Japan, whale meat harvested by modern whaling in the eastern part of Japan was partly used for canned food and fertilizers as the government and business entrepreneurs created new markets for the expanded supply.⁷

Although certain whaling advocates have claimed that Japanese whalers use all parts of whales without any waste, when and under which circumstances such practices occur should be further clarified. When Japan sent whaling fleet to the Antarctic Ocean in the early 1930s for the first time, the whaling industry's aim was to produce whale oil; it had no intention of using the meat. Thus the whaling ships in those Antarctic hunts harvested their catches for oil, which they transported directly to Europe before returning home.⁸ During such operations, the Japanese whaling vessels discarded whale meat, just as ships from other whaling nations did. It was only in the 1938–1939 hunting season that Japanese whaling fleets brought back whale meat for consumption, under orders from a Japanese government preparing for war. The super whale and reverse super whale myths are twins, borne from unscientific attitudes that ignore the diversities of whales and whaling.

Figure 7.2 illustrates the production of baleen whale oil and baleen whale meat by Japanese Antarctic commercial whaling from the 1946–1947 to the 1986–1987 seasons. The production of whale meat twice exceeded that of whale oil. Whale meat was produced in greater quantities just after World War II until 1950. Then, in 1951, Japanese Antarctic whaling shifted to prioritizing the production of whale oil over whale meat. This continued until the early 1960s, when whale meat once again became the prominent product of Antarctic whaling.

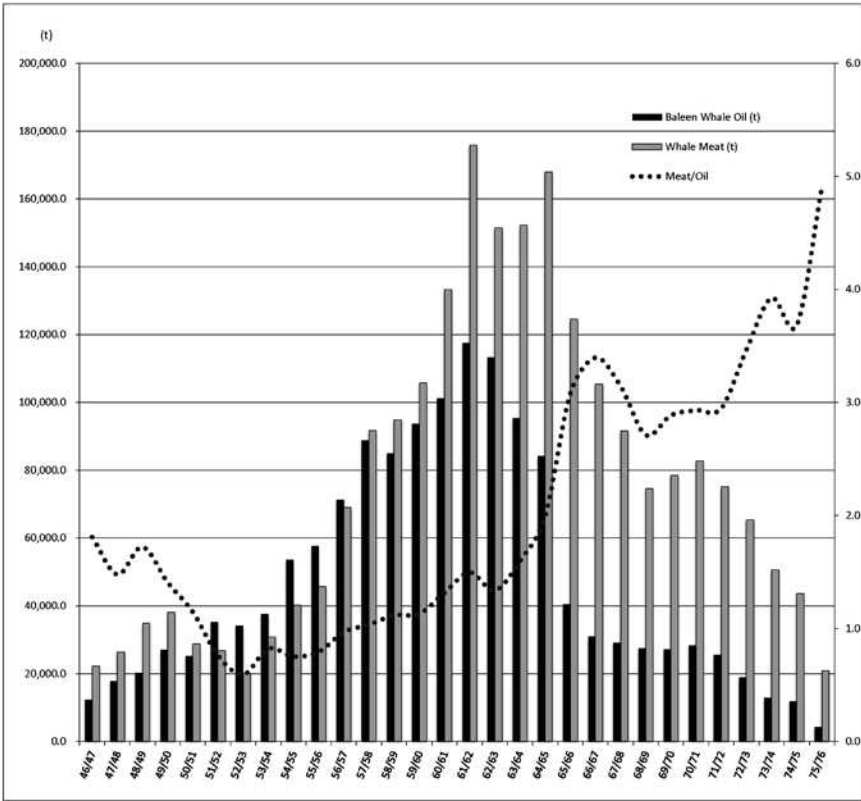


Figure 7.2. Production of baleen whale oil (t), baleen whale meat (t) and proportion of meat/oil produced by Japanese Antarctic Whaling Expeditions. Source: Tado, *Hogei no rekishi to siryo*, 175–178.

How does one interpret these shifts? The first period encompassed Japan’s severe food shortages during the postwar era. When large portions of the Japanese population faced starvation, they turned to whale meat for salvation. After the food shortages were alleviated, Japanese Antarctic whaling shifted to oil production, which was then exported to earn foreign currency. Producing oil was an extension of prewar Antarctic whaling’s industrial characteristics. The chaotic postwar period that favored whale meat over oil was an exception in the history of Japanese Antarctic whaling. This is ironic because in the 1960s the Japanese began consuming other types of meat, yet whale meat production continued to increase. For example, national consumption of whale meat was surpassed by pork in 1964, when the

Tokyo Olympics were held, then by chicken in 1966, and by beef in 1969 (see figure 7.3).

Even as the Japanese began to consume more meat from domesticated animals, Japanese Antarctic whaling produced more meat than ever before. What were the possible reasons for this paradoxical pattern of consumption? During the 1964–1965 season, hunting blue whales was prohibited, and sei whale became the predominant species for hunt. This decrease in supply led to an increase in the value of whale meat. Figure 7.4 shows that the targets of Japanese Antarctic whaling shifted from larger species with more blubber to smaller

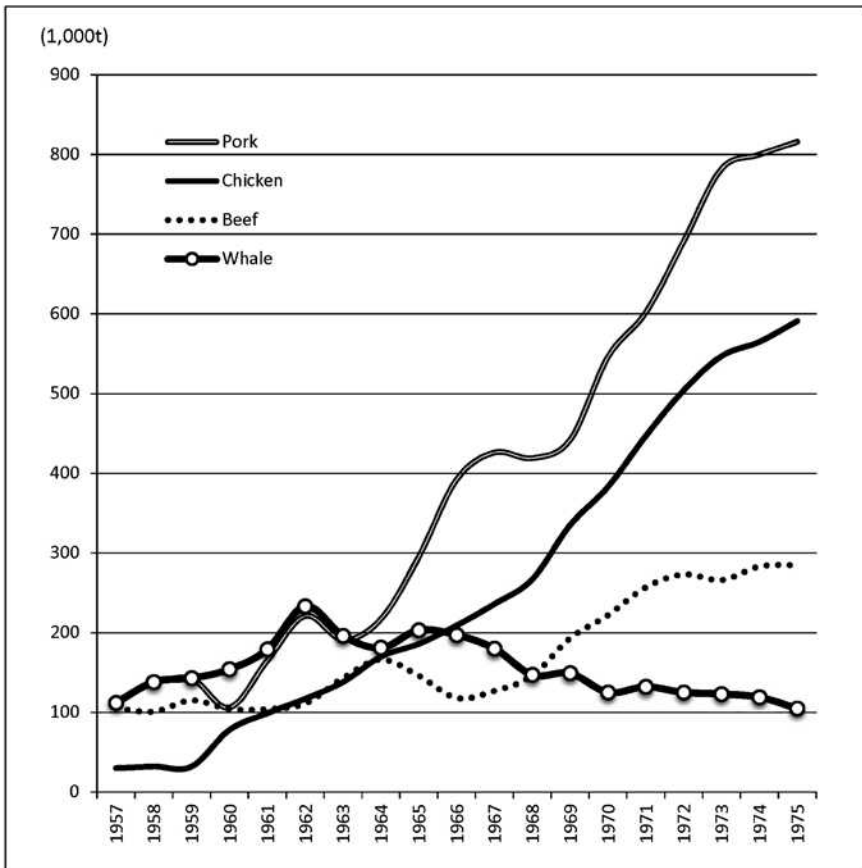


Figure 7.3. Major meat consumption in Japan (1,000mt): 1957–1975. Source: *Food Balance Sheet* (MAFF of Japan).

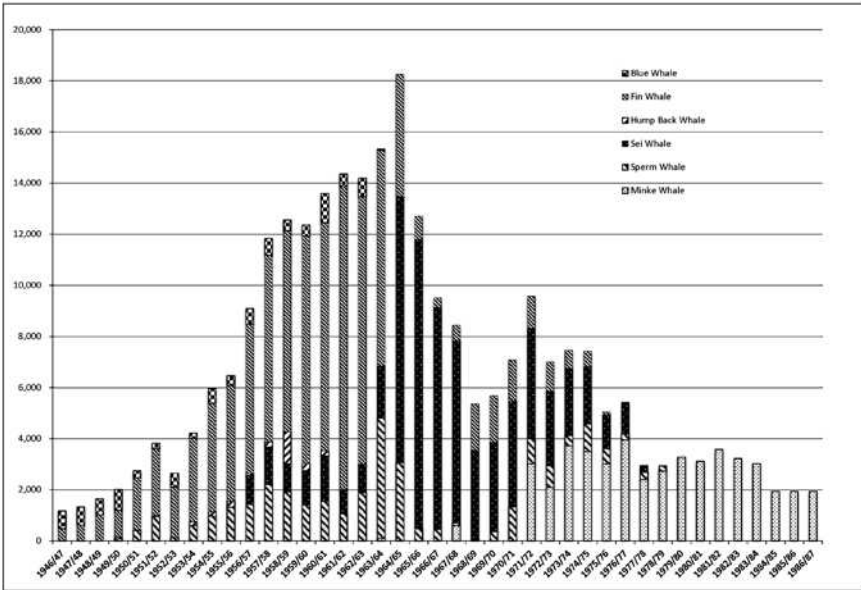


Figure 7.4. Baleen whales caught by Japanese Antarctic whaling expeditions by species. Source: Sakuramoto, Hidehiro, and Tanaka, *Geiruisigen no kenkyu to kanri*, 240–254.

species with less blubber, which made production of oil uneconomical. Full-scale commercial whaling of minke whales in the Antarctic Ocean only began during the 1971–1972 season and the minke whale became the only species commercially harvested in the Antarctic Ocean in 1979. The minke was also the main species targeted by coastal whaling, until Japan adhered to the IWC’s moratorium of commercial whaling in 1987. The meat of minke whales from both Antarctic and coastal whaling operations was distributed for food consumption. Through this process, the minke whale became a symbol for whaling, one that referred exclusively to meat production rather than oil. This transformation was not initiated by the Japanese whaling industry. Rather, changes in the global oil market and whaling quotas had a major effect.

Whale Meat Foodways in Japan

The Collections of Japanese Foodways (Nippon no shokuseikatsu zenshu) compiled records of home-cooked food across Japan during the late 1920s and early 1930s.⁹ It is a fifty-volume series that describes food from all forty-seven prefectures and one Indigenous ethnic minority, the Ainu in Hokkaido. Each volume, based on extensive oral histories, features both food prepared for everyday use as well as for special occasions such as New Year's celebrations. *The Collections* reveals that of forty-seven prefectures, twenty-seven have at least one kind of whale meat dish. Saga Prefecture listed sixteen varieties of whale dishes, followed by twelve in Yamaguchi and Fukuoka, nine in Wakayama, and eight in Nagasaki and Hyogo. With the exception of Hyogo Prefecture, each of these prefectures have locations where traditional whaling parties (*kujira-gumi*) were active (Taiji, a small coastal town in Wakayama Prefecture, both has a long history as a traditional whaling center and is still an active whaling base today).

The Collections describes recipes collected before the Japanese ventured into Antarctic whaling, when whale meat was obtained through coastal whaling. It was in the early twentieth century when Norwegian-type modern whaling gained a foothold in Japan, and increasing amounts of whale meat were supplied to the domestic market. An examination of the dishes introduced in *The Collections* reveals how whales were consumed in Japan a century ago, when whaling had become just modernized. However, modern readers should bear in mind that this was before refrigerators were common, and so most of the whale meat and blubber in *The Collections* was salted. In whaling regions, residents were proficient in such methods of preparation and preservation, and consumption of raw meat was limited to the winter months.

Blubber was often used for making soup stock. Interestingly, *kujira-jiru* (whale soup) is favored in the northern and northeastern parts of Japan, such as Hokkaido, Aomori, and Yamagata. According to *The Collections*, residents of both Hokkaido and Aomori eat *kujira-jiru* during the cold of winter. However, residents of Yamagata reported that *kujira-jiru* was good after a summer's hard work in the rice paddies. According to a whale meat processor in Chiba Prefecture, whale blubber used to sell well in Yamagata but is no longer as popular.¹⁰ Agriculture in Japan has changed dramatically from the days of the stories in *The Collections*.

No precise national statistics break down whale meat consumption by prefecture. According to a survey conducted in 2008 by Kyodo Senpaku, the company that provided ships for SPW, the top five prefectures for annual consumption per capita of whale meat produced from SPW were Nagasaki (197 grams), Saga (168 grams), Miyagi (148 grams), Yamaguchi (133 grams), and Fukuoka (120 grams).¹¹ With the exception of Miyagi Prefecture, all of these prefectures have been home to whaling bases since the seventeenth century. On the other hand, Miyagi Prefecture presently has an active base for coastal whaling. The survey indicates that even today, whale meat is consumed mostly in parts of western Japan where whaling was once prevalent but has since ceased. In Japan, whale consumption is not a national food culture, but instead a local cultural practice in specific regions that have inherited whale meat foodways.

Baird's Beaked Whale (*Berardius bairdii*) Whaling

In the sixteenth century, organized whale hunting methods were developed in Japan, followed by the creation of specialized whaling organizations, known as *kujira-gumi* (or whaling parties). Famous *kujira-gumi* include the Masutomi-gumi of Hirado (presently Nagasaki Prefecture), the Ukitsu-gumi of Muroto (presently Kochi Prefecture), and the Taiji-gumi of Kumano (presently Wakayama Prefecture). Many others could be found across the archipelago. *Kujira-gumi* had of a strict division of labor, with four hundred to six hundred crew members aboard a fleet of whaling boats, and another two hundred to three hundred workers on land.¹² Although their main product was whale oil for lighting and pesticides, the production of whale meat, which was often salted for preservation, increased in volume as a domestic commodity distribution system developed across the nation.

Most *kujira-gumi* developed in the western part of the Japanese archipelago. These groups hunted mainly baleen whales, such as the North Pacific right whale (*Eubalaena japonica*), gray whale (*Eschrichtius robustus*), humpback whale (*Megaptera novaeangliae*), and sei whale (*Balaenoptera borealis*). They were occasionally able to catch fin whales (*Balaenoptera physalus*), the second largest cetacean in the world. The *kujira-gumi* harvested whales by entangling them in several layers of nets, and then spearing them after they had exhausted themselves trying to escape.

Among the *kujira-gumi* during the seventeenth and nineteenth century, the Daigo-gumi of Awa (current Chiba Prefecture) was a

rare exception in terms of location, target species, whaling method, and economic activity. First, it was the only *kujira-gumi* established in the eastern part of Japan facing the Pacific Ocean during that period. Second, the Daigo-gumi exclusively hunted Baird's beaked whales, which migrate near Boso Peninsula in summer. Third, they hunted the pods of Baird's beaked whales that came into Edo Bay exclusively by spearing, rather than by using nets as other *kujira-gumi* did. This is because Baird's beaked whales swam up to a depth of more than a thousand meters, making it impossible to entangle them with nets. Fourth, although whale oil produced from Baird's beaked whales was sold in Edo (Tokyo), the whale meat was exclusively consumed by the local whaling community and rarely sold externally. This is because the Baird's beaked whale is a toothed whale and thus its meat was considered to have less economic value than that of baleen whales.¹³ Furthermore, the whaling season for the Baird's beaked whale in Awa was summer, which meant that the meat spoiled easily. Thus consumption of whale meat in dried form, locally called *tare*, developed. Even today, the people of Awa area have an inherited taste for dried whale meat.

The Daigo-gumi ceased whaling operations in 1869.¹⁴ Local entrepreneurs tried to emulate it, hunting Baird's beaked whales using the American bomb-lance method in fishing grounds that extended out from Edo Bay into the Pacific Ocean. None were successful until modern whaling methods were introduced. Modern whaling, or Norwegian whaling, was introduced to Japan in the early twentieth century, and new whaling bases were established in the eastern part of Japan facing the Pacific Ocean. Among them, the base in Ayukawa, Miyagi Prefecture, was the most famous. The company Toyo Fisheries (which later became Nippon Suisan) established its whaling base there in 1906, marking the start of modern whaling in Japan. The following year, a local company in Boso Peninsula successfully employed the Norwegian whaling method for Baird's beaked whales. That company, Tokai Fisheries, produced both oil and meat, which was still consumed locally as dried *tare*. By the end of the 1910s, Chiba Prefecture had twenty-six small whaling companies. The prefectural government eventually oversaw the merger of these into two main companies: Tokai Fisheries and the Suzuki-gumi, with only twelve vessels in total. Whaling permits increased to fifteen in 1940, but in 1941, the two companies merged into Tokai Fisheries.¹⁵

In 1948, a new company, Gaibo Whaling, joined the hunts for Baird's beaked whale in Wada Town. At the time, Tokai Fisheries and

Gaibo Whaling were the two companies in Chiba Prefecture that targeted Baird's beaked whales during the summer hunting season. In winter, the two companies hunted minke whales in other waters. In 1969, Tokai Fisheries ceased whaling. Another company took over but it too stopped whaling operations in 1973. Since then, Gaibo Whaling has been the only whaling company in Chiba Prefecture.

In addition to meat, Gaibo Whaling once produced oil and fertilizer from blubber and the bones of the Baird's beaked whales they harvested. Fertilizer was used in loquat (*Eriobotrya japonica*) farming nearby, which made the loquats sweeter. Producing oil and fertilizer was so malodorous that the company stopped producing these products in the 1980s. Currently, Gaibo Whaling produces *tare*, dried meat and canned meat. The company sells meat locally, and ships blubber to areas that favor *kujira-jiru* such as Yamagata Prefecture. Baird's beaked whale blubber now serves as a substitute for that of fin or sei whales, which was common in the past.

As the season for Baird's beaked whale is only two months, from July to August, Gaibo Whaling also takes part in SPW hunts in the Northeast Pacific Ocean in April, May, June, September, and October. The company keeps a stock of minke whale meat harvested during these hunts, and processes it into several products. Minke whale products are shipped to other regions, and Baird's beaked products are made exclusively for local consumption.

Tare is a simple product, dried with soy sauce, sake, and other seasonings. In the past, it was mainly produced privately by families, but this practice has faded recently. To prepare *tare*, lean meat was purchased by the kilo, and the preparer had to be skilled at separating the best meat, as sinewy meat is not suitable. The *obon* holiday, in which Japanese families gather to pay respects to their ancestors, is held in mid-August, during the season for hunting Baird's beaked whales. *Tare* is considered to be a required food item for family reunions at this time of the year in the southern part of the Boso Peninsula. Restaurant owners and local community volunteers team up to prepare Baird's beaked whale meat dishes for the occasion. When the first Baird's beaked whale arrives, Gaibo Whaling invites primary school students to show them the flensing process and illustrate the whale's anatomy. The company holds a two-day whaling seminar every July, where participants can learn about whales and whaling. If a hunt is successful, participants can observe the flensing process to better understand how wild animals are harvested from nature. This is the living heritage of

coastal whaling, supported by the culinary and historical traditions behind the hunts of Baird's beaked whales in the Boso Peninsula.

Conclusion

Berardius bairdii foodways are a local, inherited tradition in the southern part of Boso Peninsula in Chiba. Although *Berardius* whaling has a long history that dates to the seventeenth century, the methods have undergone considerable changes. The earliest whalers were passive, waiting for Baird's beaked whales to come to the entrance of Edo Bay. In the early twentieth century, when modern whaling was introduced, *Berardius* whaling became an active pursuit for whales in the Pacific Ocean. Until the 1980s, the main purpose of the hunts was to produce whale oil and lean meat for local consumption. When catches of larger rorquals was banned, demand for *Berardius* blubber rose in the northern part of Japan, where it was used for *kujira-jiru*.

Baird's beaked whaling is an example of the local and multi-faceted nature of Japanese whaling traditions. The coastal whaling tradition consists of widely varying different stories. In this sense, neither super whale nor the reverse super whale myth can contribute to resolving the Japanese whaling debate. The solution to such a complex issue begins with an understanding of the diversity of coastal whaling in Japan.

Notes

1. For the food balance sheet produced by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries of Japan, see "The 92nd Statistical Yearbook of Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries," <https://www.maff.go.jp/e/data/stat/92nd/index.html> (accessed July 31, 2021).
2. After Japan withdrew from the IWC in June 2019, Hachinohe in Aomori Prefecture has been added as the sixth small-type coastal whaling port.
3. Kalland, "Super Whale," 7. Arne Kalland expressed the idea of super whale against criticism for Norway's resumption of coastal commercial whaling in 1993 (see "Management by Totemization" and "Whale Politics and Green Legitimacy").
4. For the multiple relationships between whales and human beings, see Cotterrell and Gray, "Sustainable Development"; and Mullin, "Mirrors and Windows."
5. Institute of Cetacean Research, *Nihon kinkai ni iru geirui*.

6. The Mawaki ruins is one of the few archeological sites where skulls of small cetaceans have been unearthed. See Mawaki Iseki Jyomonkan (Mawaki Archeology Museum), “Iruka ryo no mura” (Village of dolphin hunting), <http://www.mawakiiseki.jp/dolphin.html> (accessed July 31, 2021).
7. Toyo Whaling (formerly Toyo Fisheries) was the first company to successfully introduce Norwegian whaling in Japan after the Russo-Japanese War in 1906. The company advertised the prospect of modern whaling (Toyo Hogeï, *Honpo no noruweishiki hogeishi*). Murakami Ryukichi was then top bureaucrat in the fisheries policy and advertised advantages of whale meat as nutritious and less expensive in a women’s magazine (“Shinshokuryo tositeno geiniku to sono ryoriho”) in 1919.
8. A maritime historian, Morita Katsuaki is one of the first scholars who clearly pointed out Japanese Antarctic whaling was in search for whale oil but not for whale meat (*Kujira to hogeï no bunkashi*).
9. *Nippon no shokuseikatsu zenshu*.
10. Shoji Yoshinori, owner of whale meat processing plant and small-type coastal whaling company in Wada, Chiba Prefecture, interview, March 2018.
11. The survey does not indicate the whale species but minke whale meat is likely dominant.
12. Torisu, *Saikai hogeigyoshi no kenkyu*, 14–17.
13. For the history of Japanese coastal whaling, see Freeman et al., *Small-Type Coastal Whaling*; Kalland and Moeran, *Japanese Whaling*; and Arch, *Bringing Whales Ashore*.
14. Kojima, “Hogeïbunka niokeru dento,” 60.
15. Komaki, *Buri no nushi*, 247–257; and Kanari, *Boso no hogeï*, 94.

North Pacific

Whale Country

Bering Strait Bowheads and their Hunters in the Nineteenth Century

Bathsheba Demuth

SOMETIME AT THE END OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY, a bowhead whale was born. It was late winter, the ice drawn far south in the Bering Sea by months of low sun and lower temperature. His mother had found an open place in the pack ice to deliver. In a shelter of air amid the inverted blue and crystalline ranges of ice, she lifted her pale calf for his first breath at the surface. All along the loose edge of the ice pack, other bowheads were giving birth. A quiet labor, a gush of blood, and a new whale slipped into seas that were home to more than twenty thousand other *Balaena mysticetus*. By June, mother and calf and their herd turned toward the Beaufort Sea, north of Alaska and Canada, the passage of their backs marking the underside of the sea ice. When the chill dark of early winter thickened the pack ice, bringing the danger of sealing the mammals off from oxygen, the whales turned south. Half a year into his life, the calf swam with bolder deep dives and long gasps at the surface.

On this surface, the Beringian seas can seem barren—pewter gray and raw with storms in summer, choked with ice through sunless winter. But the Bering Sea is home to teeming billions of phytoplankton and the krill that feed from them, the small life that anchors one of the richest marine ecosystems in the world. The work of a whale is to turn this diffused energy into hundred-ton bodies.¹

With their flesh, bowheads also made the lives of other beings. Some of the calves fed orcas. Some fed people. Bowheads carry more

calories per pound of flesh than any other Arctic species on land or sea. Even a yearling bowhead whale could nourish a village for six months. Yupik and Iñupiat in northeastern Alaska, and Yupik and coastal Chukchi on the Chukchi Peninsula, were the first peoples to hunt the bowhead calf.

They were not the last. A bowhead can live for more than two centuries, and this calf was born when the United States had not yet purchased Louisiana and the Russian Empire owned Alaska.² That the calf survived is remarkable, not just because two hundred years is a long time for a mammal to live. *Balaena mysticetus* were the lure that drew the industrial revolution and its ideologies into Beringia. Commercial whaling ships were the vanguard, staffed with unlikely revolutionaries, men laboring to make a wage by transforming whale bodies into commodities. Their rituals of slaughter and profit are a study in the expectations of a growing market. They sailed into a place where whales were not for sale but were understood as souls by the Iñupiat, Yupik, and Chukchi, who hunted them with expectations of a world constantly reincarnating and never easy to survive in. And there were the whales themselves, animals who, in the first years of this revolution, learned the danger of American ships and chose, with their behavior, to frustrate the desires of commerce.

In late September 1852, two groups of whale killers met on Chukotka's northeast coast. A pair of Beringian hunters scouting the coastline near their fall camp sighted thirty-three ragged men limping southeast across the tundra. At first, the hunters kept their distance. They were outnumbered, without a common language. But Arctic desperation transcended speech. The crews' salvaged supplies—biscuits, rum, molasses, flour, the cooked remains of their pet pig, a makeshift tent—would not long stand the winter already bearing down from the mountains. The hunting party deliberated, observed, and opted for the mercy of hosting them through the winter.

The men were survivors of the wrecked *Citizen*, a ship come from New Bedford, Massachusetts, to join in the fifth season of commercial whaling. They were openly grateful to their hosts. Captain Thomas Norton later described them as showing “a degree of sympathy for us in our destitute and dependent condition wholly unlooked for, and altogether unexpected.”³ But gratitude did not make whale fat palatable. The American crew found the slippery, chewy stuff nearly unbearable, especially because they ate it raw, with no “further change in the

promiscuous and offensive elements than what time itself would produce.”⁴ Taste—like attitudes toward bathing, sexual propriety, ownership, clothing, and religion—was one of many things Norton did not share with his hosts. The incommensurate ideals between whalers from New England and whalers from Beringia did not come from incompatible labor. Each made their living from the death of whales. The difference was in how they answered more elemental questions. What is a person? What is a whale? What is a whale’s value? What will the future be? Norton saw that the whale was the “staff of life” in Chukotka, but did not know how to ask much else. He did not even know what language they spoke.

Nor did Norton, sheltered in his tent, see how living in Beringia was an experience of constant change. One year, few geese come to their habitual lake. One winter, a storm surge brings the sea ice alive and pushes it hundreds of feet inland, crushing anything in its path. One moment, a hunter, crouched over a seal’s breathing hole on the sea ice, is surprised by a polar bear. From experience of this temperamental material world, Yupik, Iñupiat, and Chukchi interpreted an incorporeal social realm, one in which few things had a permanent form, but most things had souls. Just as the future might be transformed by sea ice suddenly on land, souls could change their places. There was no hard line between humans and other persons, land and seas were alive with sentience, judgment, and perilous whims.

Bowhead whales cooperated with humans through a specific kind of transformation: by giving themselves over to die. Asatchaq, an Iñupiaq man born in the 1890s, explained eighty years later that whales watched people from their own country, or *nunat*. “‘Those who feed the poor and the old, we’ll go to,’ the whales would say. ‘We’ll give them our meat.’”⁵ They made this choice based on the moral worth and ceremonial care of the people who ate them.⁶ Women spoke with the whales through solitary ritual, where the tongue of a particularly powerful shaman transformed into a whale’s tail.⁷ On Sivuqaq, Yupik brought meat to the sea, to feed the bowheads that fed them, while singing in low voices.⁸ Without these preparations, the whales would tell each other that the humans were not ready, morally or practically. Unwilling to die for the unworthy, they would keep to their own country.⁹

If the whales left their country, they swam near Alaska in spring, and in spring and autumn along the beaches and headlands in Chukotka, where some Chukchi villages also hunted gray whales in summer. In these seasons, boat crews prepared the *umiak*, the walrus-hide

boat that sheltered six or eight hunters on the cold sea. Each had a captain, often a man able, like his wife, to cast his soul into the country of whales, and skilled in the practical tasks of the hunt: making sure harpoons, ropes, floats, and spears were clean and bleached white, a color beloved of whales. Then the *umiak* crews went to watch, on the edge of the ice. Someone in the group always had an eye on the open water, where a black back might rise. A party could watch for weeks. They did not light fires or speak much. Each man wore new light-colored clothes so that they would seem to underwater eyes like part of the sky and ice. On Sivuqaq, women sent their husbands to sea with a prayer “that the hunters would go out as if transparent, casting no shadow.”¹⁰

When a whale came, the hunters had minutes—seconds—to act. They knew the sharp hearing of bowheads, and so moved on muffled feet and with few words. An experienced captain might wait for the steamy rush of a whale’s exhalation to mask the scrape of hulls against ice. As the boats stole toward the whale in silence, Yupik hunters watched for the animal to speak through its movement, signaling by the way it turned and dived how long the captain would live, and if it would choose to die.¹¹ Once the whale turned to dive again, the hunters addressed it. Paul Silook, who grew up hunting whales on Sivuqaq in the 1930s, described captains calling “out the name of the ceremonies, asking them to go ahead of the whale and stop it.”¹² Iñupiaq men sang as their harpoons came in range.

If they closed on a large whale, the captain waited for it to offer a flank in the vulnerable moment of breath. Then came the strike: the backward-curving barbs on each harpoon twisted a wound deep into the fat and muscle under the bowhead’s skin. Bound by a cord to a sealskin float, dozens of harpoons held the struggling body to the surface, the whale’s effort to escape working the points inward toward the heart or the spine. In a froth of frigid water and hot blood, killing the pinned animal might take most of a day. It was dangerous work. The whole great back could rise under an *umiak*, tossing its cargo into the cold spray. Sometimes, the chase ended with the whale living. The bowhead born at the end of the eighteenth century collected more than one harpoon in his first decades, carrying a museum of old weapons in his flesh for the rest of his life.

After the whale died, hunters pinned still flippers to the corpse and pulled it toward the ice or land to butcher. Every person with an able back came, then, to haul it from the water. Once terrestrial, the



Figure 8.1. Iñupiaq bowhead hunt at Utqiagvik, early twentieth century. Source: National Archives, US Department of Defense. Identifier 531123. Unrestricted use. Accessed September 6, 2021. <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/531123>.

body rose in a blue-black mound, blood leaching into the ice, leaving a tang of iron in the air as the whole village began working to separate skin from blubber from meat from bone. The tongue alone weighed a ton. Around the butchering, children chewed bits of blubber, their faces shiny with fat. Almost all of a bowhead that is not bone was eaten, from the heart and intestines to raw skin that prevented scurvy.¹³ Women packed meat into permafrost pits to last the summer. The blubber was stored to eat and burn in the lamps that warmed half-subterranean houses, some with rafters made from bowhead jaws.

As the great body came apart, it assembled social order. The carcass was divided according to rank: the choice fluke meat belonged to the first boat to land a harpoon, the flippers to the first and second boat, the lower jaws to the fourth and fifth boats.¹⁴ Those with no share, the old and the unlucky and the widowed, were the responsibility of successful families, who gave of their whale as the whale had given itself—an act both practical and reverent, in that it made a hunter and his wife worthy of leadership among people and worthy of future whale deaths. So did the days of feasting and ceremonies that followed the hunt, each nation with its songs and dances and particular offerings. Yupik hunters on Sivuqaaq mixed the liquid from a whale's

punctured eye with charcoal as paint for sacred designs on their whale-boats.¹⁵ These were all parts of the answer Beringians might have given, had Thomas Norton been able to ask in 1852, to the question “What is a whale?” It made the darkness of the polar nights visible, the cold bearable, and stomachs satiable. It was a soul in life, a gift assuring human survival in its death, a means to power, a site of communal labor, a set of expectations and ceremonies, a theory of history.

When bowheads part from solitude, they often congregate with other whales close in size. When the whale born at the end of the eighteenth century left the company of his mother, he likely spent years migrating early into the ice field with other juveniles, the old bulls and cows coming behind.¹⁶ In those decades, humans posed limited risk. People killed ten to fifteen bowheads every year in Chukotka and forty to sixty in Northwest Alaska.¹⁷ No mind, human or otherwise, could imagine more. If the bowhead knew of human danger—if such warnings were carried in the refrains of his kind, or in his memories of his harpoon gorings—it was near shore. The open ocean was not a menace. That is, it was not until men like Thomas Norton came north.

A whale for the men on the *Citizen* had no soul or country. But a whale had value. If reduced to oil and baleen and shipped to New



Figure 8.2. Bowhead whale jaws with whaling boat frames in the background, Sivuqaaq (Gambell), Alaska, 2017. Photograph by the author.

England, bowheads were commodities, natural objects just one sale away from currency. The commodity value of bowheads came from the condensed energy in their blubber, primarily, and the properties of their baleen. In this, consumers of whales in New England and in Beringia were similar. But a whale killed by a Yankee ship in the nineteenth century was not desired as food. Instead, cetacean fats lubricated a mechanizing country, first greasing sewing machines and clocks, and then cotton gins and power looms. Baleen was useful for its “fibrous and elastic structure,” employed in the manufacture of consumer objects not yet satisfied by plastics or spring steel.¹⁸ Refined whale tallow became fine-grade soap, a base for perfume, and filler for quality leather shoes.

Above all, the energy stored in whales became light. In New England, whale oil had been used as an illuminant since the 1630s. By the early nineteenth century, the demand for indoor lighting was growing alongside America’s population, and the United States was not yet refining fossil fuels into lamp-friendly kerosene. Light came, for the most part, from animal fats or seeds. Whale oil, especially from sperms, produced the brightest light. It had no scent—a problem with pork tallow. Whale oil did not explode easily, like camphene. In the early sunsets and long winters of Boston, New York, Providence, and other eastern cities, whale-fueled lamps lit homes and factory floors, streetlamps and the headlights of trains. Whales guided ships home from lighthouses. Energy gathered from distant oceans became an intimate part of domestic and civic life for people who had never seen, touched, or tasted a whale.

It was men like Thomas Norton who did the seeing and touching of whales, in that their labor made cetacean bodies into bottled light and distilled value. A voyage, to a whaler, meant years spent amid reek and risk. Whaling vessels wrecked. Sometimes they caught fire. Ports of call featured strange languages, brawls, and unseemly diseases. Winds died and left ships fallow for weeks. Men’s bones broke, wounds festered, scurvy threatened, bowels ran, and doctors were rare. What was not in doubt was whales’ value, the monetary worth of getting “a cargo of oil,” as Captain Edward Davoll told his crew in the New Bedford harbor.¹⁹ That crew came from all classes, ranks, races, religions, and motives. Men from the Azores, Cape Verde, Indigenous New England nations, and freed or escaped slaves met with New England sailors and crew native to the ports and islands visited along a ship’s Pacific route.²⁰ “The crew seem to be somewhat of a mixed up mess 5 white 5 kanakas 2 portuguese [*sic*] 3 colored brethren with the

cook who could be called black being the darkest one of all,” wrote Mary Brewster, who sailed for the North Pacific in 1849 with her captain husband.²¹ She was the only woman on board. Many ships had none. Experience also varied, as sailors were often recruited green. Walter Burns signed on as a member of the forecandle crew for the promise of “strange lands and climes, romance and fresh experiences,” and “a pile of money.”²² These new sailors left in debt to the ship’s financiers for their oilskins, utensils, shoes, and bedding, ignorant of route, duration, or expectations of the voyage to come.

In 1848, many of those voyages went to the Pacific. A fifth of the world’s whaling fleet was north of Hawaii, aspiring in seas already diminished to fill distant lamps.²³ Captain Thomas Roys, in the *Superior*, was among them. Three years before, Roys had been on Kamchatka, recovering from ribs broken by a whale fluke, when he heard a Russian naval officer describe plentiful whales to the north. Remembering this, Roys turned toward the Bering Strait.²⁴ Near Big Diomedé, his crew killed a new sort of whale: black, slow, exceptionally fat of body, and long of baleen. The *Superior* took sixteen hundred barrels of oil from just eleven kills. Six weeks later, Roys reported hope to the newspapers in Honolulu: cruising “from continent to continent, going as high as the lat. 70, [I] saw whales wherever I went.”²⁵

Each year, bowhead whales sing new songs, filling the waters around the Bering Strait—the Bering Sea to the south, the Chukchi Sea to the north, and the Beaufort Sea to the northeast—with two or three distinct musical patterns. The bowheads mostly sing in winter, the seas gradually filling with the same chorus as whales dozens of miles distant pick up the notes. Such knowledge passed down through kin lines is the mark of culture.²⁶

Humans can also move information rapidly across the sea. Roys’s 1848 account brought fifty ships to the Bering Strait the following year. “The Arctic,” Mary Brewster wrote, as the *Tiger* sailed north, “seems a long look, but from all accounts there are plenty of whale.”²⁷ She found Roys did not exaggerate. On July 8, she recorded “a large number of whale,” then “quantities of whale” on July 9, “plenty of whale” on July 10, “a great many whale” on July 11, “some whale” on July 13, and “any quantity of whale just come through the straits bound north” on July 14.²⁸ The new “polar whales” were huge. A single kill might give 150, 200, or 300 barrels of oil, three times the yield of the average sperm whale, and sometimes three thousand pounds

of baleen.²⁹ And the bowheads were “slow and sluggish beasts,” often seen “moving leisurely,” one captain’s son wrote, “spouting with a regularity that indicated a peaceful state of mind.”³⁰

The bowheads were less peaceful once struck by a harpoon. They dove. Or they fled with the boat dragging behind. One hunt on the *Francis* began with a strike at seven in the morning; then the whale “ran with [the starboard boat] so fast that the other boats could not catch them did not get him killed until 6.P.M. and they were then out of sight of the ship 14 to 15 miles to windward.”³¹ Orson Shattuck considered his life “perilled [*sic*] every time that we are fast to a whale it requires great skill and judgment to kill one of those remorseless creatures,” and “even the most skilled are sometimes killed.”³² Cephas Thomas, log keeper of the *Roman II*, met such a fate when “the Blow of the whale’s flukes hit [his boat] edge ways which killed him instantly, the whale struck him the second time while in the water which sunk him.”³³

Despite the perils, it was usually the whale that died. As the crew towed a carcass to the ship and winched it half free of the water, they could assess what of its corpse would translate into a wage: a large “first-class” brown-skinned bowhead might get two hundred barrels of oil, a “third-class” black-skinned bowhead only seventy-five.³⁴ To get the oil, the whale had to be flayed. With long-handled spades, the crew “cut in,” paring blubber away from muscle. The fat might be a foot thick or more, held as sheets by the dark skin. Whalers called these “blanket pieces.” Suspended alongside oleaginous banners, slick with grease, the crew flensed but did not butcher, except when a calf looked “like nice beef” for supper.³⁵ Back in New Bedford or Boston, Americans had no appetite for whale meat. Other than blubber, only the “monster head” had value, for its “splendid bone”—the baleen hung “inside the mouth like a good sized room.”³⁶ Once decapitated and stripped of lipid, the remaining tons, the muscle and organs and bones, were “set adrift to make a feast for the petrels, albatross and sharks.”³⁷ It was only as commodity oil and baleen that whales became useful to a sailor: a way to make a personal future, to buy another year’s food and shelter. That was the value of a bowhead to Thomas Norton, his answer to the question “What is a whale?” It was the motto etched into many a scrimshaw: “Death to the living, long life to the killers, Success to sailors wives & greasy luck to the whalers.”³⁸ *Greasy* luck to make greasy palms: whaler slang for money.

Bowhead whales are animals of the ice. The world has two primary populations, one in the North Atlantic and the other in Beringia, and both are adepts of polynyas and leads, the spaces where ice splits to reveal inky water to the sky. Bowheads navigate these rivers of air for breath. They sing out and listen for how the echoes of their voices map the frozen thickness above, warning of entrapment. When the frost catches them, bowheads will circle and splash, working to keep a channel open. If their way is filled by ice too solid to break, they retreat. These are their tools for living at the asphyxiating boundary of solid and liquid water.

Chukchi, Iñupiat, and Yupik hunters knew how to traverse the Beringian ice field: how to see in it the negative of what whales needed, the solidity to carry human weight rather than thinness that yields a whale's access to air. But for a copper-plated, wood-hulled sailing vessel, the ice was treacherous. In a night, a rime could grow over the ocean and clog the rudder. In a day, solid ice rumbled toward ships on wind and currents. "Early this morning the cry of land was heard which soon proved to be *ice*," Mary Brewster wrote, describing a few weeks later an "anxious day, for at one o'clock this morning the ice began to come upon us."³⁹ The whaling season was dictated by ice, beginning on its retreating edge in April, May, and June, tempting the gales that scoured its summer margin north of the strait into September.

Amid that ice in 1849, fifty ships killed five hundred whales. The next year, nearly three times as many ships rendered more than two thousand bowheads into oil. For captains and crew, these tallies represented hope: the *Whalemen's Shipping List* proclaimed it doubtful "if so much oil was ever taken in the same period, by the same number of ships, and attended with so few casualties."⁴⁰ In 1851, more of the Yankee fleet sailed for the Bering Strait.

They found different seas. The ice pack was thicker, slower to disperse in a cold summer. "Much ice in," one captain wrote. But more dramatic were the changed bowheads. The *Hibernia's* log described "whales going into the Ice" when they lowered boats, repeatedly, on the 10th and 11th of June. Then, three whales evaded their hunters in the ice on the 22nd. Another escaped on the 29th. And so on.⁴¹ Bowheads now identified whaleboats by sight; as a log keeper noted after a failed chase, the "Whale saw the boat and rolled away."⁴² The *Whalemen's Shipping List* summarized the season as one of whales suddenly "few and wild."⁴³

The next year was no different. If anything, the bowheads were wilder. When cornered, the animals dove away quickly, or swam backward under the harpooner's boat. Whales that had escaped a strike were especially canny; one recognizable for the steamboat-like whistle of his spout evaded whalers for years because he "always seemed to know when a boat was close to him" and would dive out of range.⁴⁴ Others, as the *Saratoga* log described, seemed to taunt their hunters: "16 boats charging one poor bowhead, who gave them all the slip, and went off shaking his tail at them as if to say 'oh no you don't.'"⁴⁵ The Yankee fleet began singing a new chanty, about bowheads "like spirits though once they were like snails / I really believed the devil has got into bowhead whales."⁴⁶

Bowhead whales had learned that, against the Yankee fleet, evasion and ice offered an effective shelter. Only nine hundred were killed in 1851, half as many as the season before. A year later, Captain Norton disregarded reports of shy whales and assertive ice. His crew found bowheads "working quickly to the north," slipping from harpoon range into "loose, floating ice into which they went and shortly disappeared."⁴⁷ The *Citizen* was one of more than two hundred vessels the bowheads forced to sail close among the bergs. The fleet managed to kill more than two thousand whales that season but four ships foundered on the ice. Norton's crew was one; staying north of Chukotka in September, they killed their last whale in the early hours of the storm that wrecked their ship.

Nine months later, the *Niger* and *Joseph Hayden* rescued Norton and the rest of the *Citizen's* crew after their winter in Chukchi huts. One sailor was overcome enough to drop to his knees and pray. As Norton sailed home in 1853, several more ships passed too close to the ice and sank. A year later, only forty-five vessels sailed to the strait. A third of them ended the season having killed no whales. The Yankee fleet retreated south. More than ten thousand bowheads likely remained in the Bering and Chukchi and Beaufort Seas, and still died for Iñupiaq and Yupik and Chukchi hunters; at least, the oral record contains no indication of whales fleeing *umiaks*, and it is a record sensitive to such changes.⁴⁸ But no bowhead became commodity oil for the next two years.

After three summers of observing mass death, the value of the ice had changed for a bowhead: the whales began using the floes as a tool against slaughter. Their culture, at the surface observed by commercial hunters, became one of choosing not to die for the market.

Notes

1. Lowry, "Foods and Feeding Ecology"; Roman et al., "Whales as Marine Ecosystem Engineers"; Smith, "Bigger Is Better"; and Niebauer and Schell, "Physical Environment."
2. The technique used to age whales gives a range for this individual between 177 and 245 years; I am using the average. George et al., "Age and Growth Estimates"; and Haag, "Patented Harpoon."
3. Holmes, *Arctic Whalemen*, 84. Thomas Norton recounted the wreck of the *Citizen* to Lewis Holmes, the ship's logs having been lost.
4. Holmes, *Arctic Whalemen*, 119.
5. Lowenstein, *Ancient Land*, 116.
6. See Fienup-Riordan, *Eskimo Essays*, 66–67; and Sakakibara, "Kiavallakkikput Agviq."
7. Turner, "American Eskimos," 100.
8. Hughes, "Translation," 78; and Apassingok, Walunga, and Tennant, *Sivuqam Nangaghnegha*, 1:205–207, 223.
9. Asatchaq, *Things That Were Said*, 116.
10. Apassingok, Walunga, and Tennant, *Sivuqam Nangaghnegha*, 3:157.
11. Apassingok, Walunga, and Tennant, *Sivuqam Nangaghnegha*, 2:145.
12. Henry Bascom Collins Collection, Unprocessed Box 3, File: Collins 1930.00A, 4–5, Smithsonian Institution. On whaling, see VanStone, *Point Hope*; Jolles, *Faith, Food, and Family*; and Burch, *Iñupiaq Eskimo*.
13. Whitridge, "Prehistory of Inuit," 108.
14. Lowenstein, *Ancient Land*, 160–161.
15. Apassingok, Walunga, and Tennant, *Sivuqam Nangaghnegha*, 1:237.
16. Moore and Reeves, "Distribution and Movement," 313–386.
17. Stoker and Krupnik, "Subsistence Whaling," 592–594.
18. Starbuck, *History*, 155–156. On eating whale, Shoemaker, "Whale Meat."
19. Davoll, *Captain's Specific Orders*, 7.
20. On race, see Creighton, *Rites & Passages*, 121–123; Shoemaker, *Native American Whalemen*; and Bolster, *Black Jacks*.
21. Brewster, "Sister Sailor," 337. "Kanaka" referred to Indigenous Pacific Islanders; for a history, see Rosenthal, *Beyond Hawai'i*, chap. 3.
22. Burns, *Year with a Whaler*, 12, 13.
23. *Whalemen's Shipping List and Merchant's Transcript*, January 9, 1849.
24. Charles Melville Scammon Papers, P-K 206, 1:102–103, Bancroft Library; and *Whalemen's Shipping List*, February 6, 1849.
25. *The Friend*, November 4, 1848. News of Roys's discovery appeared in marine journals across the world by 1849. See Bockstoce, *Whales, Ice, and Men*, 24.
26. Lowenstein, *Ancient Land*, xix–xxx; and Whitehead and Rendell, *Cultural Lives*, 83–84, 184–185.
27. Brewster, "Sister Sailor," 372.

28. Brewster, "Sister Sailor," 385–387. On the 1849 season, see Bockstoce, *Whales, Ice, and Men*, 94–95.
29. The average oil yield varies depending on the calculations. See Scammon, *Marine Mammals*, 52; and Bockstoce, *Whales, Ice, and Men*, 95.
30. *Whalemen's Shipping List*, July 12, 1853; and Williams, "Voyage," 370.
31. Logbook of the *Frances*, ODHS 994, 99, New Bedford Whaling Museum.
32. Logbook of the *Frances*, ODHS 994, 97, New Bedford Whaling Museum.
33. Logbook of the *Roman 2nd*, KWM 176, 170, New Bedford Whaling Museum.
34. Scammon, *Marine Mammals*, 58.
35. Williams, "Voyage," 77.
36. Williams, "Voyage," 194.
37. E. West, *Captain's Papers*, 13.
38. John Jones's diary, in Frank, *Meditations from Steerage*, 24.
39. Brewster, "Sister Sailor," 373, 378.
40. *Whalemen's Shipping List*, December 24, 1850.
41. Logbook of the *Hibernia* (Ship), Log 82a, 1868–1869, 55, 57, 58, 60, Mystic Seaport Museum. John Bockstoce first identified this pattern of whale evasion causing decreased commercial success. See *Whales, Ice, and Men*, 101–102.
42. Logbook of the *William Baylies*, ODHS 955, 81, New Bedford Whaling Museum.
43. *Whalemen's Shipping List*, November 25, 1851.
44. Allen, *Whaler and Trader*, 98.
45. Logbook of the *Saratoga*, KWM 180, 192–193, New Bedford Whaling Museum.
46. Frank, *Jolly Sailors Bold*, 339.
47. Holmes, *Arctic Whalemen*, 46.
48. Woodby and Botkin, "Stock Sizes," 390–393.

Two Landings in Lorino

How Environmentalists Confronted the Soviets in the Bering Strait and Discovered Subsistence Whaling

Ryan Tucker Jones

AT THE FAR NORTHERN REACH OF THE PACIFIC OCEAN, the narrow Bering Strait divides two continents. Shallow, foggy, and frigid, the waters around the Strait conceal an underwater world rich in life. Turbulent currents carry nutrients to the surface, where the nearly ceaseless daylight of summer breathes them to life. The plankton blooms nourish invertebrate life in the millions of tons, and many larger creatures feast on these products of storm and sun. Among these creatures are whales, which each summer converge from every direction. Gray whales arrive from their tropical birthing grounds to stir the coastal mud for crustaceans. Bowheads probe and prod the retreating sea ice for the krill that congregate there. Humpbacks, blue whales, sei, and fin whales cruise the region, engulfing gigantic swarms of krill wherever they find them. Humans, too, enter the Strait when the whales come. For more than four thousand years, every summer, Iñupiaq, Yupik, Chukchi people and their ancestors have pursued whales, crossing back and forth, creating communities with each other and—so their stories relate—with the whales they hunt.¹

From the nineteenth century, twin imperial powers in the United States and Russia also came to the Bering Strait, also sometimes in search of whales. To varying degrees they subjugated the region's peoples.² The Russians co-opted Chukchi whaling for their own purposes; the United States first plundered the Bering Strait of whales and then (for a time) left Iñupiat and Yupik to whale on their own. After World

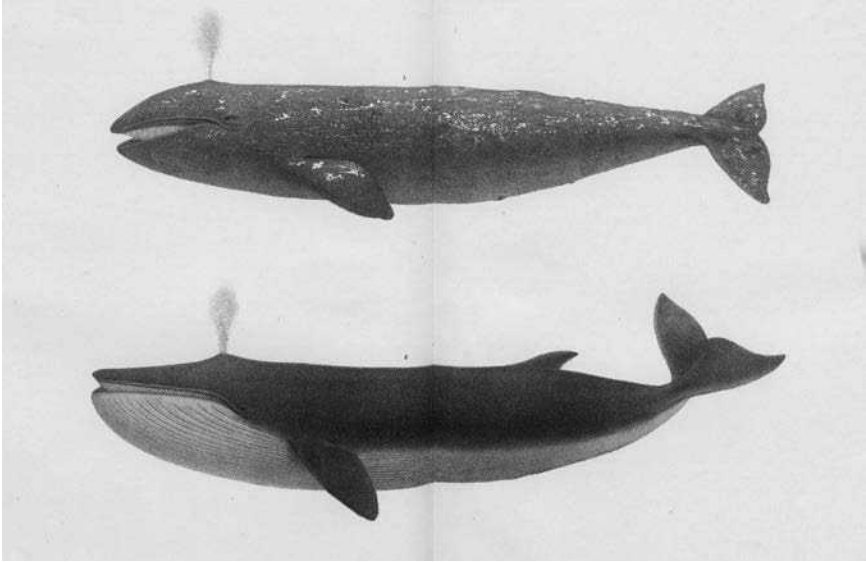


Figure 9.1. Illustration of a gray whale and a fin whale. Source: Scammon, *Marine Mammals*, 24–25.

War II, the Soviets and the Americans also sundered the human ties across the Strait, closing and closely guarding the border between the two fierce Cold War foes. Then, in the early 1980s, new visitors to the Bering Strait arrived—environmentalists—also in pursuit of whales. In 1981, the new environmentalist organization Sea Shepherd came to stage a dramatic and risky protest meant to expose illegal Soviet whaling in the Bering Sea. Two years later, the more established Greenpeace repeated the campaign. Both campaigns crossed the Bering Strait and landed their participants in the Siberian village of Lorino, where they documented whale meat being fed to minks in possible contravention of International Whaling Commission (IWC) rules, which mandated that this whaling be done only for the benefit of Indigenous subsistence. In these dangerous last years of the Cold War, both audacious actions drew media coverage and public attention. However, neither was able to pressure the Soviets to stop whaling.

In fact, these campaigns' deeper significance for Pacific and whaling history lay somewhere else entirely, in the unexpected local opposition environmentalists discovered in the Bering Strait. The story of the two Lorino landings helps explain some of the most important, intertwined histories of Pacific whales and whaling in the late

twentieth century: the development of environmentalism's troubled relationship with Indigenous people as well as the contested legal and popular definitions of subsistence whaling. Encounters in the Bering Strait revealed previously unexamined tensions between Western environmentalist and Indigenous ideas of whales and forced environmentalists to rethink their relationship to whaling. In the wake of the conflicts around the resumption of Makah whaling in the 1990s, these tensions may seem obvious, but they were not nearly so clear in the 1980s.³ Instead, to that point environmentalist organizations such as Greenpeace had enjoyed some synergies with Indigenous communities, and many had imagined they would be natural allies against industrial whalers.

In detailing the story of the Lorino landings, this chapter also begins to unravel one of this book's knottier cords. Namely, the Pacific has helped spawn both long Indigenous traditions of relating to whales and novel Western ideas about the creatures. The importance of whales to both lends a coherence to large swaths of Pacific history and conceals some contradictions. Indigenous and Western ideas are often thought to resemble each other, whales serving both communities as sentient totems of ecological awareness. As Phillip Armstrong notes, however, in New Zealand, Māori legends have been cherry-picked for their superficial resemblance to Western ideas of ecology and sustainability.⁴ Something similar has happened in North America's Pacific Northwest. In various ways, the chapters in this book help trouble that easy conflation while describing important ways Indigenous and Western whale histories have flowed together. Lorino reminds us of this book's other central insight. The conflicts that emerged during the Bering Strait campaigns came not only from differing ideas about whales, but also from the fact that whales crossed the ocean, heedless of political boundaries, inescapably connecting human communities of all kinds around the Pacific.

Bering Strait Whales and Colonialism

The Sea Shepherd and Greenpeace volunteers who landed at Lorino in the early 1980s did not know much about the object of their protest. They suspected that the Soviet Union was not whaling for its stated purpose, to feed their Chukchi and Yupik subjects. They had a good idea that whale meat was instead going to feed minks, whose furs were a valuable part of the Soviet export industry. But that was all

they (or anyone other than the Soviets) knew. This ignorance came in part from Westerners' lack of information about the region and in part from deliberate Soviet efforts to suppress information about their own whaling. Had they known more, though, they would have found Russians' and North Pacific peoples' relationships with whales were surprisingly complex.

Russian colonialism in the North Pacific had long been bound up with whales and with Americans. Although Russia had claimed the Chukchi and Yupik of the Bering Strait as colonial subjects in the eighteenth century, both in fact had retained considerable autonomy. That autonomy included robust trade links across the Bering Strait and with the increasing numbers of American whalers visiting the area from the 1840s.⁵ Then, during a rush to the sea ice between the 1870s and 1890s, Americans decimated the region's bowhead and gray whale populations. This destruction was much more harmful to the people of the Bering Strait than American destruction of whales elsewhere in the Pacific. Depending to a large degree on whale and walrus meat, Yupik and Iñupiaq communities in Alaska starved in the wake of the American onslaught.⁶ Siberia's Chukchi fared somewhat better because they traded right-whale baleen with the Americans for food, but Russians still reported that commercial whaling had "completely depleted the land and its inhabitants."⁷

By the 1920s, the new Soviet government reported that the Chukchi were now "sitting on their half-ruined floors, cursing all whites, and especially the Russians."⁸ That the Chukchi blamed the Russians for their woe was especially galling because the Bolsheviks had redoubled efforts to assert Russian control over the region, a task that included ensuring Chukchi well-being. But—at least in the Soviet estimation—because of American overhunting, the Chukchi were only catching two whales per year.⁹ Soon they switched from their preferred prey of bowheads to less desirable gray whales. Grays too had suffered from American overhunting, having nearly gone extinct in the mid-nineteenth century, but were rebounding as commercial whalers moved on to other species. Targeting grays rather than traditional bowheads and selling some whale products on the market, by the 1930s Chukchi whaling had become more complex than notions of "traditional" whaling would have it. In their adaptations to changing global conditions and their embrace of the market, they resembled contemporaneous Iñupiat in Alaska, Makah whalers in Washington State, and for that matter Indigenous people all around the Pacific.¹⁰

In 1946, a boat full of St. Lawrence Islanders in Alaska made the last crossing over to Siberia before the Soviet Union—its wartime alliance with the United States rapidly collapsing—closed the Bering Strait maritime border.¹¹ The closure separated many Yupik families and severed a vital Pacific trade and travel link that had existed since the Bering Land Bridge. Also in 1946, the world's whaling nations came together to regulate the industry's future, creating the International Whaling Commission. The commission's purview then encompassed only commercial, industrial whaling—with one exception. The Soviet Union, a surprise last-minute joiner to the IWC, insisted that an exception to the ban on gray whale hunting be made for the Chukchi, who depended on the whales for their lives. This insertion established the IWC's precedent for subsistence whaling defined as "local consumption by the aborigines."¹² It borrowed from an earlier (1931) convention, which had made exemption from quotas on the basis of gear—no firearms or motorized boats could be used if "aboriginal" whaling were to qualify—as well as local consumption.¹³ So, not only had the Soviet Union signed on to this definition of subsistence whaling, but it was the country pushing the issue most strongly at the IWC.

It soon began bending the rules it had helped create. In the 1960s, Moscow initiated a major reorganization of Chukotka, which involved consolidating Chukchi and Yupik villages into a few towns, now built of Soviet-style apartment blocks. The closure of many traditional villages is still greatly resented by local families, though some also found new sources of meaning in urban employment. In the new cities, unskilled labor, mink-farming, and the sale of marine mammal products on the Russian market increasingly replaced subsistence hunting. At the same time, seal and walrus stocks crashed, placing increased importance on whaling.¹⁴ In 1969, Soviet authorities took local whaling into their own hands, using a modern catcher ship called the *Zvezdnyi* (or Star), piloted by Russian whalers, to kill whales on behalf of the Chukchi. Native Chukotkans still transported the catches to shore on wooden boats and did most of the processing of the whale carcass.¹⁵ Officially, Moscow had taken over catching for the best reasons of conservation—to reduce the waste incurred by Indigenous methods, which resulted in the loss of dozens of whales and the escape of many injured individuals. Soviet reports to the IWC claimed that "since 1969 the Chukotka collective farmers have chartered a modern catcher boat thereby eliminating the problem of struck and lost animals, and relieving the people of a rigorous and dangerous job."¹⁶

The Soviet reports were right about one thing—catches increased dramatically and losses were reported to have dropped to virtually zero. But their claims of relieving the Chukchi of a “rigorous and dangerous” job were less accurate. As later Russian writers admitted, “the loss of subsistence whaling for almost 30 years . . . was a frustrating experience to the Yupik and Chukchi people of Chukotka.”¹⁷ Many Chukchi resented the fact that they no longer whaled themselves, in the process losing traditional skills and a communal focus. At the same time, others welcomed this kind of modernization, happy to have a reliable supply of whale meat deposited on shore every year and divided, still, according to “traditional norms of sharing and cooperation.” They also valued the full employment that came with the mink farms fed by excess whale products.¹⁸ The mink farms were not mentioned in Soviet reports to the IWC.¹⁹ They would, however, directly trigger the madness that hit Chukotka and Nome in the early 1980s.

Before that, however, the IWC had already turned its attention to the Bering Strait. Concerned by scientists’ claims that bowhead numbers were dangerously low, in 1977 the IWC’s Scientific Committee removed the subsistence exception for bowhead whales. Alaskan Eskimos (a shorthand term for Yupik and Iñupiaq communities), who had no idea the topic had been discussed at the IWC for the previous several years, were shocked and angry.²⁰ They quickly organized their own Alaska Eskimo Whaling Commission and began their own study of bowhead numbers. Interestingly, some of the first data that confirmed Eskimo claims that bowheads were far more numerous than scientists thought came from the Chukchi hunter Andrei Ankalin, who had been working with Soviet whalers and scientists on bowhead monitoring for several years.²¹ Because bowheads moved across the Bering Strait, his observations were useful for Eskimo estimations as well. Such indirect exchanges also signaled a tentative resumption of contact between Indigenous peoples across the Bering Strait. Anthropologists and scientists traveling to Moscow and Anchorage began exchanging letters and linguistic notes between Chukchi, Yupik, and Iñupiat, traveling literally halfway around the world to precariously reunite people separated by less than fifty miles of ocean.²² Meanwhile, the IWC agreed to set up a special commission to find a compromise solution to the bowhead question.

A new voice complicated the compromise: environmentalist organizations were becoming increasingly influential at the IWC. From the late 1960s, Friends of the Earth, Project Jonah, and others had targeted

whaling as a particularly noxious form of humanity's destruction of the environment. Most spectacularly, in 1975 and again in 1976 and 1977, Greenpeace had confronted Soviet whaling ships on the open ocean near California and Hawai'i, driving their small zodiacs between harpooners and prey and broadcasting footage of the encounters on major news networks. These were some of the most dramatic acts of eco-protest ever staged, and they made Greenpeace a household name. They also established opposition to whaling, what came to be called the Save the Whales campaign, as one of environmentalism's most successful issues. The campaigns successfully tapped into new Western ideas about whales as uniquely intelligent, peaceful creatures worthy of special consideration—"armless Buddhas" as Greenpeace leader Bob Hunter called them.²³

Greenpeace and other environmentalists had seen Indigenous peoples as natural allies in their fight against industry and government. During Greenpeace's first voyage to protest American nuclear testing, they had received the blessing of a Kwakwaka'wakw village at Alert Bay, with some members of the organization inducted into the community as brothers. Later, during the antiwhaling protests, Greenpeace's ship, the *Phyllis Cormack*, flew a flag that included an image of Sisiutl, what they understood to be a whale taken from Kwakwaka'wakw oral history. Although Bob Hunter related that the Kwakwaka'wakw had gifted them the flag freely, Greenpeace was mistaken in thinking that the Sisiutl symbol was two whales forming the "infinite cycle of nature."²⁴ Nonetheless, the group met with a warm reception when they returned to Alert Bay in 1975 and returned the flag.

A subsequent campaign against sealing in Newfoundland exposed Greenpeace to some of the problems this alliance might encounter, as Native peoples there came out in opposition to the environmentalists.²⁵ Now, the Alaska bowhead controversy forced them to more closely examine their blanket opposition to whaling because it would put them in direct opposition to Eskimos. "It was a bad day for many environmentalists," writes Kurk Dorsey, "when they were forced to acknowledge that some of the people who were supposed to be leading by example liked to eat the animal that symbolized a planet in peril."²⁶ The venerable environmentalist organization Sierra Club decided to support Alaska Natives in the bowhead question. Greenpeace, however, did not. As Paul Spong, who had played a crucial role in the Soviet whaling protests, wrote, "Greenpeace policy on whaling is opposed to all killing of cetaceans . . . by humans everywhere for

whatever reasons.” He found the organization’s opposition to Indigenous people unfortunate, but

Sadly . . . Greenpeace reflects on the degree to which the native cultures of our planet are being eroded by the impact of external cultures and the inexorable advance of the Technological Age. It is a dream to imagine that the cultures of the native peoples of the North can survive intact from introduction to the modern world. Change has always been a cultural constant, and increasing rate of change has become another. . . . The end of the Bowhead hunt is properly seen in the cultural context as one of many important changes.²⁷

Spong did not assume, as many Westerners have, that Indigenous cultures forsook their legitimacy when they changed.²⁸ But, his claim that these cultures could not survive “intact” suggests that neither he, nor Greenpeace as a whole, had an entirely consistent picture of their new Indigenous antagonists. Nor was the organization’s membership in complete agreement with Spong’s maximalist antiwhaling stance, and some wrote letters advocating for compromise.²⁹ But Spong held firm, and when the IWC ruled in favor of reinstating a bowhead quota in late 1977 (and thus allowing their hunting again), Greenpeace experienced its first major reverse in its antiwhaling campaign.

Soviet whaling seemed—in a sense—a safer target, a return to more familiar ground, with a more familiar opponent. The fiery Paul Watson, another veteran of the epochal 1975 and 1976 campaigns, and now head of his own organization, Sea Shepherd, had learned at the 1980 IWC meeting that the Soviet Union was taking far more whales in the Bering Strait than were necessary to feed the Chukchi and Yupik settlements for which they were ostensibly meant. Conservationists calculated that each family would have to consume about ten tons of whale meat per year to make full use of the carcasses, “a rather daunting task” as one author put it.³⁰ Watson also established contact with some Soviet scientists who confidentially agreed with him that the Chukotka hunt violated IWC rules and was unnecessary.³¹

The Soviets would not allow international inspectors into this sensitive region, still closed to foreigners. But Watson, a man known for his bombastic style and total lack of fear, was not deterred by such obstacles. Although no outsiders had visited the Chukotka whaling villages since 1946, Watson decided simply to go there himself. He

would attempt to find the Soviet whale-catching boat *Zvezdnyi* and get between it and its prey, Greenpeace style. This, Watson hoped, would “provoke an international incident with the Russians.” It was an exceptionally bold and risky gamble. Watson did promise, in a statement hardly calculated to reassure, that he had “no plans to blow up or sink the Russian boat.”³²

Despite again targeting the Soviets, some important differences marked Watson’s 1981 campaign. First, this voyage would violate Russian territorial waters and thus carried greater risks along with potentially even greater media attention. The second difference quickly became apparent when in early August the ship *Sea Shepherd* landed at the Alaskan Gold Rush town of Nome, home to a mixed American, Iñupiat, and Yupik community. *Sea Shepherd* crew members—mostly volunteers who had paid \$1,000 apiece to join the ship—purchased t-shirts from Nome’s Native store reading “Save the Whales, Eat an Eskimo.” Local Eskimos were outraged, and Watson had to arrange a meeting to soothe tensions. The effect, however, was the opposite: During the conversation, Watson took issue with one whaler’s claim to respect whales.

Maybe, maybe not . . . But I do know that if you are sincere about your respect for the whale then you are obligated to respect us, for we are protectors and defenders of whales. We act on behalf of the whale and in the interest of the whale . . . and if you cannot understand this then you do not understand your own words.³³

The tense exchange exposed the second difference from the earlier anti-Soviet campaigns. Although they had not planned for it, in the Bering Strait environmentalists had come face to face with Indigenous people most definitely not on their side. Environmentalists’ role as special protectors of whales could only appear as insufferable arrogance to Alaska’s whalers, who had understood themselves as locked in intimate partnership with whales for millennia.

Watson recollected this conversation with Eskimo whalers years after the fact. But, in 1981, his position had actually been significantly more nuanced. In an interview with the local paper, the *Nome Nugget*, he had asked,

What is an aboriginal hunt if the Native people don’t take part in it? This situation [in Chukotka] is making a mockery of all Native

whaling and is threatening the existence of the animal as well. It's exploiting the Native people and the idea of the Native hunt. We would like to shut down this operation in the interests of Native whaling.³⁴

Watson cited both excessive whales taken as well as the use of modern whaling equipment as reasons he did not consider the Soviet hunt to be subsistence whaling. He also tried firmly to separate Chukotkan and Alaskan whaling: "There is something wrong when Natives in Barrow can take 43 whales in three years," he told the paper, "and receive considerable protest, but the Russians can take 200 in a year and hear nothing."³⁵ So, despite having lectured the Iñupiat whalers on their relationship with whales, and presumed to speak for the animals, Watson seemed to accept that Indigenous whaling—on a small scale—would be acceptable to environmentalists.

Whatever Watson's concessions to Eskimo hunting, many people in Nome shared the hostility to the environmentalists. "Personally, I feel the mission is stupid," Bob Nelson, from the Alaska Department of Fish and Game said. Nelson claimed, correctly, that gray whales had rebounded from their low point during the nineteenth century to become "one of the most abundant whale species left," which meant that the Chukotka hunt was not unsustainable. He also claimed, less persuasively, that, having worked with Soviet fishermen, Nelson could certify that "They are good about the conservation of marine and all other animals" (in fact, the Soviet Union had secretly killed tens of thousands of endangered whales in the 1960s and 1970s, nearly rendering some species extinct).³⁶ Finally, Nelson predicted failure, that *Sea Shepherd* would be arrested when it crossed the international dateline.³⁷

Here Nelson was mistaken. The *Sea Shepherd* launched on August 9, 1981, and quickly crossed into Soviet waters. Although he could not locate the *Zvezdnyi*, Watson quickly directed a switch to an even more reckless strategy—he landed the zodiacs full of amateur volunteers on the Chukotkan shore, taking the Soviets by total surprise. There they began filming a small "Mongolian" village and a mink farm. As Watson described the scene,

Piles of fresh whale meat littered the area with some very un-aboriginal-type women employed with hacking the hunks of meat into smaller pieces with some mean-looking flensing knives. We were close enough to see their blondish hair and back with

bandanas and to notice some of them had blue eyes. So much for the aboriginal justification for the hunt. The amazing part was that the women seemed completely unconcerned with our presence.³⁸

As soon as the locals realized that these visitors were not Russians, they apparently called the military, which arrived in helicopters shortly thereafter. When the environmentalists retreated, film in hand, the Soviets hurried a military ship out to intercept them and demanded surrender. At the crucial moment, just as it seemed the Soviets might fire, Watson reported that a gray whale suddenly broke the surface between the ships.³⁹ The Soviets retreated, Watson thanked the whale, and the *Sea Shepherd* was free.⁴⁰

And that was it—the *Sea Shepherd* moved on to Yupik St. Lawrence Island, then to the Aleutians, and then home. Pictures of the mink farm made it clear that the whales were being used for more than human subsistence. A scattering of media outlets picked up the story, and then it dropped from consciousness. As one Greenpeace member later described the outcome, “If a tree falls in the forest and the media doesn’t cover it, did it really fall?”⁴¹ In some sense it did—after the campaign, *Sea Shepherd* hardened its stance against Indigenous whaling. No more mincing words: Watson would later write that “The aboriginal hunter barter a part of his soul with every spent bullet.”⁴² It is a stance that he, and *Sea Shepherd*, have maintained ever since.

From other environmentalists’ perspective, *Sea Shepherd* had not done enough. At the 1983 IWC meeting, with the Soviets continuing to use whales for mink food at Lorino, the environmentalist mouth-piece *Eco* wrote sarcastically about the “aboriginals” involved in Chukotka’s subsistence hunt:

Yesterday, the Soviet Commissioner told the Commission that a long-awaited study of the nutritional and cultural need of the consumers of their gray whale harvest was at long last underway. . . . Nutritional Need: local aboriginals have been heavily reliant on whale meat for many, many generations, back to 1956. Whale meat supplies their principal food source, as locked cage doors prevent their seeking out a more varied diet. Cultural Need: long term definitive study has shown that the local inhabitants have important, but little understood, feeding rituals. Active

ping begins shortly before feeding time, and cultural leaders are sometimes seen to climb on top of watering dishes in expectation of whale dinners. The hunt by the aboriginals, though now a lost tradition, is said to have been one of the phenomenal spectacles of nature. Thousands of individuals, in a highly disciplined and carefully timed manoeuvre, would swim out into the water, encircle the whale, sink their needle-sharp teeth into its hide, and tow it ashore.⁴³

Exasperated, Greenpeace decided to repeat Watson's daring feat and was already en route to the Bering Strait, hoping to provoke another incident just as the IWC delegates met. This time everything would go very differently.



Figure 9.2. Cover of Greenpeace's 1983 Quarterly Magazine Recapping the Lorino Campaign. *Greenpeace Examiner* 8, no. 4. Courtesy of Greenpeace Global Media.

Trying to elicit a more visible response, Greenpeace had first sent multiple letters to the Soviet authorities alerting them to its intention to enter territorial waters and expected to be intercepted offshore. However, no one was waiting—Greenpeace later found out that the Siberian authorities had heard nothing from Moscow about a potential American landing.⁴⁴ Instead, enclosed in a heavy fog and (inevitably) accompanied by gray whales, Greenpeace was able to launch zodiacs close to shore and land undetected. Lorino made a poor first impression. Dave Rinehart reported that “Siberia wasn’t at all what we expected . . . We thought it would be flat, cold and desolate. Instead, it was mountainous, cold, and desolate.”⁴⁵ Amid the desolation, Greenpeace expedition members spotted the mink farm, and while the cameraman recorded video from offshore, they handed out leaflets in Russian explaining their purpose there.⁴⁶ One “Eskimo” “tore up a leaflet,” but as with *Sea Shepherd*, the Soviets had a delayed reaction.⁴⁷ After about half an hour, the military arrived. Soldiers told Chris Cook, leader of the expedition, to bring the other members ashore. Cook motioned for his comrades to land, at the same time shouting in English for them to leave and hurry back to Nome with their video footage. He and the five others on shore were arrested and flown by helicopter to a detention center.

A Soviet military ship, the *Taishet*, began pursuing the mother ship, the *Rainbow Warrior*, as it motored back to Nome. Fearing interception, Greenpeace decided to send one of its members alone on a zodiac with the film, hoping the Soviets would not notice. But they did, and a Russian helicopter used its rotor wash to flip crew member Jim Henry out of the zodiac. He was near death from hypothermia when a Soviet ship picked him up, revived him with a vodka rubdown, and added him to the other six in prison. Together they would soon be known as the “Siberian Seven.” But the lucky chance that so often seemed to accompany Greenpeace voyages again appeared; miraculously, the *Rainbow Warrior* spotted the zodiac running pilotless in circles, and one activist managed, at the cost of a broken leg, to leap into the boat and retrieve the film. The Soviets gave up the chase about halfway to Alaska. As crew member Rick Dawson reported, “We all cheered as we watched the gunboat slow down and turn around. I could’nt [*sic*] help feeling sorry for them in a way. A band of young environmentalists had outmanoevered [*sic*] them and had escaped. Somebody’s head was going to roll.”⁴⁸ Meanwhile, the *Rainbow Warrior* dictated its story over the wires to the international press. The



Figure 9.3. A Greenpeace zodiac approaches Lorino. The whale-processing factory can be seen on the right. Mink farms are located on the hills to the left. Photo courtesy of Rick Dawson.

precious film made it to Nome and was then quickly flown to Anchorage and Seattle, where it soon ran on major news stations around the country and world.

The media attention would only grow when it was learned that seven protestors were detained in a Siberian prison. Officials there threatened to lock them up for twenty years.⁴⁹ But their treatment was surprisingly good; the prisoners were given hearty bowls of delicious soup (with what turned out to be large slabs of whale meat). The guards tried to convince the protestors that the whaling was, in fact, being conducted for the benefit of the Chukchi, but otherwise the Soviet guards appeared unconcerned with Greenpeace's antiwhaling activities. Instead, they seemed convinced that the protestors must be part of an official American governmental action.⁵⁰ Meanwhile, crew member Nancy Foote regaled the guards with stories of her earlier visit to Moscow, a place so distant from Chukotka that their enraptured Soviet interpreter had never visited it.⁵¹

Much to the prisoners' surprise, the Soviets released the Siberian Seven after just seven days. The only sticking point was the handover—they

would not give them back to the *Rainbow Warrior* without an official American presence on board. Into this role stepped Nome Mayor Leo Rasmussen, who feigned reluctance. He came to the handover decked out in “Visit Nome” and “Re-elect Leo Rasmussen” hats and badges. The Soviets refused this political propaganda, but the Western media who came along ate it up. They crowded the decks of the *Rainbow Warrior* and breathlessly reported everything. The Soviets’ final gesture was one of goodwill—they handed over a bottle of vodka to the Greenpeace protestors to remember their stay.

But, still aglow from this unexpected goodwill, the protestors’ reception in Nome was nearly as hostile as in Siberia. Just like Sea Shepherd, while trying to make a point about the Soviet Union, they had stepped straight into the volatile politics of Indigenous whaling. One of the basic problems was that Greenpeace had not recognized the connections that existed across the Bering Strait. Although they had come to protest Soviet policy, in Lorino they had drawn special interest and kindness from the local Chukchi population. Greenpeace newspapers described them as “Inuit (Eskimoes),” a significant refinement over Watson’s “Mongolians” and the campaigners’ initial description of simply “Eskimoes.”⁵² Still, they had little notion that their campaign might have hurt, above all, the Chukchi and Yupik.

Yupik people in Nome quickly alerted Greenpeace to this fact. Jenny Alona, who was from St. Lawrence but was then living at Nome and had been prominently involved in forging the roundabout connections with Soviet Yupik and Chukchi, sent an angry letter directly to the *Rainbow Warrior* crew. She accused it of “jeopardizing efforts to re-establish contact between the Chukchis of Siberia and Eskimos in Western Alaska.” Alona feared that with such a brazen violation of Russian sovereignty, the Soviets would mistrust American intentions. “Don’t you consider the local people or what they might say,” Alona asked, “we want to share stories [with the Chukchis], laugh, and regain our ties to them.” Still, Alona saw a potential positive—she wanted to talk to the Greenpeace crew to hear whom they had met there, perhaps potential relatives. Greenpeace, for its part, claimed that “The Soviets could not possibly see any connection between the Eskimos of Alaska and an international group based in England” (meaning themselves).⁵³ But of course the Soviets had seen Greenpeace as closely connected to the American government.

Greenpeace’s actions potentially impacted Eskimos in another way: their protest of whaling was defined vaguely enough that it

seemed to present a threat to Alaskans' rights to do the same. Letters to the editor of the *Nome Nugget* reveal the scale of the suspicion. Whaling historian John Bockstoce, who happened to be in Nome at the time, said something similar. Noting like Bob Nelson that gray whales were not endangered, he made clear that "I don't have any problem with using any actual resource properly." Bockstoce signed a protest letter against Greenpeace's presence circulating in Nome, specifically, Bockstoce said, "to be a thorn in their side." Another reader noted that Greenpeace "made an illegal entry in the Soviet Union hell-bent-for-leather to stop commercial whaling. They tell us they aren't against subsistence whaling—at least not for now. Yet they have very little concept of what subsistence involves."⁵⁴

The Greenpeace protestors had not in fact given subsistence whaling much thought; Nancy Foote claimed, "We weren't even aware" of Alaskan subsistence whaling.⁵⁵ As one crew member, Nancy Higgins, admitted, "I understand [the importance of whaling to them] much more than I did. . . . We have to respect human rights as well as the rights of whales. I don't know what the answer is in terms of the whales, but I do know that the whale is very important for those people to live."⁵⁶ Scrambling to clarify Greenpeace's intentions toward people they had had no intention of making as enemies, international spokesman Bob Cummings told reporters that "Greenpeace doesn't take a position on subsistence hunting. . . . The aboriginal people did not create the problem, nor are they the crux of the problem. . . . We honestly don't know where to place our feet [on the subsistence issue]." Still, Cummings repeated Paul Watson's earlier claim that environmentalist had taken on the role of "advocates for species that can't speak for themselves."⁵⁷

Others locals had complaints that also revealed a clash of sensibilities with the eco-radicals. Nome resident James Winchester wrote, "now that our groovy Greenpeace buddies are getting ready to sail off into the too fine So Cal sunset we can take time to sit down and ponder this whole bizarre incident. . . . They even managed to rouse old Ron Reagan out of his geriatric torpor and get him involved." "Quite a feat," he admitted. But, claiming that the Soviets would only be persuaded by force, not posters, he recommended more radical action: "Give those whales the tools and they can do the job. They're big tough boys. I say arm the whales, a nuke on every fluke. Vaporize a couple of processing ships and packing plants and those heartless commie rats would quit post haste."⁵⁸ It can safely be said that locals,

along with the whalers who knew whales the best, were not impressed with Greenpeace.

Some local pushback was in favor of Greenpeace, but, tellingly, a flurry of letters from outside the state expressed stronger support. Wrote a man from Texas, "I sincerely hope that your mayor, Leo Rasmussen, was badly misquoted when he spoke so eloquently against the Greenpeace organization. Surely the residents of Nome realize that there is a difference between Eskimos killing a whale for subsistence and Russians and Japanese factory ships killing whales for lipstick, or god forbid, Mink Food!"⁵⁹ "God bless the crew of the *Rainbow Warrior*," wrote a couple from California, and then added, "I just heard on TV that the protestors were afraid they couldn't see their relatives in Russia. Well, we don't necessarily want Soviet sympathizers on our shore, especially if they condone cruelty and lawbreaking on the part of the Soviets."⁶⁰ Given such statements, Eskimo fears that environmentalist actions threatened renewed cross-Strait ties were not unfounded.

Ironically, even as the Sea Shepherd and Greenpeace campaigns succeeded in documenting the use of whale meat for mink food, the IWC was redefining aboriginal subsistence whaling in ways that might make these revelations irrelevant. In 1980, an IWC working group significantly broadened its definition of aboriginal subsistence whaling as "for the purposes of aboriginal consumption carried out by or on behalf of aboriginal, indigenous or native people . . . [for] meeting their nutritional, subsistence or cultural requirements. This term includes trade in items which are by-products of subsistence catches."⁶¹ Both aspects of Soviet whaling—the use of modernized, non-Indigenous whaling boats and the use of whale meat to feed minks—could fit these broader parameters. As a result, the IWC did not sanction the Soviets, even after the environmentalists' actions. Further, during that 1983 meeting that coincided with the Greenpeace protests, Alaska Eskimos were given an enlarged bowhead whale quota. Chukchi and Yupik subsistence whaling would also survive the global moratorium on commercial whaling enacted in 1986, just three years after the Greenpeace campaign.

However, even if these twin campaigns failed in their immediate aims, they had an impact. Greenpeace was led by its unforeseen conflicts with Alaskan Eskimos to soften its opposition to subsistence whaling. Hints of that policy change can already be seen in the *Rainbow Warrior* crew's realization in Nome that they needed to think harder about the issue. Although it is unclear when Greenpeace switched its

official position, by 1997, Sea Shepherd was clashing openly with Greenpeace's support for subsistence whaling on St. Lawrence Island. That year Greenpeace activists used two of their zodiacs—famous as antiwhaling protest vessels—to help a Yupik crew tow a dead bowhead whale to shore. Paul Watson declared Greenpeace activists to be pirate whalers and announced that he considered their boats acceptable targets for sinking.⁶² Environmentalist positions on subsistence whaling had clearly hardened—in opposite directions—since the early 1980s.

A look back at the two Bering Strait campaigns reveals some of the unresolved contradictions in early environmentalists' adoption of whales as objects of special attention. Did saving the whales imply that their value outweighed some human cultures' real need to kill them? Or were the antiwhaling campaigns better seen as an attack on widespread ills of industrial society, in which case nonindustrial Indigenous whaling could be acceptable to environmentalists? The Bering Strait conflicts pushed Sea Shepherd in one direction on this question and Greenpeace in another; for both, it clarified these issues. Another issue remained murkier: what constituted subsistence whaling anyway? The history of subsistence whaling—as defined by the IWC, states, activists, and whalers—showed a great degree of flexibility. From its inception, the IWC recognized the importance of the practice and was willing to expand its definition to include commerce and machinery. So was the Soviet Union. Environmentalists were less flexible in principle, but in practice, when they met Indigenous people in person, many perceived greater nuance. In fact, environmentalists' and regulators' records on subsistence whaling mostly show an appreciation for local circumstance and the necessity for adaptation, even if those realizations were sometimes slow in coming. By and large, Indigenous whalers in the late twentieth century were not boxed in by outsiders' notions that their culture could not change.

The history of the two campaigns was also a story of communities in formation. Environmentalist organizations in the 1980s drew in activists from around the world who were inspired by the dramatic confrontations of the 1970s. They worked across international borders to achieve global change, but sometimes the communities they had an impact on inhabited different worlds than the activists imagined. The environmentalists' arrival in the Bering Strait revealed significant areas of agreement between Nome's Native and white communities, as well as meaningful cross-strait, transnational communities. In Alaska and Siberia, Indigenous communities understood their activities to

be intimately linked, and what Sea Shepherd and Greenpeace had thought of as anti-Soviet campaigns, these communities perceived as anti-Indigenous campaigns. And, as the outraged Western supporter of Greenpeace hinted, in fact Native and white citizens of Nome felt greater kinship with the Soviets than they did with outsiders from the Lower 48.⁶³ If these pro-whaling communities were not circum-Pacific in scope, they were built on a shared orientation toward and across a common ocean.

Despite local fears, the environmentalists did not derail relations across the Strait. Although no one knew it at the time, already by 1983 less than a decade of life remained for the Soviet Union. When it disintegrated in 1991, the *Zvezdnyi* stopped operating. Moscow also ended subsidies to Chukotka, and food supplies there dwindled perilously. Chukchi and Yupik fell back on whaling to feed themselves, but most had forgotten the necessary skills after thirty years of relying on Russian support. In the Soviets' stead arrived Alaska Yupik and Iñupiat, who traveled across the strait bringing aid, gasoline, and firearms. They also retaught their long-separated brethren to kill gray whales and helped them avert starvation.⁶⁴ The ancient communities across the Bering Strait breathed new life, just as the bowhead and gray whales that sustained these communities returned from their own brush with extinction.

Notes

1. See chapter 8, this volume.
2. See Demuth, *Floating Coast*.
3. On environmentalists' relationship to Makah whaling see Reid, *The Sea*; Sullivan, *A Whale Hunt*; for continued tension between Sea Shepherd's Paul Watson and Indigenous whaling, see O'Malley, "Teenage Whaler."
4. Armstrong, "Whale Road," 77.
5. Demuth, *Floating Coast*, 52; and Znamienski, "Vague Sense."
6. Bockstoce, *Whales, Ice, and Men*; Demuth, *Floating Coast*, 54–59.
7. Russian State Archive of the Far East, Vladivostok, F. 702, Op. 1, D. 275, L. 1; quoted in Demuth, *Floating Coast*, 64.
8. "Otchety i informatsionnye materialy o promysle morskikh zverei, 1925-196," State Archive of the Primorsky Krai, Vladivostok, F. R-633, Op. 4, No. 85, 45.
9. "Otchety i informatsionnye," 45.
10. Reid, *The Sea*; for Māori commercial whaling at around the same time, see Phillips, "Ika-Whenua."
11. Krauss, "Crossroads," 368.

12. International Whaling Commission, *Fifth Report*, 15.
13. Scheiber, "Historical Memory," 17.
14. Krupnik and Chlenov, *Yupik Transitions*, 283.
15. John Tichotsky, unpublished 2008 report to National Park Service Shared Beringian Heritage Program, 33.
16. Ivashin and Mineev, "History of Gray Whale Harvesting," 504.
17. Bogoslovskaya, "Bowhead Whale," 210.
18. Freeman et al., *Inuit, Whaling, and Sustainability*, 138.
19. See, for example, Krupnik, Bogoslovskaya, and Votrogov, "Gray Whaling," 561.
20. Gambell, "International Management," 102.
21. Bogoslovskaya, "Bowhead Whale," 212.
22. Krauss, "Crossroads?," 370–371.
23. Hunter, *Warriors of the Rainbow*, 142.
24. Eduardo Sousa, "Greenpeace and the Sisiutl: Cultural Appropriation and Reconciliation," Greenpeace Canada, October 27, 2015, <https://www.greenpeace.org/canada/en/story/496/greenpeace-and-the-sisiutl-cultural-appropriation-and-reconciliation> (accessed July 31, 2021).
25. Zelko, *Make It a Greenpeace!*
26. Dorsey, *Whales and Nations*, 244.
27. Spong, "Bowhead Policy," 3.
28. As Reid puts it, "Indians are allowed to have either culture or history."
29. See *Greenpeace Chronicles*, "Letters—Bowhead Policy," no. 11 (December 1978).
30. Day, *Whale War*, 74.
31. *Nome Nugget*, August 13, 1981. Watson did not name the Soviet scientist to the *Nome Nugget*, but said in a later interview that it was the prominent cetologist and later Minister of the Environment Alexei Yablokov. Paul Watson, author interview, August 8, 2018.
32. *Nome Nugget*, August 13, 1981.
33. Watson, *Ocean Warrior*, 66–68.
34. *Nome Nugget*, August 13, 1981.
35. *Nome Nugget*, August 13, 1981.
36. See Ivashchenko, "Soviet Whaling."
37. *Nome Nugget*, August 13, 1981.
38. Quoted in Day, *Whale War*, 74.
39. Watson, *Ocean Warrior*, 81, 82.
40. *Nome Nugget*, August 13, 1981.
41. Wilcox, *Greenpeace Captain*, 58.
42. Watson, *Ocean Warrior*, 43.
43. *ECO* 24, no. 5 (July 22, 1983): 3.
44. Chris Cook, author interview, August 3, 2018.
45. *Christian Science Monitor*, July 26, 1983.

46. Chris Cook, author interview, August 3, 2018.
47. *Christian Science Monitor*, July 26, 1983.
48. R. Dawson, "The Russian Gray Whale Campaign, July 1983," unpublished manuscript, author's possession.
49. Dawson, "Russian Gray Whale Campaign."
50. Chris Cook, author interview, August 3, 2018.
51. Chris Cook, author interview, August 3, 2018; and Nancy Foote, author interview, June 14, 2019.
52. Rinehart, "Voyage," 10.
53. *Nome Nugget*, July 28, 1983.
54. *Nome Nugget*, July 28, 1983.
55. Nancy Foote, author interview, June 14, 2019.
56. *Nome Nugget*, July 28, 1983.
57. *Nome Nugget*, July 21, 1983; and July 28, 1983.
58. *Nome Nugget*, August 4, 1983.
59. *Nome Nugget*, August 11, 1983.
60. *Nome Nugget*, August 4, 1983.
61. Quoted in Gambell, "International Management," 104.
62. *Nunatsiaq News*, October 10, 1997.
63. Ranseur, *Melting the Ice Curtain*, 22.
64. Alex Tizon and Alan Berner, "The Hunt for the Great Gray," *Seattle Times*, May 13, 2001.

Swimming with Gigi

Captivity, Gray Whales, and the Environmental Culture of the Pacific Coast

Jason M. Colby

THE MOOD WAS GLOOMY at Sea World in early March 1972. A year earlier, in cooperation with the US Navy, the San Diego marine park had captured a female gray whale calf off the Mexican state of Baja California. Dubbed “Gigi,” she had afforded dozens of scientists their first access to a live baleen whale and tens of thousands of Sea World visitors their first glimpse of her species. Yet the youngster had outgrown her 250,000-gallon tank, and the time had come to return her to the sea. Her caretakers worried about Gigi’s fate in the wild. “She could go north or south or run in circles or even beach herself and wait for someone to come and tube feed her,” warned Sue Bailey, a young Sea World “Sea Maid.” Bailey had spent most of the year caring for Gigi, likely forming the closest bond between a human being and an individual baleen whale in history. As he watched the pair in one of their last swims together, one reporter asked if Bailey ever felt fear entering the water with a gray whale—a species until recently referred to as Devilfish. “None at all,” replied Bailey. “After all, that’s my baby.”¹

The release operation began in the early morning hours of March 13, 1972. After lifting Gigi’s seven-ton body from the pool by crane, staffers lowered her onto a flatbed truck lined with foam rubber and drove the six miles from Sea World to the Naval Undersea Research and Development Center (NUC) at Point Loma. There they transferred her onto a barge. At 6:23 a.m., a Navy vessel began towing the barge westward as research and Coast Guard boats followed

closely behind. Five miles offshore, the team spotted gray whales and decided to set Gigi free. Having fitted the young whale with a radio pack, Navy researchers hoped to track her over the coming weeks and months. On the nearby media boat, actor Lloyd Bridges, star of the television series *Sea Hunt*, narrated for a local television station. It was 9:51 a.m., and for all involved it seemed a pivotal moment. “In the future,” reflected one journalist, “it may be that present knowledge and treatment of gray whales will be dated B.G. and A.G.—before and after Gigi.”²

In hindsight, it seems an overstatement. These days, gray whales are a beloved symbol of the transnational Pacific Coast, protected by domestic legislation and international agreement in Canada, the United States, and Mexico. Each year, hundreds of thousands of tourists pay for whale-watching excursions to see the species, and few, if any, hear tales of Gigi. To be sure, marine mammal captivity played a pivotal role in the changing human treatment of cetaceans. Efforts to conserve dolphins and killer whales in the 1970s, for example, stemmed to a great extent from their role as display animals for the growing marine park industry.³ Yet the argument doesn’t seem to fit for gray whales. The species had been under international protection since the 1930s, and scientists based in Southern California had begun counting migrating gray whales in the late 1940s. By 1970, the US government was already moving to close the last US whaling stations, even as the gray whale numbers off the Pacific Coast were clearly growing.⁴

Yet human interactions with gray whales did take a sharp turn during and immediately after Gigi’s captivity. San Diego entrepreneurs launched the first whale-watching excursions to the gray whale calving lagoons of Baja, and the Mexican government initiated its first protections of that critical habitat. Soon a growing number of US researchers were traveling to Baja and some began reporting that gray whales were visiting their boats and welcoming human contact—behavior that few, if any, Mexican locals had ever witnessed before. In the late 1980s and 1990s, these “friendly gray whales” would become the foundation of Baja whale watching, helping to inspire an international campaign to protect their calving lagoons from industrial development. What did these cultural changes, both human and cetacean, have to do with Gigi?

Not much, if one believes the literature. Although many scientists and activists have written on the commercial harvesting and

conservation of gray whales, few have delved into the cultural and scientific impact of Gigi. Some accounts omit the episode entirely, and Dick Russell's *Eye of the Whale*—an expansive tome on the history of humans and gray whales—devotes only a few sentences to it.⁵ Yet an examination of Gigi's captivity at Sea World highlights several critical intersections. First, the display of and interaction with this young gray whale reframed human perceptions of the species from the unsightly and seemingly indistinguishable masses of flesh passing the California coast to distinct individuals with powerful mother-child bonds and the potential to befriend people. Second, Gigi's captivity provided unprecedented opportunities for research on a live baleen whale, in the process influencing scientists who would play central roles in marine mammal policy, and particularly the study and protection of eastern Pacific gray whales—one of the few success stories in the modern human encounter with cetaceans.

A slow-moving species that feeds and migrates along the continental shelf, *Eschrichtius robustus* had long played a role in the lives of coastal peoples. Historical records indicate that gray whale populations on both sides of the Pacific followed a similar rhythm of life, feeding in high northern latitudes from spring to early fall before migrating south to warm waters to breed and calve. In the eastern Pacific, this involved a four-thousand-mile passage from feeding grounds in the Bering Sea to the sheltered bays and lagoons of Baja. In addition to protection from killer whales, the warm, salty lagoons offered calves a buoyant introduction to life in the ocean. As California politician and activist Serge Dedina has observed, "There is no other large cetacean that depends on such well-defined near-shore habitat for its survival."⁶ Yet if their migration routes afforded gray whales protection from orcas, it made them vulnerable to people. Historian Jakobina Arch has shown that shore-based Japanese whalers in the Tokugawa period (1603–1868) focused on gray whales, decimating the western Pacific population long before US whalers arrived to hunt right and sperm whales.⁷

In these same years, eastern Pacific gray whales faced a gauntlet of predators. In addition to the mammal-eating killer whales who targeted their calves as they crossed California's Monterey Bay, gray whale mothers faced the threat posed by the Nuu-chah-nulth and Makah, who hunted the animals by canoe as they passed present-day Cape Flattery and western Vancouver Island. Yet the numbers taken by cetacean and human predators remained too small to threaten the

eastern Pacific gray whale population, which likely totaled at least twenty-five thousand when US whaling ships first rounded Cape Horn in the early 1800s.⁸ Initially, the Yankee whalers focused on sperm and right whales, but following the US seizure of California from Mexico, they turned their attention to gray whales.⁹ Within a decade, US whalers had decimated the grays who frequented San Francisco and San Diego Bays, and whaling captains began finding their calving lagoons in Mexican waters. None proved more enterprising than Charles Melville Scammon.¹⁰

In late 1857, as the young skipper of the whaling vessel *Boston*, Scammon entered Laguna Ojo de Liebre—a vast, secluded lagoon in Baja Mexico. There he found hundreds of gray whales cavorting in the shallow waters. Anticipating an easy hunt, his crew lowered their skiffs and approached the whales with their usual method. “A cow with a young calf is usually selected, so that the parent animal may be easily struck,” he later wrote. But this approach proved dangerous among mother gray whales, who fiercely protected their calves by striking the skiffs with their heads and tails. Scammon’s crew returned from that first foray battered and bloodied. “Every attention was given to the wounded men,” he recalled, “but the vessel, for several days, was a contracted and crowded hospital.” Yet the protective mothers could only delay the hunt. Devising new tactics, the ambitious captain filled his hold with gray whales slaughtered in what became known as Scammon’s Lagoon. Over the following decade, he and his competitors returned again and again to Baja. “Every navigable lagoon of the region was discovered and explored, and the animals were hunted in every winding and intricate estuary which were their resorting or breeding places,” Scammon later reflected. “None of the species are so constantly and variously pursued, and ere long it may be questioned whether this mammal will not be numbered among the extinct species of the Pacific.”¹¹

Despite his tinge of regret, Scammon would surely have scoffed at modern reports of the “friendly gray whales” of Baja. “They are the most dangerous of all whales to attack,” he cautioned, noting that an enraged mother gray whale, “in her frenzy, will chase the boats, and, overtaking them, will overturn them with her head, or dash them in pieces with a stroke of her ponderous flukes.”¹² He and his fellow whalers had many names for the species—ripsack, hardhead, mussel digger—but the most common and revealing was Devilfish. Long after the US whalers stopped visiting Baja, stories of the species’ ferocity lingered among locals.

By the early 1900s, the US whaling industry was in steep decline, and gray whale numbers had dropped so low that commercial hunting on the Pacific Coast virtually ceased. Yet other disturbances visited the calving lagoons of Baja. Between 1904 and 1910, with the permission of the Mexican government, the US Navy used Magdalena Bay, another calving habitat, as a gunnery range. This included a visit from the so-called White Fleet: in March 1908, at the height of the calving season, twenty-eight coal-burning ships spent five days bombarding the bay.¹³ In the 1910s and 1920s, the Mexican government allowed Norwegian whalers to hunt the lagoons, straining a population that had likely dropped to fewer than a thousand animals. In 1928, the Makah of Washington State voluntarily discontinued their traditional hunt. Seven years later, Mexico allowed the last commercial whaling voyage off Baja. In 1937, an international agreement banned the hunting of gray whales. By that time, however, most scientists believed that the California gray whale was on the path to extinction.¹⁴

Over the years that followed, the population made a remarkable recovery. Near the end of World War II, observers in Southern California noted that the number of gray whales migrating north each spring seemed to be growing. In the winter of 1946–1947, marine biologist Carl Hubbs and his students at Scripps Institution of Oceanography began counting animals off La Jolla, California. In 1952, the US Fish and Wildlife Service took over the count, running it from Point Loma. Meanwhile, Hubbs and his colleagues attempted aerial surveys of grays in the lagoons of Baja, on one occasion with the help of actor Errol Flynn.¹⁵ Public interest in the species seemed to grow, but research on live individuals proved difficult. In 1956, President Dwight Eisenhower's personal heart physician joined a Scripps expedition to Baja, where he unsuccessfully attempted to conduct an EKG reading by sticking electrodes onto free-swimming gray whales.¹⁶

Meanwhile, human relations with cetaceans were changing rapidly. In the 1930s, Marine Studios in St. Augustine, Florida, had become the first oceanarium to display trained dolphins. In the early 1950s its owners invested in a new operation on the Pacific Coast. Located in Palos Verdes, near Los Angeles, Marineland of the Pacific opened in 1954 and became a major tourist attraction. Under curator Kenneth Norris, the facility collected a variety of marine mammals found in nearby waters, among them Bubbles—the first pilot whale to be displayed alive. Marineland's chief collector, veteran fisherman Frank Brocato, was keen to capture a gray whale, noting that

migrating calves sometimes tangled in his fishing nets and would be easy to catch.¹⁷ In the end, Marineland opted not to try to catch a gray whale, and the idea fell to its new competitor, Sea World.

Perched on San Diego's Mission Bay, Sea World opened its gates in summer 1964 and instantly became a sensation. With trained sea lions and dolphins and scantily clad Sea Maids, the park offered a marine-themed circus to eager visitors.¹⁸ Yet, like Marineland, it employed scientists and cultivated ties to research institutions such as Scripps. Less than six months after opening, Sea World agreed to participate in an expedition to Baja. Organized by Hubbs and funded by the National Science Foundation, its mission was to capture a gray whale alive. The expedition consisted of two ships, an eighty-five-foot tender boat and an eighteen-foot racing catamaran, both of which were crewed mostly by Scripps graduate students. The team arrived in mid-February 1965, at the peak of the calving season, and quickly learned why Scammon and other whalers called the species Devilfish. As the catamaran pursued their calves, mother gray whales collided with the vessel, on one occasion nearly lifting it out of the water. The expedition's luck turned on the morning of February 17, when Ken Hamai, a veteran Japanese-American whaler, harpooned a passing calf. As the young animal pulled against the line, its mother struck the boat with her head and tail. Finally, after an exhausting thirty-six-hour struggle, the capture team hoisted the calf onboard. Three days later, Hubbs and his team lowered the young female into a pool at Sea World. The first gray whale ever held alive in captivity, she became known as Gravel Gertie.¹⁹

Unlike the other marine mammals at Sea World, the youngster was not envisioned as a tourist attraction. Scripps had framed the venture as a study of the diving physiology of large cetaceans. Yet capture had taken a heavy toll on Gravel Gertie. In addition to an infection from the harpoon wound, her lung had collapsed during transit. As a result, staffers spent most of their time trying to help her recover, and she died in less than two months. Nevertheless, Gravel Gertie's brief captivity was an important breakthrough. In those two months, researchers carried out several rudimentary studies—the first on a live gray whale—and many saw the potential for longer-term captivity. "I don't believe we would have any problems keeping one alive if we could catch it without a harpoon and get it into a tank in three to eight hours," declared Sea World veterinarian Dave Kenney.²⁰ Yet the new marine park's priorities soon turned elsewhere. That December, it

acquired its first killer whale, Shamu, and over the next few years, the company focused on securing a steady supply of orcas.²¹

Meanwhile, US whalers were lobbying to resume harvests of gray whales. In 1959, the International Whaling Commission had approved a small-scale harvest to assess the recovery of the gray whale population on the Pacific Coast. In charge were two Fish and Wildlife biologists based at the Marine Mammal Biological Laboratory in Seattle, Dale Rice and Allen Wolman. Run in cooperation with US whaling firms in Richmond, California, the study allowed for the commercial use of the whales after the scientists had taken samples and measurements. Over the following decade, Rice and Wolman supervised the killing of some thirty gray whales per year. Yet even as the researchers worked, the politics of whaling were shifting beneath their feet. By the late 1960s, dolphins and whales were becoming symbols of the surging environmental movement, and the US government took notice. In July 1970, the Interior Department listed eight species of cetaceans on its revised Endangered Species List, among them the California gray whale. Scientifically, the endangered designation was debatable. Relative to the other species listed, eastern Pacific gray whales were doing well, having recovered to an estimated population of ten thousand. But the notion of resuming a commercial harvest was becoming unthinkable. Indeed, even Rice and Wolman's research seemed strikingly out of step with popular views of whales. By the time they published their study, which was based on the killing of more than three hundred gray whales, Sea World had another live one in a pool.²²

Dave Kenney and his team had learned from earlier mistakes. Rather than harpoon another calf, they brought a tail noose similar to those used to capture dolphins. With permission from the US and Mexican governments, two capture vessels, the *Margaret F* and the *Martha Jane*, entered Scammon's Lagoon on March 11, 1971. After two days of near misses, they succeeded in ensnaring a calf. As in the previous episode, the young whale's mother desperately fought the boats for hours. Finally, the team managed to maneuver the smaller animal to shore. "Unable to follow her calf without becoming beached," Navy researcher William Evans later wrote, the mother "tossed back and forth, her swells rocking the *Martha Jane*," and called to her missing calf. "With nothing to guide her," he noted, "she patrolled the area where she had last seen the baby, then swam away."²³ It was a vivid image of the mother-child bond.

Elated with their success, the crew members loaded the whale onto the *Margaret F* and three days later lowered her into a fifty-five-thousand-gallon holding tank at the back of Sea World. Staffers initially focused on simply keeping the youngster alive. A short-term worry was a deep wound on her underside caused by the chafing of a rope during the voyage to San Diego. The long-term concern centered on feeding. At eighteen feet and nearly 4,400 pounds, the growing calf, dubbed Gigi, required an immense caloric intake that she would normally have been drawing from her mother's milk. Yet, for two weeks, she rejected all offerings, and sampling showed that a mixture of cream, squid, and fish pumped into her stomach remained undigested. Only when handlers removed the cream from the formula did she begin to regain weight. Yet even then, she remained distrustful of her handlers, roiling the water whenever they approached. Soon Kenney and his colleagues were themselves subscribing to the term Devilfish and wondering if they would ever be able to run tests on the young animal.²⁴ Then Gigi met Sue.

Like her two sisters, Sue Bailey had begun working as a Sea Maid shortly after Sea World opened. "We did fish tank feedings in the grotto, we would run the fish selling booth for the dolphin pool and the sea lion pool, and we would also do the hula for the lagoon show," she recalled. "We all looked pretty good." Many of her early shows involved swimming with animals, including the park's first Shamu, but by the late 1960s, she found her opportunities limited. "I wanted desperately to go into the training department, but they wouldn't hire women," she explained. "We were second class subjects there, you know. 'You can't work with the killer whales. You can't be a trainer! You're a girl.'" Yet Sea World's new gray whale presented an opportunity. After several weeks of captivity, Gigi seemed to have accepted the presence of staffer Bud Donahoo, who suggested that swimming with a Sea Maid might encourage the young whale to be more active. Bailey gave it a shot, and within days, she was swimming, caressing, and even riding the young gray whale. "I fell in love with her," she reflected. "I spent all my free time swimming, playing and working with her. She was my baby. That was my first baby."²⁵

As in the case of human babies, early care was taxing. "We had to drain the tank, we had to tube feed her two or three times a day," Bailey explained. "We would scratch her tongue and then we would put our hand in her mouth and go up behind the baleen and put the tube in. We would tap her three times on the head and then we would put

the tube in and pump sixteen gallons of formula into her.” Skin maintenance also proved essential. “She had lots of barnacles when she first came that we would try to get off,” Bailey noted. “She had some deep places that we had to rub a little further and she was itchy because of the barnacles and stuff so she liked it when we rubbed her. . . . She was growing so fast at one point that we were taking off sheets of skin. I mean large enough to make lamp shades out of.”²⁶

Gigi was indeed growing fast, and at the end of May 1971, staffers transferred her to a larger tank, placing her in a public viewing area. The timing was propitious. Months earlier, the San Diego Museum of Natural History had sponsored its first whale-watching expedition to Baja, and that spring, hundreds of sightseers gathered at Point Loma to watch gray whales on their northern migration. Some San Diego fishermen even experimented with charters focused on viewing the passing whales. Growing public interest expressed itself in enthusiasm for Gigi. To be sure, Sea World visitors came primarily to see the performing killer whales, but the young gray whale gave thousands their first close-up look at her species. Initially, it wasn’t a very exciting sight. “She would take a whole bunch of breaths and go down to the bottom of the tank, lay over on her side, and stay there for five or ten minutes,” recalled Bailey, “but when we started to drain the tank she got very excited for her food, and she would swim around a lot more.” Near the end of summer, Gigi had a breakthrough. Rather than requiring tube feeding, she started gathering squid from the bottom of the tank, and her handlers began offering her food by hand, marveling at her ability to select what she wanted. “We would take a bucket full of herring, mackerel, smelt and squid, and we would pour it into her mouth,” Bailey explained. “She would open one side of her mouth, and we would pour that in and then she would close her mouth and on the other side of her mouth out would come the herring, the mackerel and the smelt—she did not ever lose one tentacle of squid.”²⁷ It was surely the first time in history that humans had observed gray whale feeding so closely.

As Gigi grew more energetic, Bailey swam with her more frequently during the park’s open hours. The sight of a person swimming with the whale seemed to make a powerful impression, especially on children, who crowded around to watch Bailey ride Gigi around the pool. Decades later, a middle-aged man approached Bailey at a garden center. “You used to work with the gray whale, with Gigi,” he declared. “I watched you all summer. You just had so much fun with

your gray whale, and it was amazing to me that people could play with those animals.”²⁸ Gigi became even more active when staffers added a tankmate—a bottlenose dolphin named Speedy. “From the beginning, the two were pals and tumbled about, often touching snouts and flippers,” wrote William Evans.²⁹ Indeed, Gigi’s frolics with Speedy and Bailey put gray whales in a new light for those who came to watch.

Many of those visitors were scientists. Previous research on gray whales had been limited to those taken by whalers or found on the beach. As Kenney put it, “we know a lot about dead gray whales, but no one knows about the living gray whale.”³⁰ Researchers now welcomed this novel opportunity. In the summer of 1971, scientists from Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute, Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, the Stanford Research Institute, Scripps Institute, the University of California at San Diego School of Medicine, and the Naval Undersea Research Center came to study Gigi. For the first time, researchers were able to measure the baleen growth, heart rate, respiratory volume, and diving physiology of gray whales. Scientist Jim Fish was particularly interested in determining the acoustic capabilities of the species.³¹ When Sea World announced that it planned to release Gigi the following March, a new rush of researchers appeared.

Among them was G. Carleton Ray, a distinguished marine mammal specialist who had never been in the water with a whale. Curious about the mechanism by which gray whales feed, Ray brought along colleague William Shevill, and the two attempted to observe Gigi as she gathered squid. The young whale proved shy at first. “I put on scuba gear and went down to the bottom of the tank,” Ray later recalled. “She was a twenty-three-foot animal, and I couldn’t find her! You wouldn’t believe that, but she so blended in with the walls of the tank, and no matter where I went, she was always on the other side.” Hoping to put the young whale at ease, Ray grabbed a concrete block and anchored himself on the bottom of the pool. “Sure enough,” he noted, “the animal came over, turned on its side, and slurped up the squid, always from the left side. . . . So we published a paper on how these animals feed.”³² Such methods didn’t impress Bailey. “They wrote this big thing about how she only picked up stuff only on one side—well, that’s not true!” she declared. “She went through like a vacuum cleaner on either side, and I was in the tank with her when she did it, so don’t tell me she only picks up food off one side—you watched her for three hours!”

As Gigi's proposed release date neared, gray whales were gaining international attention. In December 1971, Mexican President Luis Echeverría declared Scammon's Lagoon a gray whale reserve. Two months later, journalist Michael Scott-Blair wrote a feature article on the lagoon for the *San Diego Union*. "For undisturbed millennia," he reflected, "the mothers have unerringly found the lagoon, delivered their young, nursed them to strength and guided them back to the Arctic." Yet in just one century, "man has successfully transformed the lagoon from a nursery to a bloodstained slaughtering ground, then a tourist attraction and scientific research area, and now, by order of the Mexican government this month, into a protected sanctuary for the whale." And he noted that this was all happening amid profound scientific change. "Most whaling research of the past has been done by men aboard whaling factory ships and stations at seas and on land," Scott-Blair explained. In contrast, a visit to the lagoon now represented an opportunity to study "the natural behavior" of live whales.³³ Sea World expressed hope that Gigi would soon be one of them.

In charge of the release operation was Naval Undersea Center (NUC) research zoologist William Evans. As the young scientist explained to reporters, Sea World and Navy scientists were waiting for that "magic time" in March when gray whales would be passing San Diego on their northward migration. Still, they cautioned that it might go badly. After all, the young whale had enjoyed abundant food in the safe confines of her pool for nearly her entire life. "This is going to be quite a shock for her," emphasized Sea World vice president John Campbell.³⁴ "I was devastated," Bailey later admitted. "My baby was going out to the ocean."³⁵

Evans and his colleagues had ambitious plans for Gigi. Hoping to gather information on gray whale behavior and migration, they mounted a fourteen-pound radio transmitter on the young animal, which they secured by threading polyurethane tubing through her skin. Held in place by a corrodible bolt, the pack was designed to fall off after nine months.³⁶ Yet things went awry almost immediately. Less than twenty-four hours after release, as Gigi swam off Point Loma, Evans lost the radio signal. Letters of concern poured in from across the nation as Sea World and NUC researchers scrambled to find Gigi.³⁷

Over the following weeks, the team tracked Gigi's progress northward but struggled to pinpoint her location. On March 26, a fisherman on a San Clemente pier spotted a gray whale with a radio pack, and soon after Gigi startled swimmers off Dana Point. "The Navy called

us and said they had a sighting there,” explained Bailey, who again found reason to question the experts. “They had all their Navy equipment and they were saying, ‘She must be three to five miles offshore this direction.’ And I said, ‘No she isn’t! She’s right there!’”—pointing to Gigi’s position immediately below them.³⁸ Days later, Evans and his team were tracking Gigi near San Clemente just before dawn aboard the Navy research vessel *Cape* when a searchlight lit up their vessel. “You are in a restricted area,” announced armed men in a high-speed vessel. “Identify yourself!” To the researchers’ shock, they had crossed paths with a detachment of the US Secret Service guarding the home of President Richard Nixon. “Convincing the officers that the *Cape* was indeed following a whale was not easy,” Evans wrote. “Eventually, the officers decided that the whale could stay, but the vessel had to leave.”³⁹ By April 19, despite assistance from NASA, Evans admitted that had again lost the signal and concluded that Gigi was headed to the Bering Sea. As he put it, “I guess Gigi figured this was her last chance to join the pack.”⁴⁰

Despite her disappearance, Gigi had left her mark. During her year at Sea World, hundreds of thousands of visitors had gotten their first close-up look at a gray whale, and news coverage of her release boosted interest in the species. Meanwhile, public concern with the fate of whales continued to grow. In the fall of 1972, the US Congress, advised closely by Carleton Ray and William Shevill—the scientists who had observed Gigi’s feeding—passed the Marine Mammal Protection Act, which Nixon signed in October.⁴¹ In addition to ending US commercial whaling, the law gave sweeping protections to cetaceans. In January 1973, CBS broadcast a feature on the coastal migration of gray whales along with graphic footage of whaling. Scientific interest likewise continued to grow. Several of the researchers who had worked with Gigi held a conference at the San Diego Museum of Natural History, which resulted in a 1974 special issue of the *Marine Fisheries Review*. That same year, Scripps sponsored a meeting between US and Mexican scientists and officials over protection of the Baja lagoons. All along the coast, it seemed that interest in gray whales was growing. In May 1975, the new Greenpeace organization, on its way to confront Soviet whalers, frolicked with gray whales off the coast of Vancouver Island. The encounter, reflected the organization’s leader Bob Hunter, had the effect of “‘converting’ everyone into whale freaks.”⁴² Two years later, Mexico hosted the First International Symposium on gray whales.

Meanwhile, Gigi's story continued to loom large at Sea World. The marine park's education department performed puppet shows for visiting school groups that detailed the whale's brief captivity, along with ecological information on gray whales. "The story of Gigi was beloved at that time," recalled a former member of Sea World's education staff. "Most of the teachers primed the kids to know about Gigi, so when we did the show there was lots of clapping and cheering."⁴³ In those presentations as well as in media statements, Sea World promoted hope that Gigi might someday return for a visit, and over the years reported sightings trickled in, but without confirmation. Then in December 1977, William Evans, now head of the Hubbs-Sea World Research Institute, received photos taken off Point Loma. A gray whale had approached a small boat so closely that the operator had taken detailed photographs and even touched the animal. After noting the scars caused by the sutures for the radio pack nearly six years earlier, Evans announced that the animal was Gigi. Once again, the famous gray whale made front-page news.⁴⁴

She also captured the imagination of Sea World employees, among them Steven Swartz. A staffer in the education department, Swartz had become fascinated with the Gigi episode and gray whales more broadly. In early 1977, he made his first trip to Baja, where he explored the possibility of field research in the calving lagoons. The following year, he and former Sea World Sea Maid Mary Lou Jones began pioneering studies in gray whale behavior in San Ignacio Lagoon. It was during their first season, in early 1978, that Swartz and Jones observed unexpected behavior among the gray whales, who had long stirred fear among local fishermen. Beyond just tolerating the presence of the few whale-watching vessels, some of the animals approached the boats and even allowed physical contact from people.⁴⁵ News of the "friendly" whales spread quickly.

Back in San Diego some wondered if one of the "friendlies" might be Gigi herself. After all, the whale had experienced intimate contact with humans for more a year, and she had recently approached at least one boat off San Diego. Was it possible that she had sought out people and thereby influenced the behavior of other gray whales? Such cultural transmission isn't unheard of in cetaceans. In Australia, researchers have observed that a dolphin held briefly in captivity introduced the behavior of "water walking" to a number of wild dolphins.⁴⁶ When asked whether she believed her "baby" had initiated the friendly encounters, Sue Bailey had little doubt: "Absolutely! The

friendlies didn't show up until after we released Gigi."⁴⁷ Such claims are impossible to confirm, and they likely reveal more about Gigi's impact on humans than on other gray whales. Above all, her captivity had reframed gray whales as individuals and forever banished the image of the Devilfish.

It also helped shape the career of researcher Jim Sumich. In 1970, after earning a master's degree in biological oceanography at Oregon State University, Sumich had taken a job at Grossmont College just outside San Diego. Like many new arrivals, he made the obligatory visit to Sea World to see the killer whales, but it was the facility's capture of a gray whale calf the following March that really caught his attention. "I had never seen a gray whale before Gigi," he explained. "I really had no intention of building a career around this species." Over the following year, he came as often as he could to observe the captive calf. His interest only grew with her release. Soon after, he met a graduate student at San Diego State University who had taken part in the capture of Gravel Gertie in 1965. "One of the things he expressed," Sumich recalled, "was that after they got her aboard, the mother of that calf physically battled the capture boat for twenty-four hours before they finally left the lagoon." Sumich found himself deeply affected by the story, and those feelings grew when he attended the 1973 conference on Gigi at the Natural History Museum. Among the presenters was Dave Kenney, who likewise emphasized the mother whale's determination to save her calf. "Did you ever consider releasing the calf?" Sumich asked the Sea World veterinarian. "Don't you think she earned it?" Kenney brushed off the question, but Sumich found himself drawn to this evidence of a mother-child bond. "I was trying to get at the emotional aspect of what was it like to be on this forty-foot boat and having a thirty-five-foot animal slap the shit out of you for twenty-four hours," he explained. "That's where my interest really started."⁴⁸

In 1978, Sumich entered a PhD program at Oregon State, intending to explore the breathing rates and metabolic needs of mother gray whales and their calves. He planned to do field work in San Ignacio Lagoon, where he hoped friendly gray whales would allow him to take breath samples. But they weren't *that* friendly. "I went down with two students, and we worked for about three weeks and we couldn't get a sample," he recalled. Where were all the friendlies Swartz and others had reported? "I was totally depressed. I knew my PhD was out the window," and as his team packed up, things only got worse. "That

night it rained about three and a half inches, the entire desert was just a lake, and you couldn't find the roads," he recalled. Fortified by peanut butter and beer, he and his students dug in, and the next day they had their first encounter with a friendly. The whales, it seemed, had decided to cooperate, and over the following weeks several youngsters approached Sumich's boat, allowing him to take breath samples. "It wasn't so much the calf that was letting us work and get samples as it was the way the mom behaved," Sumich explained. "We were sitting up here on a little inflatable boat and every time the calf was in close, she'd come in and park herself underneath us, perpendicularly, three feet below. You could just barely reach down to touch her." For Sumich, it was a powerful illustration of the mother-calf bond. "I thought it was a very clear message: 'You behave with my baby or I will blow you out of the water.'"⁴⁹

Mexican locals were skeptical. "When we first started making contact with the whales, local fishermen thought we were absolutely *loco*," recalled Sumich. "They were afraid of those animals, and they avoided them." But soon, locals recognized the whale's potential as a tourist draw; some began operating as whale-watching guides. "Almost all of that cultural change has been on us and not on the whales," Sumich noted. "Up until 1975, we still called them Devilfish, and you were a fool if you let a whale approach you."⁵⁰ By the early 1980s, however, the friendlies were becoming a major tourist attraction in Baja, and the Mexican government continued to expand protections in the lagoons.

These policies reflected larger global trends. In 1982, the International Whaling Commission voted for a moratorium on commercial whaling, which took effect four years later. By that time, eastern Pacific gray whales had become symbols of the shifting human relationship with cetaceans. In November 1988, Mexican President Miguel de la Madrid established the Vizcaíno Biosphere Reserve, expanding protections over San Ignacio and two other calving lagoons. That fall, far to the north, activists led the push to save three gray whales trapped by spreading sea ice off Point Barrow, Alaska. In the end, Canada, the United States, and the Soviet Union—three former whaling nations—cooperated in the partly successful effort.⁵¹ It was an astonishing display of the species' symbolic importance, and it had little to do with the health of the population. In 1994, the US government removed eastern Pacific gray whales from the endangered list—still the only cetacean population ever to be delisted.

For its part, Sea World continued to contribute to the species' iconic status. In January 1997, an ailing gray whale washed up in the surf near Los Angeles. With permission from the National Marine Fisheries Service, Sea World rescued the youngster—dubbed JJ. Applying lessons from Gigi's captivity, staffers nursed her back to health, and soon she was available for public viewing and scientific research. Among those who came was Jim Sumich. Over two decades of fieldwork, Sumich had collected numerous samples from wild gray whales, but he needed more reliable data on lung volume and growth rates to complete his research. "I thought, 'this is ideal,'" explained Sumich, "I had done really good studies using friendlies in San Ignacio, but there were some things that I really needed to calibrate with a controlled, captive animal."⁵² Sea World Vice President of Animal Care Jim Antrim welcomed such research. "You can do anything that you want to do with this whale," he told Sumich. "provided it isn't invasive and is done either before the park opens or after the park closes." Such access proved critical to Sumich's work. As he later wrote, "The opportunity to have repeated access to a healthy, growing gray whale calf over the entire time span of JJ's rehabilitation at SeaWorld allowed us to document for the first time a baleen whale's developmental changes from neonate to independent yearling."⁵³ JJ remained at the park for fourteen months, and by the time of her release in March 1998, she was the largest animal ever maintained in captivity.

By then, the future of eastern Pacific gray whales once again seemed in doubt. In the early 1990s, the Mexican government had formed a partnership with the Japanese corporate giant Mitsubishi to expand its salt production facilities into San Ignacio Lagoon. Scientists, activists, and whale-watching entrepreneurs warned that the project threatened essential gray whale habitat, and concerns only grew when an unknown mortality event in 1999–2000 killed off some 25 percent of the population. Convinced by activists inside and outside Mexico that the population was threatened, Mexican President Ernesto Zedillo scotched the project in 2000, and over the following years local communities in Baja embraced the economic possibilities brought by the whales. "When I first started working in San Ignacio Lagoon, there were a half dozen fishing families, and that was it," reflected Sumich. "Now there is a little town with streets and all the support staff. I think Mexico has done an amazingly fantastic job of controlling access, not overexploiting the

resource that they know is a very valuable one.”⁵⁴ In the process, gray whales became increasingly woven into the cultural and economic fabric of Baja.

What was Gigi’s role in all of this? Some who knew her well make sweeping claims. “Gigi created a lot more interest in the gray whale,” asserts Sue Bailey. “All of the museums up and down the coast now have gray whale tracking and whale watching.” And “the friendlies didn’t show up until after we released Gigi,” she adds. “Hello!”⁵⁵ Sumich is more skeptical, doubting even that Gigi was accurately identified in 1977. “In the mid-70s, it was almost an annual event for Sea World to announce a ‘sighting’ of Gigi,” he cautions. “Keep in mind that she had no barnacles or cyamids while in captivity, so five years later, one could not know what she might look like.” Certainly, he wasn’t prepared to attribute the friendly gray whales, or public affection for the species, to Gigi.⁵⁶

Yet however uncomfortable it is to acknowledge in the current context of anti-captivity activism, Gigi’s time at Sea World undeniably influenced public and scientific views. All but forgotten today, her captivity played an important role in the transnational embrace of gray whales on the Pacific Coast. Years before whale watchers raved about the “friendlies” of Baja, thousands were introduced to Sea World’s friendly gray whale, and those encounters reframed public perceptions of this now-iconic species. Equally important, many of the scientists who pioneered gray whale research got their start with Gigi. In the end, her time at Sea World helped change the environmental culture of the Pacific Coast. And who knows? Perhaps she influenced the culture of eastern Pacific gray whales as well.

Notes

1. “Mom’s’ Role Carried Out by Sea Maid,” *San Diego Union*, March 13, 1972.
2. Bob Corbett, “Gigi’s All Heart—In the Cause of Science,” *San Diego Evening Tribune*, March 3, 1972.
3. See, for example, Mitman, *Reel Nature*, chap. 7; and Colby, *Orca*.
4. On the history of commercial whaling regulation, see Burnett, *Sounding of the Whale*; and Dorsey, *Whales and Nations*.
5. See, for example, Dedina, *Saving the Gray Whale*; Swartz, *Lagoon Time*; and Russell, *Eye of the Whale*. An exception to this neglect is Coerr and Evans, *Gigi*, a short account written for school use.
6. Dedina, *Saving the Gray Whale*, 27.
7. Arch, *Bringing Whales Ashore*.

8. Arima and Hoover, *Whaling People*; Reid, *Sea Is My Country*; and Sumich, *E. Robustus*, 26–27.
9. Dolin, *Leviathan*, chap. 13.
10. For an excellent overview of the gray whale hunt within the context of marine mammal harvests in the Pacific, see Iglor, *Great Ocean*, chap. 4.
11. Scammon, *Marine Mammals*, 259–263, 270, 32–33.
12. Scammon, *Marine Mammals*, 259, 29.
13. “Target Practice at Magdalena Bay,” *The Californian*, March 25, 1908. See also Dedina, *Saving the Gray Whale*, 24–25.
14. Russell, *Eye of the Whale*, 25–26.
15. Flynn used the expedition to produce *The Cruise of the Zaca* (1952), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ohnyjmz-aCg> (accessed July 31, 2021).
16. “Dr. White’s Latest Heart ‘Patient,’ Whale, Proves Too Wary and Elusive,” *Los Angeles Times*, February 10, 1956.
17. Norris, *Porpoise Watcher*, chap. 5.
18. On the history and culture of Sea World, see Davis, *Spectacular Nature*.
19. “Gray Whale Captured,” *San Diego Union*, February 24, 1965; and Bryant Evans, “Captive Whale Meets Press,” *San Diego Union*, February 25, 1965.
20. “Gray Whale Serves, Dies,” *San Diego Evening Tribune*, April 13, 1965.
21. “Sea World Will Get Killer Whale Calf,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 18, 1965.
22. Rice and Wolman, “Life History and Ecology.” “The Rice and Wolman study gave us a tremendous amount of information on reproductive capabilities, on basic anatomical features, and a better understanding of the migratory patterns,” gray whale specialist Jim Sumich reflected decades later. “Clearly that kind of study will never, could never, be completed again. I mean, it was initiated to evaluate the female population and restart whaling!” Jim Sumich, author interview, February 13, 2018.
23. Coerr and Evans, *Gigi*, 55.
24. Coerr and Evans, *Gigi*, 61–62.
25. Coerr and Evans, *Gigi*, chap. 7; and Susan Nessel, author interview, July 15, 2017.
26. Susan Nessel, author interview, July 15, 2017.
27. Susan Nessel, author interview, July 15, 2017.
28. Susan Nessel, author interview, July 15, 2017.
29. Coerr and Evans, *Gigi*, 74.
30. Kenney quoted in Corbett, “Gigi’s All Heart.”
31. Coerr and Evans, *Gigi*, chap. 8.
32. G. Carleton Ray, author interview, October 9, 2017.
33. Michael Scott-Blair, “A Visit to the Whales,” *San Diego Union*, February 27, 1972.
34. Campbell quoted in Ron Fulkerson, “Gigi Going Home, Whale of a Return,” *San Diego Union*, March 13, 1972.

35. Susan Nessel, author interview, July 15, 2017.
36. "Sea World Plans to Free Gray Whale," *San Diego Evening Tribune*, March 2, 1972; and Fulkerson, "Gigi Going Home."
37. "Gigi Dallies in Kelp Beds; Mail Pours In," *San Diego Evening Tribune*, March 21, 1972; and "Gigi Enjoys Dinner Off San Clemente," *San Diego Union*, March 22, 1972.
38. Susan Nessel, author interview, July 15, 2017.
39. Coerr and Evans, *Gigi*, 108.
40. "Scientist Says Gigi Goes North," *San Diego Union*, April 19, 1972; Evans quoted in "Big Search Set for Missing Gigi," *San Diego Union*, April 23, 1972.
41. Ray and Potter, "Marine Mammal Protection Act."
42. Zelko, *Make It a Green Peace!*, 213.
43. Jan Colby, personal communication, May 15, 2018.
44. Coerr and Evans, *Gigi*, 110.
45. By 1982, Swartz had recorded two hundred such encounters. See Dedina, *Saving the Gray Whale*, 18.
46. Matt Walker, "Dolphins Learn to Walk on Water," BBC Earth News, October 22, 2001, http://news.bbc.co.uk/earth/hi/earth_news/newsid_9116000/9116120.stm (accessed July 31, 2021).
47. Susan Nessel, author interview, July 15, 2017.
48. Jim Sumich, author interview, February 13, 2018; and Laylan Connelly, "Gray Whale Expert to Discuss the Massive Mammals, with Tales of Gigi and JJ," *Orange County Register*, January 25, 2017, <https://www.ocregister.com/2017/01/25/gray-whale-expert-to-discuss-the-massive-mammals-with-tales-of-gigi-and-jj> (accessed July 31, 2021).
49. Jim Sumich, author interview, February 13, 2018.
50. Jim Sumich, author interview, February 13, 2018.
51. "Whales Slip Off to Sea, Still Must Dodge Ice for 200 Miles," *Sacramento Bee*, October 29, 1988.
52. Jim Sumich, author interview, February 13, 2018.
53. Sumich, *E. Robustus*, 140.
54. Jim Sumich, author interview, February 13, 2018.
55. Susan Nessel, author interview, July 15, 2017.
56. Jim Sumich, author interview, February 13, 2018.

PART IV

Indigenous Modernities

Ngarrindjeri Whalers

Culture Contact, History, and Reconciliation

Adam Paterson and Christopher Wilson

THE HISTORY OF WHALING AT ENCOUNTER BAY, South Australia, has been told many times. Details of the ownership of the stations, the lists of whalers, the catches, and the profits are well known. Employment of Ngarrindjeri people as whalers is also noted and generally accepted as being an important facet of this industry. This chapter retells some of this narrative, incorporating a Ngarrindjeri perspective, which is crucial to addressing imbalances in the colonial archive, where Indigenous voices are usually absent. Often when considering these silences, it has been necessary to read between the lines of the accounts of missionaries, government officials, and non-Indigenous settler farmers and whalers, incorporating Ngarrindjeri knowledge and cultural understandings of colonialism. We turned to the written archive, which Ngarrindjeri have actively engaged with as a source of cultural information, to inform our interpretations. We also drew inspiration from Lynette Russell's approach to documenting the history of Indigenous women living with non-Indigenous sealers and whalers, a history that is "fuller, though perhaps less certain," it is however "a view that does justice to the past."¹

Reconciliation has been a theme of our work investigating Ngarrindjeri whalers; supported by our workplaces through governance initiatives, it has also evolved from a shared commitment to embark on research that makes space for Indigenous voices. By documenting the histories of the Ngarrindjeri whalers, we aim to develop a

better understanding of the historical basis of present conditions and to assist Ngarrindjeri to reclaim and promote their connections with whales, which they name Kondoli. Centering Ngarrindjeri led us to explore records of the Protector of Aborigines and a Legislative Council enquiry into the Aborigines, both of which provide evidence of Ngarrindjeri whalers overlooked by previous accounts. Perhaps, even more important, framing our research this way facilitates nuanced interpretations of their role in the industry. Searching for agency among Ngarrindjeri whalers, our history questions their motives for involvement in an extractive industry that was foreign and at odds with their cultural obligations. It presents Ngarrindjeri involvement as multifaceted, proactive within the bounds of colonialism, and incorporating cultural maintenance. This reconciliation in practice also included an exhibition, “Leviathan,” held at the South Australian Maritime Museum and a video interview published to museum social media channels during National Reconciliation Week 2020.

Ngarrindjeri

The Ngarrindjeri Nation is a people from the Lower Murray River, Lakes Albert and Alexandrina, the Coorong (Kurung), and the southern Fleurieu Peninsula. Over the past 180 years, Ngarrindjeri have actively worked to maintain culture, creatively adapting to changing economic and social pressures brought about by colonization. Records created by missionaries in the nineteenth century, anthropologists in the early twentieth century, and government organizations throughout the colonial period form an important resource used to further develop connections to culture and *ruwe* and *ruwar*. In the Ngarrindjeri language, *ruwe* translates as body and *ruwar* as country, though the two are intimately linked and the health of one is crucial to the health of the other.² Some variations in colonial records aside, it is generally accepted that the Ngarrindjeri consist of five main groups—the Jarildekald, Tanganekald, Portaulan, Warkend, and Ramindjeri.³ Within these groups were further divisions named *lakinyeri*, more or less equivalent to family groups, of which around twenty were recorded. Encounter Bay is reported as the territory of the Ramindjeri, though Ngarrindjeri from other areas are believed to have also visited; we therefore refer to Ngarrindjeri whalers.

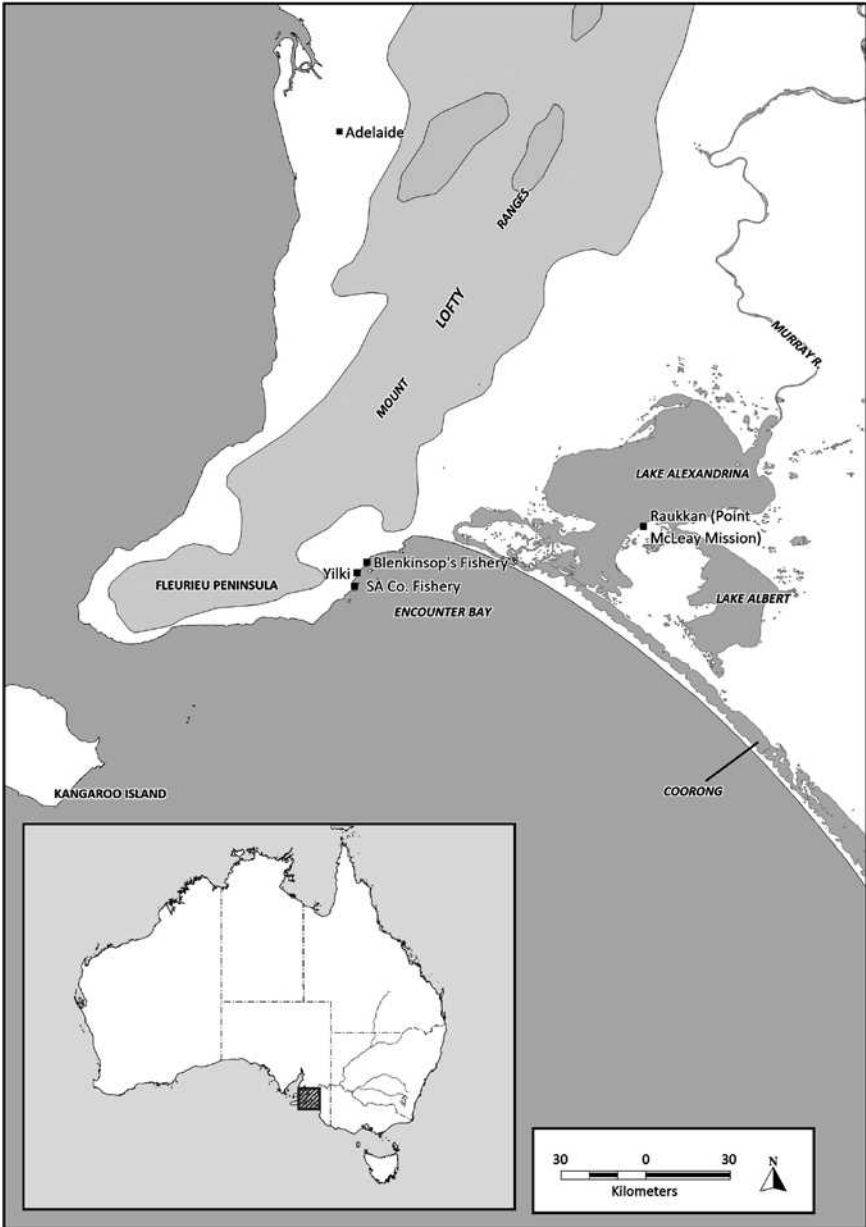


Figure 11.1. Map of Encounter Bay showing locations mentioned in text. Courtesy of Flinders University College of Humanities Arts and Social Sciences.

Missionaries were preoccupied with Christianizing the Ngarrindjeri, whereas anthropologists focused on trying to define “original” or “traditional” knowledge to record Ngarrindjeri life as it may have been prior to colonization. They relied on the testimony of a few Ngarrindjeri and, other than “Pinkie Mack,” the informants were all men.⁴ At times, Ngarrindjeri were also asked to provide information regarding the territories of *lakinyeri* to which they did not belong and may not have had full knowledge. Given these potential complications, it is perhaps unsurprising that several versions of Ngarrindjeri stories are not uncommon. Although from the perspective of totalizing univocal histories this may seem problematic, Ngarrindjeri delight in the ambiguity of storytelling.⁵ The version of a story can change depending on who is telling (and the extent of their knowledge) and also the audience. Here we are concerned with the importance of approaching the colonial archive through a critical lens to privilege Indigenous voice and incorporate contemporary knowledge and narrative into historical interpretation.

Kondoli (Whale)

Kondoli is a word shared by the Ngarrindjeri and Kaurna, a neighboring though linguistically and culturally distinct group, and features in the creation stories of both groups.⁶ Despite some variations in the Ngarrindjeri Kondoli story, the narratives are broadly similar.⁷ In a time when animals were human, Kondoli was a large and powerful man who was invited to a ceremony at a place named Murtaparingga. He alone possessed fire and when he danced sparks came out of his feet. One version of the story tells that, other men, jealous of his ability to make fire, speared him in the neck to steal his talent. Flames came out and Ribaldi, the sky lark, gathered up his fire and placed (or dropped) it in the grass tree. Kondoli then fled into the ocean to salve his wound and became the whale. His wound is visible as spray spurting from the whale. In other stories, Kondoli fled from violence at the gathering, dropping fire on the way, which became the iron pyrites from the Mount Lofty Ranges, used by Ngarrindjeri to strike flints.⁸ The stories reflect two ways of making fire practiced by Ngarrindjeri.

For some Ngarrindjeri, Kondoli is also a powerful *ngatji* (totem). The first written record of this connection was published in 1879 by Anglican missionary George Taplin, who included a list of eighteen

lakinyeri, their *ngatji*, and the territories to which they were linked.⁹ Taplin described the ocean beach west of the Murray Mouth as the place of the *kondolinyer* whose *ngatji* was Kondoli.¹⁰ Anthropologists working in the early twentieth century added further *lakinyeri* to the list and also found that Ngarrindjeri could have several *ngatji* and take them from either their mother or father.¹¹ They also wrote about spiritual beliefs and *ngatji*, including the apparent custom for Ngarrindjeri to abstain from eating their own *ngatji*.¹² Some misunderstanding may be involved, however, given accounts of *ngatji* being eaten or used for cultural displays and ornaments.¹³ Most likely it was only possible to eat or display the remains of *ngatji* if done with appropriate ceremony and respect. Anthropologists recorded that a person whose *ngatji* was Kondoli must be present before Kondoli could be consumed.¹⁴ Other individuals, presumed to have Kondoli *ngatji*, were afforded a spiritual authority regarding Kondoli; Ngarrindjeri described them as having the ability to “sing” or “chant” whales to shore.¹⁵

Ngarrindjeri use of whales was recorded in the colonial archive, though many if not all the practices that observers described probably predated these records. Prior to colonization, Ngarrindjeri did not hunt whales but instead made seasonal use of stranded whales, eating the flesh, using blubber to bind pigment and smearing it on their skin for warmth.¹⁶ Whale bones were used in the construction of shelters. Two whale ear bones recovered from coastal locations are believed to have been modified to carry water.¹⁷ W. H. Leigh, who visited the stations at Encounter Bay in 1837, the first year of colonial whaling, described the practices of Ngarrindjeri when whales were caught. The Ngarrindjeri, he noted, consumed the whale meat until they were completely full and, when possible, buried the meat in the sand.¹⁸ Although Leigh claimed that the meat was foul when recovered from the sand, this practice most probably served to keep it cool and away from sunlight and flies. Leigh also noted that “footmen” were sent across country to spread the word that whales were on the beach. The arrival of whales and their stranding was a time for gathering and people would come from other territories for feasting, trade, and ceremony. Although cultural custom permitted use of Kondoli, conditions at colonial whaling stations, where the slaughter was immense, were very different from those before colonization, when only stranded whales were harvested.

Reconciliation and Historical Inquiry

Most historical accounts of Ngarrindjeri whaling are fragmentary and superficial, appearing in broader narratives of whaling, colonization, or local histories.¹⁹ An exception is the work of Phillip Clarke, who has produced a detailed account of the cultural significance of whales to the Ngarrindjeri.²⁰ Clarke's article does discuss Ngarrindjeri whalers, though the emphasis of his work is unraveling the various versions of the Kondoli "dreaming." Acknowledging that Clarke's work is grounded in a deep understanding of the colonial archive, we have developed a Ngarrindjeri whaling history that questions the colonial record, scrutinizing it for racism, ignorance, or other ways in which the significance of whales to Ngarrindjeri and their involvement in the industry may have been misrepresented. Through this approach, the history of Ngarrindjeri whaling becomes a form of "truth telling"—recognition of injustices past and present and a key stone of recent debates in the Australian Reconciliation movement.²¹ Recognition of injustices, however, does not preclude the ability of histories so grounded to search for and identify Ngarrindjeri agency, agency being the ability of individuals to make choices that "are effective in changing their cultural or material conditions."²²

As a concept, reconciliation has gained increasing traction in Australia over the past two decades. It involves bringing together Indigenous and non-Indigenous people within postcolonial contexts to promote, support, and celebrate Indigenous people and their contribution to society. At its core, it requires recognition of past injustices arising from colonialism and acknowledgment of a legacy of colonialism that we live with today. This legacy of disadvantage for Indigenous people is evident in educational and health outcomes and has a symbolic dimension. Working across the disciplines of archaeology, history, museum practice, and community development, we recognize the concrete and serious challenges that Indigenous communities face. In this context, the symbolic dimensions of reconciliation and the documentation of history have important roles to play. For Ngarrindjeri, claiming and reclaiming culture, passing on skills and stories establishing connection to country and each other, is the foundation on which *ruwe* and *ruwar* are understood and strengthened.

Connecting to culture through archival research is especially important for Wilson, who is Ngarrindjeri, whose *ngatji* is Kondoli, and who is a descendant of Sustie Wilson, a Ngarrindjeri whaler. The

significance of retelling the accounts of his great-great-grandfather Sustie is to position himself within the community and thus show the trajectory that connects past, present, and future generations of Ngarrindjeri people. Understanding his family history, through archival research, speaking with elders and other Ngarrindjeri is central to Wilson's work teaching about his culture and identity, including the impact colonization has had on the Ngarrindjeri. Paterson, a non-Indigenous Australian, though less personally connected, has a long-standing interest in colonial whaling and brings a knowledge of the industry and its archive to our work.

Our approach is informed by the rich academic history of debate and practice aimed to decolonize archaeological and museological practice. We are especially cognizant of the acceptance of multivocality and Indigenous perspectives within these contexts and seek to incorporate Ngarrindjeri perspectives into our reading of the colonial archive and history of whaling at Encounter Bay.

Encounter Bay

The first known opportunity for Ngarrindjeri to observe newcomers to *ruwe-ruwar* was the encounter between French Captain Nicolas Baudin and English Matthew Flinders on April 8, 1802, during their voyages to chart the southern Australian coastline. Neither captain sent men ashore and did not meet with the Ngarrindjeri.²³ However, columns of smoke depicted on coastal profiles, exquisitely illustrated by artists travelling with Baudin, suggest that the Europeans did not go unnoticed.²⁴ The captains named the coast Encounter Bay for their meeting one another, but for Ngarrindjeri the most lasting legacy was their documentation of the natural resources within the region, especially the presence of seals. In 1803, while journeying back to Europe, Baudin encountered an American sealer, Isaac Pendleton, who was eager to seal among the islands of Bass Strait. Baudin, having firsthand experience of how jealously the British protected their interests to the east, suggested that Pendleton try the large offshore island he had named Île Borda and Flinders had named Kangaroo Island.²⁵

Pendleton spent four months on Kangaroo Island collecting thousands of seal skins. After Pendleton's success, sealers continued to visit the islands of the southern coastline. In 1805, a Tasmanian sealing gang arrived at Kangaroo Island. In 1807, seven sealers settled there for three years and initiated a trade in salt that complemented the

trade in seal and wallaby skins. Gradually a permanent population began to develop, most reports after 1820 suggesting a population of around twenty men, many of whom had abducted Aboriginal women from Tasmania or the mainland, including Ngarrindjeri.²⁶ As well as sealing and harvesting salt, the Kangaroo Islanders had been growing crops and exchanging fresh food for tobacco and rum from passing ships, some of which were whalers.

The extent of whaling activity before official colonization is difficult to gauge. Several Launceston-based ships visited the southern coastline from 1831 and were reported to have established whaling stations on Kangaroo Island and Cape Jervis, though no mention of Encounter Bay was made.²⁷ Some stations lay farther west. A Mr. Homburg visited Spalding Cove on the Eyre Peninsula in 1832 with the intention of carrying “a party of thirty persons, with five boats and the necessary implements for catching whales.” While there, he noted that the natives were numerous, peaceful, and helped carry water to the ship. Homburg was convinced that “for a little tobacco and with kind treatment” they would work well.²⁸

These settlements and the industries that supported them were known to the colonists who voyaged from England in 1836 to proclaim the colony of South Australia. Before they sailed, a business named the South Australian Company was formed by members of the Board of the South Australian Colonisation Commission to purchase land and establish commercial ventures. The company’s prospectus included among its aims “the pursuit of the whale, seal, and other fisheries, and the curing of fish for exportation.”²⁹ Whaling was expected to return quick profits and the company held high hopes for their shore stations and small pelagic fleet.

In the winter of 1837, less than a year after the colony was founded, two rival stations were operating at Encounter Bay. The Ramindjeri had a more or less permanent campsite at Yilki, on the shore roughly halfway between the two whaling stations, where about two to three hundred people lived. Numbers swelled by a further two to three hundred during the whaling season, which lasted five to eight months.³⁰ In September 1840, with the encouragement of the Protector of Aborigines William Wyatt, Reverend H. A. Eduard Meyer occupied the Government Hut at Police Point with his wife Frederike and their children.³¹ This was one of two Lutheran missions in the colony at that time, the other being Pirltawardli in Adelaide. Despite government support, little financial aid was forthcoming.³² Finding

the location too far from Ramindjeri camps and too near the police, whom the Ramindjeri mistrusted, in 1843 Meyer leased twenty acres set aside for use by the Ramindjeri close to the Inman River and built another house.³³

Meyer recorded many details of life at Encounter Bay in the 1840s. His letters and journals, together with those of his German Lutheran colleagues Reverend Christian Teichelmann and Reverend Clamor Schürmann provide some of the most detailed eyewitness accounts of Ngarrindjeri living near the whaling stations. Lamenting the promiscuity among the whalers and Ngarrindjeri, he observed that

The huts of the natives are close to the fishing stations where every year from April to October about 100 people of the lowest class are employed and make use of most of the poor blacks of the female sex for sinful and shameful purposes, thus causing sickness among the tribes.

He further noted that

If they are questioned about it each sex has its own excuse, the women say “we were forced to do it by our men so that they might obtain tobacco and flour from the Europeans.” The men reply: “We can do nothing about it; the women love those men too much.”³⁴

The extent of venereal disease was also an indication of the ongoing and widespread nature of these relationships. In 1842, Dr. Wark noted that most Ramindjeri women were sterile or miscarrying.³⁵ In 1860, Taplin reported that he believed that venereal diseases such as those affecting Ngarrindjeri were not previously known to them.³⁶ It is considered likely that Australian Aboriginal people had no acquired immunity for numerous diseases.³⁷ A population estimated to have been about five to six thousand before colonization had been reduced to around one thousand in 1860, though many of these were Ngarrindjeri from the lakes and Coorong region. The Ramindjeri near the whaling stations had fared less well.³⁸

Whaling occurred at Encounter Bay every winter until 1851. In some years, as many as three stations were operating and in others only one, with ownership changing often. Catches of 120 tuns or more of oil were common in the first decade before plummeting due to over-fishing of whale stocks. Some whaling continued in the 1860s, though

records of this phase are sparse. The final year was 1872. The area continued to develop, however. In 1864, a jetty and breakwater were constructed at the eastern side of Encounter Bay forming the deep-water port of Victor Harbor, handling goods transported by rail from the river town of Goolwa.³⁹ Expansion and intensification of pastoralism and agriculture restricted Ngarrindjeri access to hunting grounds. They maintained some access to fishing and were provided with nets and boats.⁴⁰ This was only necessary, however, because alienation of their territory restricted access to river red gums for making canoes and rushes for nets. Ration stations were established and in the 1860s government policy officially encouraged the formation of missions.⁴¹ The nearest to Encounter Bay was Raukkan (Point McLeay) established by George Taplin, who worked with Ngarrindjeri to establish the mission buildings and community.⁴²

The twentieth century was a period of intense government observation and control of Ngarrindjeri.⁴³ Previously most attempts to “civilize” Aboriginal Australians had been carried out by church missions with little support from government. In the twentieth century, schools, religion, and labor were all used by government with renewed vigor. Their aim was to shape Ngarrindjeri culture into something acceptable to the dominant colonial society and, where this was deemed impossible, to segregate them.⁴⁴ In the early twentieth century, Ngarrindjeri were rarely at Encounter Bay, most living on the mission at Raukkan or farther inland at Wellington or Murray Bridge on the Lower Murray. Faced with severe disruption to their culture, Ngarrindjeri have demonstrated great resilience and creativity to ensure their cultural survival. Most recently, Ngarrindjeri have proactively begun to reclaim their history through the colonial archive.⁴⁵

Ngarrindjeri Whalers

Ngarrindjeri responded in different ways in the face of the upheaval wrought by the arrival of colonists to their *ruwe-ruwar*. Some chose to actively avoid newcomers. Others sought new ways of being Ngarrindjeri. Sjirbuke and Nakandcanambe (Salamo, Salomon) lived often at Encounter Bay, building houses near the mission and assisting with the work, building fences, clearing ground, and farming. Sjiburke sometimes worked at the mission and was often at the whaling station. Meyer wrote in a letter dated October 4, 1846, that “Sjibuke also appears to want to cleave to us as the whalers have left

the Bay and he is used to the European way of life.”⁴⁶ Tammuruwe Nunkauere (Encounter Bay Bob) also visited the mission occasionally, helping with farm work, although he preferred to live near the whaling station where he could earn enough to dress in European clothes.⁴⁷

Although the missionaries’ diaries and letters provide some clues as to who Ngarrindjeri whalers were in the 1830s and 1840s, other more general accounts, without naming individuals, suggest more than just Sjibuke and Tammuruwe Nunkauere, the two men Meyer mentioned. In 1839, the *Southern Australian* reported that a boat crewed entirely by Ngarrindjeri was at Encounter Bay, suggesting at least six Ngarrindjeri whalers, and that one was rated among the best men in the chief headsmen’s crew.⁴⁸ A political will existed in the colony and among its absentee benefactors that Aboriginal people should be peaceably incorporated into colonial society. Employment was seen as one way this could be fostered. In addition, 1839, the first year that Ngarrindjeri whalers were publicly acknowledged, was an especially unfortunate season at Encounter Bay. An entire boat crew was disbanded after its headsmen John Dutton chained them on Granite Island, one of whom, named Alexander Riches, drowned while trying to escape.⁴⁹ The white whalers were disbanded, and it is possible that the Ngarrindjeri crew was recruited to fill a gap in the workforce.

A crew of Ngarrindjeri whalers was hastily assembled in 1846. Whales in the bay in that year had been few. The headsmen of the Rosetta Head station, named Barton, disbanded the regular crew early on, only for a large group of whales to then visit. Noting the circumstances of Ngarrindjeri recruitment, the *South Australian Register* reported that “his crew unfortunately got afraid and as the monster rolled in agony, they feared lest every succeeding lash should sink them, boat and all.”⁵⁰ Despite this encounter, Ngarrindjeri whalers persisted and more success was had in later years. In 1852, during a general shortage of labor in the colony because of the Victorian “gold rush,” the Protector of Aborigines noted in the quarterly reports that

In consequence of the scarcity of European labor [*sic*], numbers have found employment with the farmers and stockowners. At the whaling station, Encounter Bay, a party of nine is employed in whaling, and has been very successful; Mr. Clark, the chief headsmen, speaks very highly of their behaviour.⁵¹

Histories of whaling at Encounter Bay acknowledge an intermittent and perhaps opportunistic industry between 1852 and 1872, when the last hunt was abandoned after the capture of a single whale.⁵² Details of the workforce or even events of interest are not documented, possibly because the sources most commonly used to prepare whaling histories—newspapers, company records, and occasionally court proceedings—make no mention of the industry at the time. Evidence of this period of whaling, though exceedingly rare, does exist in the diary of the missionary George Taplin, the letter books of the Protectors of Aborigines, and the minutes of the Legislative Council Select Committee upon Aborigines.

An 1860 letter dated July 10 from T. Jones, superintendent of the railway at Goolwa to the Protector of Aborigines, mentions “about 22 [Ngarrindjeri] employed at the whale Fishery at Encounter Bay.”⁵³ It was also in 1860 that Taplin told the Legislative Council Select Committee that he had distributed rations to young Ngarrindjeri men who returned to Raukkan from the fishery without receiving payment.⁵⁴ Lack of payment may reflect exploitation.⁵⁵ In the case of whaling, however, it is possible that the men were unpaid because no whales were caught. A year later, Taplin recorded the following account in his diary:

23 July 1861—heard today that Tom the brother of Pongge and Nangowane has died at Encounter Bay. He was engaged in the whale fishery. Poor fellow, he was one of the first who attended my Sunday services and was always very diligent and attentive while he stopped here. I feel much affected at his death and many enquiries arise in my mind concerning him.⁵⁶

Tom’s death is also remembered through the family history of a non-Indigenous whaler Alexander Ewen, which describes “Tommy,” an Aboriginal “watcher” on the Bluff lookout, running down the hill, jumping in the boat, and falling down dead.⁵⁷ Ewen apparently placed his buttoned cape over Tommy, concealing his death so that the Aboriginal crew would participate in the hunt and not begin their “mournful lamentations” before the whale was caught. The suddenness of Tom’s death suggests that it may have been an accident.

The industry had been mostly abandoned by colonists by this time, and its conspicuous absence from contemporary newspapers suggests that it was of little interest, possibly because of a lack of

profits or pay for workers. Whaling was most likely marginal. Crews were mostly Ngarrindjeri whalers attempting to eke out a living relying on rations, or perhaps cash payment if whales were caught. Payment of Aboriginal workers only in rations was common and, in the first decade of whaling, probably a disincentive for them to engage in formal work given that they could gain more sustenance through hunting and gathering.⁵⁸ By the 1860s, alienation of Ngarrindjeri land had occurred to such an extent that it was extremely difficult to live independently from wage labor. Opportunities for employment, however, were scarce because of the prevalent racism and government-sanctioned displacement of Indigenous people, who were relocated to missions and town camps.

Sustie Wilson

The only firsthand Ngarrindjeri account of whaling comes from a newspaper interview with Sustie Wilson, a whaler at Encounter Bay. The son of a French whaler known only as Wilson and a Ngarrindjeri woman named Fanny, Sustie's exact birth date is unknown, though when he was interviewed in 1930 he was reported to be about 102 or 103.⁵⁹ John Wilson, a name Sustie sometimes went by, was recorded among the whalers engaged by Wilde and Howard in 1844, suggesting that he may have been among the whalers working in the first decade of the industry at Encounter Bay.⁶⁰

the Encounter Bay tribe of natives, many of whom were employed on the boats, were much better whalers than the whites. This, he said, was because they had been throwing spears all their lives, and took to harpooning naturally. When "Sustie" was quite young he was in a whaling crew which was dragged about 12 miles out to sea by a huge whale. "We took two days and two nights to row back," he said, "and it was hard going too, especially when the wind was against us. Not many of the young men of today could have done it."⁶¹

At about the same time that Sustie's account was recorded, other whalers—including James Long, one of the longest standing headsmen at Encounter Bay—were telling their versions of life at the stations.⁶² Long, a white whaler who worked at the same time as Ngarrindjeri whalers, did not mention them in his recollections of the industry,

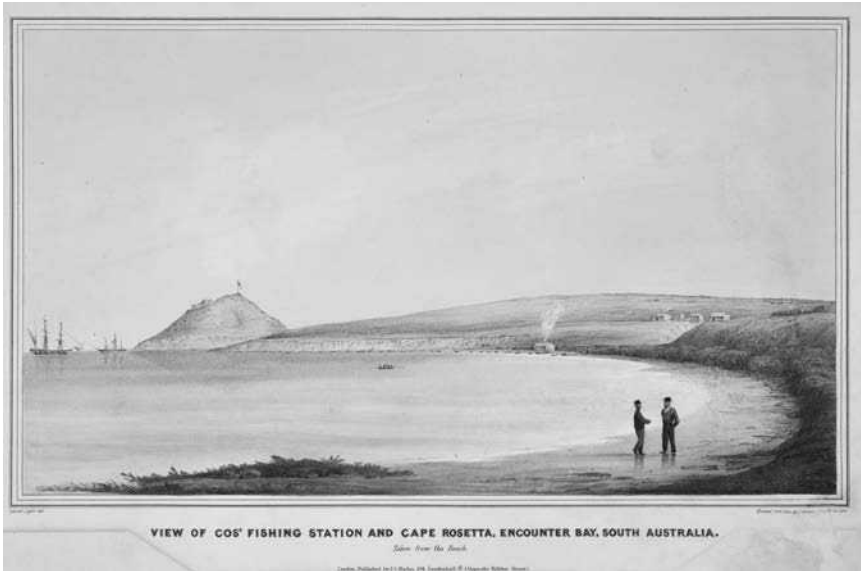


Figure 11.2. View of the South Australian Company’s fishing station and Cape Rosetta, Encounter Bay, South Australia. Taken from the beach near Yilki in 1838, by Colonel William Light, engraved by J. Grieve and published by J. C. Hailes, London. Courtesy of South Australian Maritime Museum HT2020.0605.

only as camping nearby and eating whale, which most white commentators associated with their “uncivilized” nature. George Blackiston Wilkinson recalled that whale meat was “food for blacks, sharks, dogs, and pigs.”⁶³ Given the clarity of his recollections about almost all aspects of the industry, it is easy to construe Long’s amnesia as racially motivated, an act perhaps made easier by the confinement of most Aboriginal people to missions by the 1890s.

Sustie also described the work of a Ngarrindjeri man the whalers referred to as Charlie Warner, who was employed as a watcher or lookout and was said to be able to chant or sing whales to shore. Sustie recalled that the whalers used to give old Charlie rations every day.

I was there one day when they forgot to do this. . . . So Charlie Warner ran out to a rock near the sea, and began his chanting. A huge whale which was lying in the bay vanished in a few seconds. The whaling crew dashed out, but could not even find the wake which is usually left by the whales. They returned and went to old Charlie and gave him his rations. He said, “Now you catch him. You go

back same place this afternoon. You catch him all right." The same afternoon, they found the whale in the same place. I often saw him bring whales into the bay, as well.⁶⁴

The reporter may have recorded the conversations with Sustie faithfully, but it is likely that without detailed knowledge of Ngarrindjeri culture and customs something was lost in translation. To Ngarrindjeri, the singing or chanting of whales represents knowledge of whale behavior learned through song and held by special people, often elders. From this point of view, Warner was most likely especially knowledgeable of seasonal patterns, local conditions such as tides and other environmental conditions, as well as whale behavior. It is because of this knowledge that Warner had an uncanny knack of predicting when whales would come into the bays, recognizing when they were agitated and likely to dive or strand, making him an exceptionally talented lookout. This reinterpretation is much more powerful for Ngarrindjeri, shifting the discussion of whale enchanters from one of magic or superstition toward a spiritually grounded knowledge of the natural world—or as some observers have described it, "Indigenous science."⁶⁵

Reconciling Kondoli, Whaling, and Ngatji

The slaughter of whales had profound impacts on Ngarrindjeri life. Important questions surround how we understand their reactions to these changes. Lynette Russell points out that for Aboriginal men involvement in deep sea whaling may have provided an escape from the control of missionized society.⁶⁶ Shore stations such as those at Encounter Bay may not have provided a physical escape from colonial surveillance and disciplining but wage work could provide better or alternative ways to negotiate the colonial world, as well as possibly increase status within Aboriginal communities. Tammuruwe's (Encounter Bay Bob's) preference for European clothes suggests that some Ngarrindjeri were interested in whaling because it afforded them greater ability to engage in new systems of exchange for novel material goods. Furthermore, although it may be impossible to know for certain how the relationships between white whalers and Ngarrindjeri women were negotiated at Encounter Bay and whether the women went freely or not, Aboriginal men who were whalers may have been more appealing partners than those who were not.

Although records created by missionaries and anthropologists indicate that Ngarrindjeri would not harm their *ngatji*, stranded Kondoli could be eaten if a person with Kondoli *ngatji* gave their permission. Undoubtedly, consumption of whale meat would have provided Ngarrindjeri with short-term economic benefits, and may also have incorporated a continuing adherence to cultural protocols, though perhaps modified. Ngarrindjeri probably viewed the European practice of discarding thirty or more whale carcasses each year as wasteful, disrespectful, and—if the proper ceremonies were not conducted—potentially dangerous. It is not known whether Ngarrindjeri continued their practices associated with consumption of whale meat, though if they did not, those whose *ngatji* was Kondoli would have been especially aggrieved.

The link between hunter and *ngatji* is not mentioned in the whaling archive, and whaling was an entirely new practice that would have required a significant cultural shift. Ngarrindjeri whose *ngatji* was Kondoli are less likely to have joined the whale hunts, however, faced with the prospect of others hunting Kondoli and delivering their bodies for feasting, we wonder, might they also have chosen to join the hunt and exert some control over the fate of the whales? Those whose *ngatji* was a different animal may have been relatively free to participate in the hunts without contravening their cultural obligations, though no doubt would have been aware of the disruption caused to others.

Kondoli was most likely Charlie Warner's *ngatji*. Our analysis of the colonial archive acknowledges the cultural importance of Charlie Warner and others like him. Their knowledge of whales and their likely role in sanctioning eating and other uses of Kondoli would have afforded them status and respect within Ngarrindjeri society. The mass slaughter of whales is likely to have disrupted their role and fragmented Ngarrindjeri cultural obligations to Kondoli. Sustie Wilson's account suggests, however, that Ngarrindjeri spiritual, cultural, and economic relationships with whales may instead have been reconfigured in creative and productive ways. Adapting and continuing culture in the face of what was undoubtedly a massive and brutal upheaval was a strategy that enabled Ngarrindjeri like Charlie Warner to survive in the colonial world. By attaching himself to the whaling station, he made sense of the slaughter using Ngarrindjeri ontology, renegotiating status within Ngarrindjeri society, and seemingly drawing on the resources available through colonial society.

Conclusion

Placing Ngarrindjeri at the center of the history of whaling at Encounter Bay has enabled sketching an outline of the conditions under which Ngarrindjeri became involved in the industry and how the industry changed over time, identifying a phase of whaling previously neglected. We have also brought to light the impact of colonialism on the archive today. Recognizing how narratives of Ngarrindjeri whalers have been variously constructed and indeed forgotten are important aspects of this history and need to be shared widely in Australia, a country still coming to terms with colonial injustice.

Without doubt, whaling at Encounter Bay brought significant changes to Ngarrindjeri ways of life. The killing of Kondoli and the waste and misuse of their bodies must have raised the ire of many Ngarrindjeri, though for some the eating of the meat probably helped right this wrong. Some Ngarrindjeri with Kondoli *ngatji* may have found ways to incorporate the most visceral aspects of the industry into their world view, though we consider it unlikely. Charlie Warner's involvement in whaling, his chanting whales to shore, may have been an attempt to renegotiate his position in Ngarrindjeri society. It may also have repositioned Ngarrindjeri more broadly as controlling the fate of their *ngatji*.

The history of the Ngarrindjeri whalers highlights the strength, creativity, and perseverance of Ngarrindjeri in the past and the present. It is important to recognize, though, that the stories told today about Ngarrindjeri and their role in the development of South Australia can easily be colored by past bias. Meaningful engagement with Ngarrindjeri histories and promotion of Ngarrindjeri points of view about shared histories are crucial to improving relationships between Ngarrindjeri and other Australians.⁶⁷

Notes

1. Russell, "Dirty Domestics."
2. Bell, *Ngarrindjeri Wurruwarrin*, 262–263.
3. Bell, *Ngarrindjeri Wurruwarrin*; and Berndt, Berndt, and Stanton, *World That Was*.
4. Bell, *Ngarrindjeri Wurruwarrin*, 321–322.
5. Bell, *Ngarrindjeri Wurruwarrin*, 36, 477.
6. Berndt, Berndt, and Stanton, *World That Was*; and Clarke, "Significance of Whales."

7. Berndt, Berndt, and Stanton, *World That Was*, 235–236.
8. Berndt, Berndt, and Stanton, *World That Was*, 235–236; and Clarke, “Significance of Whales,” 26–27.
9. Taplin, “Narrinyeri,” in Woods, *Native Tribes of South Australia*.
10. Taplin, “Narrinyeri.”
11. Bell, *Ngarrindjeri Wurruwarrin*, 210.
12. Taplin, *Journals*, 63, PRG 186–1/3.
13. Bell, *Ngarrindjeri Wurruwarrin*, 208.
14. Berndt, Berndt, and Stanton, *World That Was*, 81.
15. Clarke, “Significance of Whales,” 20.
16. Berndt, Berndt, and Stanton, *World That Was*, 81.
17. George French Angas, engraving (lithograph), Encampment of Native Women, near Cape Jervis, and Natives of Encounter Bay, 1847, Plate B 15276/56, State Library of South Australia, <https://www.catalog.slsa.sa.gov.au/record=b2793076~S1> (accessed September 7, 2021); whale’s ear drinking vessel from Pelican Point, Specimen A49445, South Australian Museum, https://archive.org/stream/RecordsSouthAus34Sout/RecordsSouthAus34Sout_djvu.txt (accessed September 7, 2021).
18. Leigh, *Reconnoitring Voyages*.
19. On whaling, Hosking, “Whaling in South Australia 1837–1872”; Russell, *Roving Mariners*; on colonization, Bell, *Ngarrindjeri Wurruwarrin*; Lockwood, “Early Encounters”; on local histories, Page, *Victor Harbor*.
20. Clarke, “Significance of Whales.”
21. Uluru Statement from the Heart, 2017, <https://ulurustatement.org/the-statement> (accessed July 31, 2021); and Appleby and Davis, “Uluru Statement,” 4.
22. Russell, *Roving Mariners*, 13.
23. Baudin, *Journal*; and Flinders, *Voyage to Terra Australis*.
24. Fornasiero, Lawton, and West-Sooby, “Art of Science,” 116–117.
25. Baudin, *Journal*.
26. Moore, “Notes,” 82–83, 87–88, 107–108.
27. Firth, “Bound for South Australia.”
28. Moore, “Notes,” 93.
29. South Australian Company, *Prospectus*.
30. H. A. E. Meyer to Committee of the Evangelical Lutheran Mission Society, Dresden, July 25, 1844, Meyer correspondence, Lutheran Archives.
31. Meyer to Dresden Mission Society, March 10, 1841 and February 2, 1842, Lutheran Archives.
32. Meyer to Dresden Mission Society, 1842, Lutheran Archives.
33. Meyer to Committee of the Evangelical Lutheran Mission Society, Dresden, July 25, 1844, Lutheran Archives.
34. Meyer to Committee of the Evangelical Lutheran Mission Society, Dresden, July 25, 1844, Lutheran Archives.

35. Colonial Secretary's Office 1842, Wark to Grey, GRG 24/1/1842/65, State Records of South Australia.
36. Legislative Council, Select Committee, 165.
37. Lockwood, "Early Encounters."
38. Legislative Council, Select Committee, 165.
39. Page, *Victor Harbor*.
40. Protector of Aborigines, Out Letter-Book, Scott to Jno Henderson, May 16, 1866, to December 31, 1870; Protector of Aborigines, Out Letter-Book, Birch to Jno Henderson, State Records of South Australia.
41. Foster and Nettlebeck, "Protectorate."
42. Taplin, Journals, State Library of South Australia; and Legislative Council, Select Committee, 165.
43. Brock and Gara, "Segregation."
44. Brock and Gara, "Segregation."
45. Kartinyeri, *Ngarrindjeri Nation*; and Kartinyeri, *Ngarrindjeri Anzacs*.
46. Meyer to Dresden Mission Society, October 4, 1846, Lutheran Archives.
47. Meyer to Dresden Mission Society, October 4, 1845; and C. Schürmann to Dresden Mission Society, 10 October 1846, Meyer correspondence, Lutheran Archives.
48. *Southern Australian*, August 7, 1839.
49. *South Australian Register*, August 31, 1839.
50. *South Australian Register*, August 8, 1846.
51. *South Australian Government Gazette*, December 23, 1852, 772–774.
52. *Chronicle*, April 20, 1933; and *South Australian Register*, September 6, 1872.
53. T. Jones, Superintendent Railway, Goolwa, to E. T. Wildman, Sec.: Hon. Commr. Crown Lands and Immigration, GRG35/1/0 758/60, Further Correspondence IN (and Responses) of Commissioner Crown Land and Immigration, State Records, AU.
54. Legislative Council, Select Committee, 165.
55. Kartinyeri, *Ngarrindjeri Nation*.
56. Taplin, Journals, State Library of South Australia.
57. Encounter Bay Family History Group, "Alexander Ewen," November 8, 2017, <http://encounterbayfhg.org.au/ewen> (accessed July 31, 2021).
58. Raftery, *Not Part of the Public*, 74–75.
59. Tindale, *Murray River Notes*.
60. *South Australian Government Gazette*, March 28, 1844.
61. Tindale, *Murray River Notes*.
62. *South Australian Register*, January 29, 1894.
63. *South Australian Register*, September 6, 1879.
64. Tindale, *Murray River Notes*.
65. Bohensky, Butler, and Davies, "Integrating Indigenous Ecological Knowledge," 20; and Whyte, Brewer, and Johnson, "Weaving," 25.
66. Russell, *Roving Mariners*, 76–89.

67. Bell, *Ngarrindjeri Wurruwarrin*, 318; and Isadora Bogle, “SA Maritime Museum unveils woven whale sculpture inspired by French explorer,” May 24, 2018, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-05-24/whale-sculpture-unveiled-at-museum/9797436> (accessed July 31, 2021).

Whale Tales

(Re)Discovering Whales and Whaling in Puget Sound Salish Culture and History

*Jonathan Clapperton and the Squaxin Island
Tribe's Ancestor's Voice*

“ONE MORNING, WHALE CAME TO THE BAY. Young Mink said, ‘I guess I’ll take a look at Whale in the salt water.’ Just as he came out, Whale passed by the camp and jumped. ‘Next time Whale passes by, I’ll kill him!’ Mink said.” So begins the story of “Mink Kills Whale” as told by Pike Ben in the mid-1920s.¹ The story sheds light on the presence, importance, and history of whales and whaling to Coast Salish peoples in Puget Sound, Washington State.

Although academics and lay people have long recognized whales and whaling as integral to a few Indigenous communities in the Pacific Northwest—notably the Makah and Nuuchahnulth—they assert that most maritime Indigenous nations did not “actively” catch whales. Most scholars contend that these other groups, possessing neither the physical nor cultural apparatuses to be “active whalers,” at best used drift whales washed ashore or could manage to catch smaller porpoises. Robert Losey and Dongya Yang challenge this dominant depiction, asserting that the characterization of most Indigenous nations of the region as nonwhalers springs primarily from ethnographic work occurring “well into the twentieth century, long after even the Makah and Nuuchahnulth had ceased whaling.”² Extrapolating from their case study of a site on the Oregon coast, they contend instead that “many groups along the west coast of North America likely occasionally hunted whales in the past and that this hunting occurred using nonspecialized technologies.”³

Building on Robert Losey and Dongya Yang, and with the story of “Mink Kills Whale” in mind, this chapter focuses on the Squaxin Island Tribe of southern Puget Sound (encompassing all waters south of the Tacoma Narrows) and other neighboring Coast Salish in Puget Sound where scholarly accounts are ubiquitous in rejecting Native Americans as whalers.⁴ We propose that unpacking the history of whales and whaling, moving beyond outsider constructions that bifurcate tribal identities as either “active whalers” or “passive nonwhalers,” upsets the restrictive, ethnocentric constructions of Indigenous identities and casts new light on the importance of whales (including porpoise and orca) and the activity of whaling to the Puget Salish.

“Mink Kills Whale” is one of many stories regarding the presence of whales in Puget Sound, and Ben’s account is similar to others in the Pacific Northwest that reveal Indigenous understandings of their relationships to whales. To return to it,

“How would you kill him, you small man?” all the older people asked. “You’ll see! You’ll eat him yet!” Mink said. Later, someone said, “Well, Mink, Whale is coming. We want to see you kill him.” There were many people camping on the beach. “You have no tools—you can’t kill Whale,” they said to Mink. “You bet I have!” Mink answered. Young Mink owned a little canoe, a one-man canoe. He got a large butcher knife, as sharp as a razor, and put it in the canoe. He had no spear or hatchet. “I have my canoe and my butcher knife,” he said. Whale thrashed his tail and spouted. It seemed impossible that Mink, with such a little canoe, could kill Whale. An old lady, when she heard what he was planning to do, said, “Oh Mink, you liar!” . . . Whale stayed there in the bay all day, digging clams. “Watch me now!” Mink said. He got into his canoe and went up to Whale. The latter humped his back, and Mink, still in his canoe, rode right upon his back. Then he took his knife and cut a hole about a yard square, just big enough for his canoe, in Whale’s back. He took his canoe inside Whale’s belly. . . . Whale felt it; he gave a jump and ran like a turtle. He went down the bay for . . . four days, before he stopped. Then he came back to the place on the beach when which he had started. He had been down to the ocean but had come back to Mink’s home. Mink was still inside, talking at a great rate, like a talking-machine. The people could hear him there, talking. Mink cut Whale’s heart. Whale staggered and staggered, then rolled over dead right on the

beach, close to camp. He cut off a little piece of flesh and cried, "I told you I'd kill him! Now help me sell him." Everybody then went down to the beach where Whale was lying.⁵

"Mink Kills Whale" incorporates many of the common Indigenous understandings about whales. Mink's "talking" inside Whale likely refers to his using specialized powers to coax or drive Whale back to the beach; the community gathering to participate in processing Whale reflects the standard protocol of sharing such an important and substantial food and material resource for a village. Mink's request for help selling Whale alludes to the lucrative trade in whale meat and products that once flourished among Native American communities throughout the Pacific Northwest. "Mink Kills Whale" also provides a lesson in humility for those who would belittle another's capabilities—a lesson with which settler-colonial discourse still grapples.

Before moving forward, it is important to explain what is meant by the Squaxin Island Tribe's Ancestor's Voice. This chapter is a collaboration between Jonathan Clapperton and some members of the Squaxin Island Tribe's Museum, Library, and Resource Center, and the Cultural Resources Department, but the question arose as to how best represent their voice when attributing authorship. Consequently, the Squaxin Island Tribe's Ancestor's Voice was created as the name to refer to the core group of professionals who have the right to speak on behalf of the tribe concerning the tribe's history. Doing so is also intended to decrease jealousy and individual or family voices being privileged over others. Ultimately, the goal in using this collective noun is to make the tribe stronger with a collective voice and ensures that long after the present members are gone what is written and known about the tribe and its people is agreed upon and can be used and shared by all Squaxin. We as the authors also wish to express our immense gratitude to Kevin Lyon, Legal Department director at the Squaxin Island Tribe, for his support in coordinating this research collaboration and for the insight he provided.

Creating Whaling Cultures

The binary discourse of whaling versus nonwhaling tribes in the Pacific Northwest began shortly after Euro-American settlement. In Washington Territory, early American settlers and amateur ethnographers discursively established the Makah's reputation as preeminent

whalers to the exclusion of most other maritime tribes. James Swan wrote that the Makah were the “most expert and successful in the whale fishery of all the coast tribes.”⁶ George Gibbs identifies only the Makah as whalers.⁷ Newspaper accounts at the time further describe the Makah as the state’s only Indigenous whalers.⁸

Late nineteenth- and twentieth-century anthropologists did not divert from these early characterizations. Edward Curtis’s expansive *The North American Indian* mentions only the Nootka (including the Makah), Quileute, Quinault, and Kwakwaka’wakw as whalers on this section of the coast. His famed photographs, which highlighted the Nootka’s whaling culture, no doubt created a lasting impression on later scholars and the public. Following in Curtis’s footsteps, Thomas Waterman, in *The Whaling Equipment of the Makah Indians*, was definitive in his appraisal, writing that in addition to the Makah, “Whaling is practiced by the Quileute and Quinault . . . but the practice is unknown beyond their territory.”⁹ Leo Frachtenberg argues in multiple publications that the Quileute and the Makah “are the only Indians in the United States proper known to have actually engaged in whale-hunting.”¹⁰ Michael Harkin implicitly takes an even more restrictive view, asserting that “Along with the closely related Makah across the Juan de Fuca Strait, the Nuuchahnulth were alone among Northwest Coast groups to practice whaling.”¹¹

This canon of material created a priori doubt or outright rejection of other tribes as potential whalers and ignorance of the importance of whales to their cultures. Although Waterman admits that “whales are spoken of in the accounts of other tribes living all along the coast of Oregon and Washington,” he did not examine the potential information found in the meaning of those accounts.¹² Major anthropological and historical works on the Puget Salish also either dismiss or omit whaling. Hermann Haeberlin and Erna Gunther’s *The Indians of Puget Sound* never mentions whales. William Elmendorf, studying the Twana on Hood’s Canal, notes that the Skokomish did not hunt whale except for a single historical instance when a party of porpoise hunters harpooned a whale.¹³ He appears so blinded by the discourse of limited whaling that he rejects the likelihood that if a whale was hunted once and successfully brought to shore, it happened additional times. Marian Smith’s seminal work on the southern Puget Sound Salish hardly considers whales. She inaccurately asserts, “Whales have not entered Puget Sound waters for a long time,” basing her opinion on a single story an Indigenous informant recounted to her of whales and sharks battling in Puget Sound in the distant past, after which whales left.¹⁴

Smith also judges the Puget Salish's ability to capture larger marine species inadequate, noting they possessed harpoons for seals and porpoises, but declares that "black fish were too big for these Indians to tackle."¹⁵ Smith's comment echoes that of the villagers rejecting Mink's prowess recounted earlier.

Not all scholars ignore tribal whaling activities beyond the Makah, Quinault, and Quileute, and many have recognized the importance of whale products in their economies and whales to their cultures, but those who examine whaling still reinforce the dichotomy of "active whalers" who caught whales in open water and "passive (non-)whalers" who supposedly used only dead, beached whales. For instance, Richard Kool and Erna Gunther each divide tribes between whale hunters and whale scavengers.¹⁶ Terry Thompson and Steven Egesdal, though using less definitive language, lean toward the idea that most Coast Salish communities were not whalers:

Although most Coast Salish *perhaps* were not truly ocean-going, their villages often clustered around river mouths opening into the salt water . . . *Probably* only the Klallam and Quinault were whalers among the Coast Salish. Some of the other groups were happy to "harvest" any whale that happened to wash ashore.¹⁷

Thompson and Egesdal simply expand on observations Wayne Suttles and Elmendorf made more than half a century earlier. Suttles explains that the Coast Salish hunted porpoises in two-man teams on salt water with the same harpoon used for seals. He further notes that although the Quinault and the Klallam "habitually went whaling . . . an occasional seal hunter elsewhere killed an occasional whale."¹⁸ Elmendorf observes that the Klallam were always on the lookout for whales, with canoes ready to launch upon their sighting.¹⁹ Despite numerous scholars recognizing the use of drift whales, however, none provide a sustained consideration of the importance of whales to supposed nonwhaling groups' cultures and, by extension, how doing so might change representations of them.

Evidence of Whales and Whaling in Puget Sound Salish History

Members of the Squaxin Island Tribe maintain an oral and recorded living knowledge and tradition of whales and whaling in the

southernmost reaches of Puget Sound. A member of the Squaxin Island Tribe's Ancestor's Voice states that the Squaxin's ancestors caught and ate whales, including orcas and porpoises. A "big feast" followed a successful hunt, whether the whale was caught on the water or beached itself.²⁰ Another member echoes the assertion that the Squaxin's ancestors were whalers. She elaborates that tribal ancestors, on learning of a whale near their waters, would go catch the whale with the appropriate gear. Once the whale was brought back to shore, a ceremony would be performed.²¹

The oral and recorded living knowledge and tradition of the Puget Salish more broadly represents a diverse repository of stories (often characterized as myths or legends) that supports the presence of whales and the practice of whaling in Puget Sound. This repository reveals an intimate connection between the Puget Salish and whales: whales assist people; people turn into whales and vice versa; whales are a regular presence in Puget Sound; and people have the knowledge, ability, and tools, including the proper protocols, to capture whales, including harpooning or spearing them from canoes and luring or driving them to the beach.

Cultural outsiders have long recorded these stories. Perhaps the earliest was penned by Gibbs, who was told a story by Alm-cot-ti (identified as Nisqually, a term that, at the time, was often inclusive of all tribal peoples of southern Puget Sound). The story tells of four seal-hunting brothers and a medicine man who was an unsuccessful hunter and with whom the brothers never shared seal meat. He sought to injure them for being selfish, so carved a seal in cedar wood and placed it where they usually hunted. The brothers arrived and three of them harpooned the false seal, towing it a great distance to an island where the brothers would live at a village of dwarves. After some time, the dwarves hired a whale to carry the brothers home. Along the way, they were thrown off the whale and became grampuses (orcas). Thereafter, the transformed brothers assisted their brethren by driving seal ashore and abstaining in wrecking their canoes. Demonstrative of the story's ongoing relevance and as firmly rooted in a specific place, it ends with their grieving mother transforming into a rock on the eastern end of Vashon Island where she can "still be seen in proof of the tale."²²

Alm-cot-ti's story has many similarities to others recounted about whales in Puget Sound, notably whales assisting lost people returning to their community. In a story told by Joe Young (Puyallup), "The

Two Brothers' Journey to the North," two seal hunting brothers had a sister who was married to a canoe builder "far stronger than any shaman." Although the brothers in this story gave their sister food to share with her family, she hid it, thinking her husband too proud to eat that kind of meat. Instead, he felt slighted and carved a wooden seal, which, when the brothers speared it, dragged them north for five days and nights. One brother died. The other found a tree-sized old man who claimed he was the brothers' grandfather. The old man pulled a "minnow"—actually a hundred-foot whale—to the bank. Referring to the spiritual powers used to direct a whale to shore that only the most skilled whalers had, the narrator is careful to explain the process of leading the whale to the bank was certainly an active—not a passive—activity: "The old man drew [the whale] in to land and when on the bank it stayed there. It was not dead but under the spell of the old man."²³ Thereafter the old man took the lost hunter to the whale, wherein he stored a large supply of dried salmon, entered the whale himself, and returned to the hunter's village where it beached itself. The story ends with the man providing instructions to the community on how to butcher and use the whale.²⁴

Another rendition told by George Young (Green River, Yakima, Snoqualmie, and Puyallup) of "The Two Brothers' Journey to the North" is notable in its identification of many specific places throughout Puget Sound, whereas other stories are geographically vague. In this version, a jealous brother from Nisqually is dragged by a wooden decoy north past Steilacoom, Brown's Point, Deception Pass, and beyond. Eventually, the brother stole plenty of fish from an unknown man, who cursed him and caused the brother, on his journey home, to become a blackfish.²⁵ Young, noting the continuing presence of the blackfish in southern Puget Sound, says,

He went in and out of the water. He arrived opposite Mukilteo. He got into a fight, and he bled, at Pipitc, across from Muckilteo. . . . He went to Maury Island, and stayed several days. Then he circled around Nisqually. He was not going any particular place; he just wandered around in circles.²⁶

Anthropologist Jay Miller details that at nearby Gig Harbor "residents traced descent from transformed Killerwhales, emblemized by two rocks representing the mother Orca and a platter where food offerings were daily left for her and her family."²⁷ Identifying specific

locations is important. As anthropologist Keith Basso observes, places “possess a marked capacity for triggering acts of self-reflection, inspiring thoughts about who one presently is, or memories of who one used to be, or musings on who one might become.” Basso continues, “Place-based thoughts about the self lead commonly to thoughts of other things—other places, other people, other times, whole networks of associations.”²⁸

Numerous similar stories exist in southern Puget Sound. The story “Mother of Blackfish” refers to a site named *spépéitc* (probably the same as *Pi pitc*) as the location where paint was put on the men who became blackfish, and the orator states the paint is still visible.²⁹ One story includes Raven, who is killed by Whale.³⁰ Yet another includes two brothers who are dragged by a seal across the ocean and return after the dwarves call Whale, who the dwarves explain is an “old person.” The Whale answers the call and says, demonstrating the recurring presence and familiarity of whale with these interior waters, “Yes, I know where these people are from. I pass by their homeland. . . . I will return them.” The brothers return with Whale, and then sing their songs to bring fish and game to the water’s edge. As the story goes, which highlights the agency of all animals, “All the food came freely of its own accord.”³¹

Stories that take place in Puget Sound describe catching, often through luring via song or ceremony as in those related earlier (and thus indicative of an “active” use of drift whales), butchering, and consuming whales are plentiful and often quite detailed.³² A Skagit tale recorded by Haeblerin, “The Girl Who Married a Dog,” describes a son’s learning a song from his father that could call a whale to the beach, and then teaching it to his wife. Upon the wife’s singing the song, a high tide appeared; when it receded, the whale was on the beach, whereupon “the people butchered it.”³³ A story recounted by John Xot, from lower Puyallup and the Sound, told the story of “Mink and His Wives.” In it, Mink sought to kill the lover of a chief’s daughter, who ends up being Whale. Mink sharpened sticks of ironwood, then set them to snare Whale, who rolled on them, was impaled, and died. Mink told the village that a whale was ashore, and they took “their knives, dressed the carcass, cooked the flesh of Whale, and feasted.”³⁴ Another story of “Mink Kills Whale” has him once more using nonwhaling-specific tools to kill Whale and using his power to direct Whale to Mink’s village: Mink uses a knife to cut a hole in Whale, drags his canoe inside, and directs Whale back to Mink’s village.³⁵ At

each place on the way to his village, Mink called out that he was inside the Whale, though (evocative of scholars dismissing whaling claims by tribes regarded as nonwhalers) those who heard him would say, “Mink is lying.”³⁶ When Mink finally arrived at his village, Whale stopped, Mink cut Whale’s heart, and the villagers towed Whale down the bay and ashore.³⁷

Adjacent to the main body of Puget Sound proper, in Hood Canal, Elmendorf records numerous Twana whaling stories. One, “How the Skokomish Killed a Whale,” describes the Skokomish sighting a whale moving into Hood Canal. Although Marian Smith asserts that porpoise harpoons were inadequate for whaling, the Skokomish story recounts that when the whale came back down toward the ocean, the Skokomish were waiting in two canoes with porpoise harpoons. After they lodged the harpoons in the whale, it began to tow them. Several sang special songs, one of which had enough power to drive the whale to the shore by their camp. The orator reveals the value of the whale to the Skokomish, remarking that, “the song brought the wealth ashore.”³⁸ Afterward, all their people had a two-day feast, which was followed by the arrival of Klallam and Upper Chehalis visitors laden with dentalia (shell beads, used as currency) and other goods to trade for whale meat.³⁹

Place names also reflect the importance of whales in Puget Sound. For example, Thomas Waterman interviewed Johnny Scolopine (or Scalopine) on Squaxin Island in the early twentieth century. Johnny, as a young boy, was at the Medicine Creek Treaty (1854) signing. He was one of the last medicine men of the tribe; the other was from the John’s family. He is also the great-great-grandfather of one of the members of the Squaxin Island Tribe’s Ancestor’s Voice. Scalopine identified two place names in southern Puget Sound connected to porpoises. The first is *kéwai*’ (porpoise hunter), where a man who caught porpoises was changed to rock.⁴⁰ The other is *sup*(Δ) *hs*, a cove referring to the noise a porpoise makes with his nose when surfacing.⁴¹

Other place names in the Puget Sound area also involve whales. For instance, Stex (the Stuck River) means “to plow through” or “to push through” and is based on its origin story. Whales once lived in an inland lake at the present-day town of Sumner, extending all the way down the Duwamish Valley to the Renton junction. The whales became suddenly frantic and swam ashore, plowing their way through the land to escape into Puget Sound, and in so doing made a channel

producing the Stuck River and draining the lake.⁴² Tso'kobed is a creek at Redondo that, in mythic times, connected Puget Sound with Steel's Lake. Whales would go up this passage to the lake but stopped after a young man blocked the channel using a raft sunken with stones. Steele's Lake, or Gishwa'dis, means "where there are whales."⁴³ Another lake, though unnamed in the story, is noted by Elmendorf in a narrative where a whale went up the shore, into the woods, and to a little lake where he still lives.⁴⁴

A member of the Ancestor's Voice also refutes those who would suggest the Puget Salish did not know how, or did not have the right equipment, to harvest whales, remarking that it is important to recognize the Squaxin were "natural scientists who lived close to both land and water," and as such were experts at using it. Whale bones found at archaeological sites and petroglyphs of whales in southern Puget Sound are evidence of this use and of their importance. Another member of the Ancestor's Voice describes numerous whale bone artifacts, such as vertebrae, used as part of children's swings and bowls.⁴⁵ Two harpoon blades were found at the Qwu?gwes (Mud Bay) archaeological wet site that could be used to hunt seal and whale; one of these was a large green slate blade unlike anything discovered elsewhere on the Pacific Northwest Coast.⁴⁶ False killer whale remains were found to have been processed at Qwu?gwes.⁴⁷ A D-adze made of whalebone, cherry bark, and stone was also found in Puget Sound.⁴⁸ Other whale bone artifacts, found in the traditional territory of the Squaxin Island Tribe and in their possession, exist but are not revealed here for reasons relating to cultural sensitivity.

Historic observations of Puget Salish harvesting whales also exist. A member of the Ancestor's Voice suggests that Peter Puget, of Captain George Vancouver's expedition, was referring to a whale processing site when, after visiting a village at Eld Inlet in 1792, he recorded a "horrid Stench which came from all parts of these Habitations."⁴⁹ Puget speculated that the chief occupation of the men of this village was fishing, which, given the parlance of the day, could have included whaling. Other historical accounts are more straightforward. The journal of the Hudson's Bay Company's Fort Nisqually includes an entry on April 7, 1849, recounting the presence of large party of "Soquamish" (Suquamish), and then recorded "a Whale killed by the Soquamish [Suquamish] down the beach."⁵⁰ A settler to the Olympia area remembered a large whale arriving in the southern Sound in the early 1850s, and the local Indigenous people killing it:

What was called a sulphur-bottom whale, probably ninety feet in length, floundered up the bay [at Olympia] one morning in the early '50s, and on reaching the shallow water was unable to swim out to sea again and was stranded as the tide went out. This was a rich find for the Indians. They cut off great chunks of the meat from the sides of the whale, and when this part was cut into portions the Indians climbed right into the location made famous by Jonah, the insides of the immense fish being considered a special delicacy.⁵¹

The settler's description is important given the "Two Brothers" story of the hundred-foot whale journeying into Puget Sound; it also aligns with other observations of the process by which a whale was butchered, indicating that the Indigenous people were familiar with doing so.

Finally, ethnographic observations from Indigenous informants also provide evidence of Puget Salish catching and consuming whales, and that obtaining these larger marine species was not a passive activity but a regular one that occurred with enough frequency to require specialized skills and powers. Jay Miller, in his history of the village at Minter Bay, on Carr Inlet in southern Puget Sound, asserted, "Men hunted a variety of mammals, both sea and land, during the fall and winter, depending on where they lived. A whale straying into Puget Sound might also be taken."⁵² He also described a spirit—*yilbixu*—that only came to those of high rank, with gender-specific gifts. The spirit

lived in a house full of fish and animals, and its servants looked like humans rather than other creatures. It gives ~ gave its male human partner the ability to have game and fish drop dead on command at specific convenient locations. . . . Where appropriate, it also provided whales.⁵³

Elmendorf writes that in neighboring Hood Canal the Klallam kept constant watch for whales and canoes were ready to launch when one was sighted. Elmendorf also pointed to specific events recounted to him that occurred within living memory. These informants recalled "stout women" involved in the whale hunt, one of whom was pulled overboard; once the whale was caught, it was butchered, the meat divided, and much of it was sold to other people.⁵⁴ A Twana informant also provided an account to Elmendorf about an event estimated to have taken place in 1860 regarding a Twana man who obtained a porpoise-hunting song "in the Puget Sound language."⁵⁵

Waterman left the largest ethnographic record for Puget Salish whale-catching and harvesting tools, processes, and episodes, though even it is not especially extensive. Indigenous people showed him tools for fishing on Puget Sound that, they explained, were simultaneously also used for “hunting otter and porpoise.” He describes these as an “ordinary” two-pronged spear, with a long line attaching a wooden float carved in the form of a duck. When a porpoise was struck, the duck was thrown overboard and the hunter “let the porpoise run away with it.”⁵⁶ A spear which was heavier than that used for salmon, called a *ca’sab-1d*, or porpoise implement, was sometimes used. Waterman observes that the porpoise-hunting spear of the Puget Salish was “practically identical” to that of the Yurok and the Kwakwaka’wakw.⁵⁷ Moreover, their hunting methods were also similar.⁵⁸ Waterman further details the Puget Salish’s specialized language and protocols for dividing the product of a successful catch, one that is remarkably similar to other whaling cultures.⁵⁹

Whales and Whaling in Puget Sound in the Post-Treaty Era

Although Native American whaling continued in Puget Sound at least until the mid-nineteenth century, it ceased in the twentieth in response to numerous factors. The increasing settler population provided opportunities in other, more lucrative, economic pursuits.⁶⁰ Simultaneously, whales became relatively less financially important as alternatives to whale oil, notably rapeseed and cottonseed oil, flooded the market.⁶¹ After decades of intensive depletion via industrial whaling, the whale population by the early twentieth century had plummeted. This does not mean that whales stopped entering Puget Sound. For instance, a fifty-five-foot humpback swam to the Skookum Bay area (within the Squaxin Island Tribe’s traditional territory) in 1930; rather than being taken and processed by members of the Squaxin, as would have occurred in the previous century, it was harpooned by non-Indigenous people, who towed it to Point Defiance Park (near Tacoma), where it was publicly displayed.⁶² It was within this economic and social atmosphere that most anthropologists identified Puget Salish identities as nonwhalers.

Following a century and a half of outsiders defining Indigenous identities, however, the Puget Salish tribes of Washington State embarked on programs of cultural revitalization to reframe and replace existing colonial narratives. They asserted their versions of their

culture and history, the importance of whales and whaling included, which meant confronting the canon of scholarship and popular constructions of their identity and history as nonwhaling tribes. In addition to the archaeological findings at Qwu?gwes, the Squaxin Island Tribe's connections to whales, and their opportunity to demonstrate these connections in the public sphere, was spurred largely because of a chance visitor to southern Puget Sound in 2010: a thirty-nine-foot Bryde's whale. Bryde's whales live in tropical waters and had never been reported in Puget Sound.⁶³ Although the Squaxin Island Tribe reported on other whale visitors over the years in their newsletter—for examples, a gray whale spotted in Totten Inlet in the wrong season,⁶⁴ or geoduck divers having their air and water hoses pinned down by a gray whale which was feeding in the south Sound⁶⁵—the Bryde's whale was special and would receive mainstream attention. Having somehow ended up in Puget Sound, he died in Case Inlet; the body was transported to Squaxin Island.

Following the arrival of the Bryde's whale, the Squaxin Island Tribe engaged in an internal discussion about what to do with him. Their conversation drew on what Robert Miller describes as "latent culture": the storing up of cultural traditions and practices even when activity associated with those traditions is not being actively practiced.⁶⁶ One of the members of the Ancestor's Voice explained: "We had to look back at what we would have done . . . [when] my people were eating whales."⁶⁷ Some felt that the tribe should not bother with it because it was not from their waters.⁶⁸ Others, however, linked their people to the whale and the broader marine environment. As Dave Lopeman, then Squaxin Island Tribal Chairman, explained, "It is a mammal like us. And we are people of the water. It's special."⁶⁹ Although outsiders, such as biologists at the nonprofit Cascadia Research Collective in Olympia, saw the whale's arrival as mysterious and were baffled by its appearance so far beyond its ecological range, the whale's arrival made perfect sense within the Squaxin's cultural context. Much as in the whale legends and stories recounted, some members of the tribe attributed agency to the whale and interpreted its final destination in Squaxin tribal waters as a conscious choice on the whale's part. Lopeman remarked, "Maybe it was sick and it wanted to go and die in a safe place and knew we were going to treat it well. And so it gave itself to us." Just as in the stories, the Squaxin were obligated to treat the whale properly. Lopeman continued, "we decided we are going to treat it right, so our children could always say we did."⁷⁰ The

Ancestor's Voice member echoed Lopeman: "We felt we needed to respect the whale . . . [and] culturally needed to do something with this whale."⁷¹

Salish culture emphasizes respect for, and familial relationships with, animals. In respecting the whale, the Squaxin were also following widespread cultural protocols for treating animals properly to avoid serious negative repercussions. Gibbs recounts a story about Native Americans near Clallam Bay who cut off a still-living whale's fins and tail in order to tow it ashore more easily.⁷² Consequently, they were turned to stone. A member of the Ancestor's Voice also recounted a story she was told about a porpoise hunter who was turned to stone for not following proper protocols.⁷³ Allowing the Bryde's whale's carcass to be towed away by cultural outsiders into the deep ocean and left there to rot would go against its wishes to meet its end in southern Puget Sound—which it clearly wished to do, given that it was so far beyond its regular area.

An Ancestor's Voice member echoed the stories recounted of whales being shared with the community: "This is everyone's whale," and all of the decisions about how to engage with the whale became exemplary of community involvement.⁷⁴ The tribe continued the tradition of holding a community feast upon receiving what they saw as a gift of a whale. Although whale was not on the menu, a mixture of traditional and modern foods—elk chili and homemade biscuits covered with a wild blackberry sauce and vanilla ice cream—connected the past with the present. Again, in thinking about how to ensure that the whale remained a marker of community identity, the Squaxin decided to keep the whale bones for display at their museum—a prominent place of cultural preservation and identity expression for Squaxin and others to learn about the tribe's history and values. Even butchering the whale showed the theme of change and continuity, the tribe using knives as well as pressure washers and hydrogen peroxide to clean the whale's bones.

Media attention accompanying the arrival of the Bryde's whale allowed the Squaxin to publicize their tribe as being whaling people. As the *Seattle Times* reported, "The Squaxin people have long and deep ties to whales. Fire pits at a south Sound archaeological site included bits of cooked whale bone."⁷⁵ According to a member of Ancestor's Voice, another newspaper account elaborated that whales were part of the Squaxin's past, whale remains were found on their land, and that, together, these provided "clues to the tribe's longstanding connection

to the mammal, which played a role in dictating the unusual way they handled the discovery of the Bryde's whale."⁷⁶

Joshua Reid's analysis of the Makah's resumption of whaling identified many positive outcomes, including the performance of their culture via songs and dances, generation of interest in other marine practices, movement of their culture from the museum to the water, bringing together the community, and drawing together their attention to their heritage. The Bryde's whale brought with it many of the same benefits to the Squaxin Island Tribe. Remembering stories can operate as a sense of recovery of rights.⁷⁷ The tribe's decision to honor the whale with a mixture of traditional and modern demonstrated the tribe's ability to adapt to present realities and changes while still honoring tradition. Each action served to reconnect the tribe to their whaling past and to publicly assert their presence, authority, and stewardship over the lands and waters in their traditional territory. Reid further observes that the resumption of whaling also helped the Makah transform "the sea into sovereign space. They guarded this space from others."⁷⁸ Similarly, the Squaxin emphasized that it was their responsibility to take care of the whale—not that of state fisheries officers, nor of neighboring tribes—because it ended up in *their* waters.

Although the arrival of the Bryde's whale provided a highly visible outlet for the Squaxin Island Tribe to affirm and display its long history with whales, another opportunity for asserting tribal connections, responsibilities, and rights to whales came through legal channels. A court suit, beginning in 2015, was brought by the Makah and the State of Washington who were at odds with the Quileute and Quinault tribes with respect to the scope of the treaty secured right of taking fish. Specifically, the suit sought a determination of the western boundaries for the usual and accustomed fishing areas in the Pacific Ocean for the Quileute and Quinault tribes.⁷⁹ The Squaxin Island Tribe, among others, participated as an interested party. Although the Squaxin Island Tribe did not have any immediate plans for resuming its historical practice of catching whales, the case presented the possibility the tribe could lose their right to do so in the future.

The case focused on fishing, but questions about tribal whaling came to dominate it. Could evidence of a tribe's harvest of marine mammals, including whales and fur seals, be the basis for establishing a tribe's usual and accustomed fishing areas, and, further, were whales covered under the treaty right to fish? The Makah's position was quite

similar to how outsiders have understood Indigenous whaling history in Washington State, and espoused the discourse dividing whaling and nonwhaling tribes. The Makah argued that because their treaty is the only one that mentions whales specifically, their treaty right and their whaling activity is qualitatively different from that of other tribes, which only have rights to fin-fish. Additionally, the Makah (along with Washington State) contended that whales are not fish, and the activity of whaling should be understood as hunting, whereas taking fin-fish was fishing. Conversely, the Quileute, Quinault, and other interested parties took the opposite stance. They claimed that though the Makah's treaty did include specific language in recognition of its rights, such language did not preclude others from whaling, nor was it a heightened or unique right. Further, they argued that references to fish in the treaty encompassed whales and other mammals and the activity of taking them was an act of fishing.⁸⁰

Throughout the course of the proceedings, the tribes opposing the Makah offered numerous historical examples of references to whales as fish and to catching them as fishing are abundant in the treaty era. Contemporaries referred to tribal members as "whale fishers," and the activity as "whale-fishing." Dictionaries from the time of treaty (circa 1855) also provided a broad popular understanding of the word "fish," and the common usage in legal opinions included the terms "fish" and "fishers" in reference to whales. Equally as important, especially given that the Court has ruled that treaties must be interpreted as their Indigenous signatories would have understood them,⁸¹ Northwest Coast Indigenous stories identify whales as fish. For instance, Boas recorded a story of the Thunderer, who took a man to his home. The next day, the Thunderer told the man to go catch salmon. On going to the beach, the man saw only whales swimming around, no salmon. Puzzled, he returned to Thunderer, who answered, "Those are the fish I was speaking of. They are our food. Catch a few!"⁸² The stories from tribal residents of southern Puget Sound recorded by Ballard include similar descriptions. In "The Two Brothers' Journey to the North," an old man is digging for minnows, but, "as soon as the old man had his forefinger in the fish's gills, he had it and he could land it on the beach. That fish was a whale." As the story progresses, that whale is constantly referred to as a "big fish."⁸³

The case has been ruled on twice—both victories for the Quinault, Quileute, and interested parties.⁸⁴ It presents an important example of tribal identity boundary maintenance, a process ongoing since

ethnographers and anthropologists sought to demarcate whaling and nonwhaling tribes in the Pacific Northwest. Rob van Ginkel, commenting on the Makah's decision to renew its whale hunt in the 1990s, writes,

It forced the Makah to authenticate the return to their whaling tradition vis-à-vis anti-whaling activists and the wider audience, who had entertained specific ideas about the “real” Indian that were at odds with the Makah's intentions and actions. By extension, they had to “prove” their practices were authentically Makah, leading to a “clash of essentialisms” in the contest over Makah culture and identity.⁸⁵

Interestingly, the Makah sought to force other Native American tribes into a similar process in court. Likely, they hoped that the characterization of the Makah as the preeminent whalers in present-day Washington State, and the dominant discourse of the other marine tribes as nonwhalers, would work to its advantage and to make other tribes—despite having equal claim to marine-dependency—prove that their culture and identity included using all marine life.

Whales and Whaling as Integral to Puget Sound Salish History and Identity

Within the Little Creek Casino-Resort, which the Squaxin Island Tribe owns and operates, is a carving of three orcas—a mother and two calves. On one side is written the story “The Barking Dog,” as recounted by Mike Krise, a member of the Squaxin Island Tribe, that serves as a corrective to many of the inaccurate narratives described and speaks to the annual presence of orcas in southern Puget Sound:

Long ago there were many large pods of the killer whale beings that would come down to the foot of the Puget Sound. They came to feed on the salmon people as they did every year. Well, this time two babies of one of the mothers got lost during a large feast near [the] south side of Anderson Island. The feast lasted for a long time. The two baby killer whales were in a new area to them. They ended up at the mouth of the Nisqually River. . . . As the two babies started exploring a little too far, they ended up across the flats to the creek that is now called McCalister Creek. As they swam near the mouth they noticed a dog sitting on the bank. Soon after they started getting scared by traveling too far away from their mother!

As time went by they were lost due to the tide change. The water was gone over the path they had come across the flats.

The story continues that the dog asked whether the babies were lost and knew that their mother must be worried. He told them he would bark so that their mother would know where they were. The mother heard the dog's noise and came and carried her babies out on her back. Bringing the story into the present, Krise writes, "Today if you were to go down to the mouth of the McAlister Creek, you'd hear the voices of a dog barking, warning of the dangers of the tides of the Nisqually Flats!"

Krise's story, and its public display, fits well within the oral tradition, archaeological evidence, eyewitness accounts, ethnographic observations, and the general history of Puget Sound, all supporting the characterization that the Coast Salish peoples here were, and remain, whaling cultures, even if they are yet to be widely recognized as such.⁸⁶ The characterization of the Puget Sound Salish as passive, nonwhaling tribes—what amounts to scavengers of whales that washed ashore—is an ethnocentric and ultimately inept interpretation. It perpetuates a long history of settler-colonial discourse seriously underestimating the ability of Indigenous peoples to comprehend, use, and alter the environment, and misses a key component of Puget Sound Salish (among other supposed nonwhaling tribes') culture.⁸⁷

Approximately half a century ago, anthropologists went through a decades-long professional crisis when they realized they had been constructing the very Indigenous cultures and identities they hoped to describe.⁸⁸ Much work remains to undo many of the inaccurate portrayals they created. Whaling histories must move beyond settler-scholar discourses and support the incorporation and legitimization of local cultural perspectives.

Notes

1. The story was recounted to Thelma Adamson in either 1926 or 1927. Adamson wrote that she was told the Mink stories belonged to Puget Sound. *Folk-Tales of the Coast Salish*, ix.
2. Indeed, they "suspect much whale bone has been ignored or little studied when it has been recovered outside the core region of ethnographic whaling" due to this deliberate ignorance. Losey and Yang, "Opportunistic Whale Hunting," 672–673.

3. Losey and Yang, "Opportunistic Whale Hunting," 657.
4. The Squaxin Island Tribe emerged from the unification of seven Native American bands or tribes who occupied the seven inlets of southernmost Puget Sound following the Treaty of Medicine Creek in 1854. They are part of the culture group known as Coast Salish, and historically spoke a dialect of Lushootseed, which was known throughout Puget Sound.
5. Adamson, *Folk-Tales*, 133–134.
6. Swan, *Indians of Cape Flattery*, 4.
7. Gibbs, *Indian Tribes*.
8. *Daily National Intelligencer*, "West Coast of the United States: The Indians," 1857; and *Olympia Columbian*, "Fisheries of the Pacific Coast," 1853.
9. Waterman, *Whaling Equipment*, 47.
10. Fractenberg, "Abnormal Types of Speech," 296. See also "Eschtology"; and "Ceremonial Societies."
11. Harkin, "Whales, Chiefs, and Giants," 317.
12. Waterman, *Whaling Equipment*, 47.
13. Elmendorf, *Structure of Twana Culture*, 107–108.
14. Smith, *Puyallup-Nisqually*, 267.
15. Smith, *Puyallup-Nisqually*, 267.
16. Kool, "Northwest Coast Indian Whaling," 31; and Gunther, "Indian Background," 192.
17. Thompson and Egesdal, *Salish Myths and Legends*, xx (emphasis added).
18. Suttles, *Coast Salish Essays*, 235. If, as Kool contends, that the species most commonly hunted by Northwest Coast groups was actually the humpback (not the Pacific Gray), which was once abundant, came into sheltered waters, and was far more easily taken than the Gray, then using the same tools while seal hunting makes even more sense.
19. Elmendorf, *Twana Narratives*, 42–43.
20. Clapperton, personal conversation with Rhonda Foster, October 26, 2017.
21. Clapperton, personal conversation with Charlene Krise, October 24, 2017.
22. Clark, "George Gibbs' Account," 160–161.
23. Ballard, "Some Tales," 77–80.
24. Ballard, "Some Tales," 80.
25. Calhoun, "Four Puget Sound Folktales," 42–43.
26. Calhoun, "Four Puget Sound Folktales," 43.
27. Miller, *Minter Bay*, 41.
28. Basso, *Wisdom Sits in Places*, 55.
29. Ballard, "Some Tales," 71. In this story the blackfish would kill other creatures, such as seals, and cause them to drift to *spépéitc*.
30. Calhoun, "Four Puget Sound Folktales," 43–44.
31. "The Seal-Hunting Brothers," in Hilbert, *Haboo*, 75–86.
32. Groups of supposed nonwhaling tribes beyond the Puget Sound Salish also shared with ethnographers their recollections of whaling. The Tillamook,

- for instance, provided accounts of their ancestors hunting whales through a variety of methods, including harpooning, canoe ramming, and using spiritual power. See Deur and Thompson, “South Wind’s Journeys,” 51.
33. Haeberlin, “Mythology of Puget Sound,” 420.
 34. Ballard, “Some Tales,” 66–67. The rest of the story details how the chief’s daughter ate some of the whale and killed herself upon the realization that it was her lover.
 35. Groups beyond Puget Sound have also recalled stories of hunting whales with a knife. For instance, the Tillamook story of “South Wind the Trickster, South Wind the Transformer” recounts how South Wind found a whale on the beach and thought to himself, “Oh, I’ve got no knife. How can I cut up this whale?” South Wind then goes to see Flintnose, with the intent of getting a chip off his face to make a knife. See Deur and Thompson, “South Wind’s Journeys,” 21.
 36. Adamson, *Folk-Tales*, 133.
 37. Adamson, *Folk-Tales*, 133.
 38. Elmendorf, *Twana Narratives*, 27.
 39. Elmendorf, *Twana Narratives*, 26–27.
 40. J. P. Harrington Field Notes, “Notes and Writings Collected from Others,” 172, Microfilm A6952, Reel 30, University of Washington.
 41. Harrington Field Notes, 173.
 42. Harrington Field Notes, 368–389.
 43. Harrington Field Notes, 264.
 44. Elmendorf, *Twana Narratives*, 141–142. Whales in bodies of water beyond the ocean have also been reported in Coast Salish stories beyond Puget Sound, such as in a K’ómoks story telling of a whale left in Pentlatch Lake after a great flood where he still lives. Kinkade, “Pentlatch Myth Corpus,” 100. Another, by the Stó:lō, describes a whale in Harrison River and Harrison Lake; in one story, the whale is killed using spears. *Agassiz-Harrison Observer*, “Echoes from the Past: Whale Spotted ‘Churning’ Lake Water in a Fury,” September 8, 2011, <https://www.agassizharrisonobserver.com/community/echoes-from-the-past-whale-spotted-churning-lake-water-into-a-fury>.
 45. Clapperton, personal conversation with Charlene Krise, April 30, 2018.
 46. Croes and Williams, “Bifacially Flaked,” 519; and Croes, “Ground Slate,” 519–520.
 47. Wigen, “Vertebrate Fauna,” 127.
 48. Burke Museum Inventory, Object #4747, Contemporary Culture Database, Burke Museum, Seattle, WA, <https://www.burkemuseum.org/collections-and-research/culture/contemporary-culture/database/display.php?ID=86153> (accessed September 8, 2021).
 49. Clapperton, personal conversation with Charlene Krise, October 24, 2017; and Anderson, “Vancouver Expedition,” 204.
 50. In Farrar, “Nisqually Journal,” 210.

51. Blankenship, *Early History*, 113. Though it would be unusual it is possible, given the name and size of the whale, that this was a blue whale.
52. Miller, *Minter Bay*, 41.
53. Miller, *Minter Bay*, 21.
54. Elmendorf, *Twana Narratives*, 42–43.
55. Elmendorf, *Twana Narratives*, 166–167.
56. Waterman, *Notes on the Ethnology*, 58–59.
57. Waterman, *Notes on the Ethnology*, 60, 88.
58. Waterman, *Notes on the Ethnology*, 60.
59. Waterman, *Notes on the Ethnology*, 60–61.
60. Historians and anthropologists have produced rich accounts of Puget Sound tribes' participation in salmon and shellfish endeavors, laboring in the logging industry and hop fields, and finding employment and other opportunities within the burgeoning cities. See De Danaan, *Katie Gale*; Raibmon, "Practice of Everyday Colonialism"; Thrush, *Native Seattle*; and Boxberger, *Fish in Common*.
61. van Ginkel, "Makah Whale Hunt," 62.
62. *Shelton Mason County Journal*, "Giant Whale Big Sensation Here Friday," August 25, 1930.
63. Kerosky et al., "Bryde's Whale," 125.
64. *Klah-Che-Min*, "Gray Whale Surfaces in Totten Inlet," February 1998, 9.
65. *Klah-Che-Min*, "Gray Whale Surfaces," 9; and "Diver Meets Whale," November 1998, 10.
66. Miller, "Exercising Cultural Self-Determination," 248–249.
67. Genevieve Belmaker, "Remains of Beached Whale Could Hold Clues to the Past," *Epoch Times*, February 17, 2020.
68. Belmaker, "Remains of Beached Whale."
69. Lynda Mapes, "Treating a Rare Visitor Right," *Seattle Times*, February 14, 2010.
70. Mapes, "Treating a Rare Visitor Right."
71. Belmaker, "Remains of Beached Whale."
72. Clark, "George Gibbs' Account," 313.
73. Clapperton, personal conversation with Charlene Krise, October 24, 2017.
74. Lynda Mapes, "Squaxin Island Tribe Pays Tribute to Rare Bryde's Whale," *Native Village Youth and Education News*, March 1, 2010.
75. Mapes, "Treating a Rare Visitor Right."
76. Mapes, "Treating a Rare Visitor Right."
77. Hillaire and Fields, *Rights Remembered*, 23.
78. Reid, *Sea Is My Country*, 272.
79. The subproceeding ended up being quite important and lengthy: it was tried over twenty-three days (March 2 to April 22, 2015), included fourteen tribes, eleven witnesses, and admitted 472 exhibits.

80. These arguments are presented in Findings of Fact and Conclusions and Memorandum Order, *USA et al. v. State of Washington, et al.*, no. C70–9213, Sub. no. 09-01, US District Court, Western District of WA at Seattle, September 9, 2015; and “Six Tribes’ Real Parties in Interest Principal Brief,” nos. 15-35824 and 15-35827, on Consolidated Appeals from the US District Court, August 5, 2016.
81. Miller, “Exercising Cultural Self-Determination,” 189.
82. Boas, “Traditions of the Tillamook,” 23.
83. Ballard, “Some Tales,” 80.
84. “Six Tribes’ Brief,” 18.
85. van Ginkel, “Makah Whale Hunt,” 59.
86. That so many of these stories are available in published form is remarkable considering that anthropologists and others do not appear to have gone out of their way to find whale stories among supposed nonwhaling groups; no doubt, many more exist that have not been published.
87. For further reading on this discourse see Denevan, “Pristine Myth”; Boyd, *Indians, Fire, and the Land*; Krech, *Ecological Indian*; and Williams, *Clam Gardens*.
88. For further discussion on the poststructural and postcolonial critique of anthropology, see Lewis, “Anthropology and Colonialism”; Wolfe, *Settler Colonialism*; Moore, “Anthropology Is Dead”; and Said, “Representing the Colonized.”

Heeding the Call of Paikea

A *Whakapapa* Approach to Whaling and Whale People in Aotearoa–New Zealand

Billie Lythberg and Wayne Ngata

IN AOTEAROA–NEW ZEALAND, whales are revered by Māori in *whakapapa* relationships of kinship and affinity and through carvings, songs and oratory that instantiate these ties. These connections span deep ancestral time to the present, with many *iwi* (tribal groups) celebrating descent from whales and whale-riding ancestors who brought people to Aotearoa from the Māori homeland of Hawaiki. Although the commercial whaling era was but a short interlude in this *longue durée*, consequent legislation to protect cetacean populations has constrained relationships between Māori and whales, both in Aotearoa and across international borders. This chapter tells the story of a whale-riding ancestor called Paikea and his instantiation as a late-nineteenth-century *tekoteko* (gable figure) held in the collection of the American Museum of Natural History in Mannahatta (Manhattan), New York, since 1908. It analyzes the relationship between Paikea and his descendants from the tribal group Te Aitanga a Hauiti (the descendants of Hauiti), of Ūawa on the East Coast of the North Island, materialized in a transnational gift, as an example of a *whakapapa* approach to whaling and whale people in Aotearoa.

In April 2013, Paikea the *tekoteko* in New York was visited by delegates of the tribe's arts management group, Toi Hauiti (the arts of Hauiti). They were eager to reconnect with the ancestor who had once graced the apex of their *whare whakairo* (carved ancestral meet-inghouse) Te Kani a Takirau, and to whom they sing and entreat with



Figure 13.1. Map of Ūawa and Te Aitanga a Hauiti rohe (tribal area), North Island, Aotearoa-New Zealand. Courtesy of Kaaterina Kerekere, KEdesign © 2019.

such regularity that the Paikea *haka* (action chant) is considered an unofficial east coast anthem. To instantiate their reconnection after more than a hundred years, Toi Hauiti presented a *taonga* (treasure) to Paikea: a *rei puta* pendant carved from a sperm whale's tooth.

The tooth had come from Māhia, south of Ūawa, a *tapu* (sacred) site associated with whales and whale beachings.² Beached whales



Figure 13.2. Whakakau, a named *rei puta* (whale tooth pendant) carved by Lance Ngata, © 2012. Photo courtesy of Lance Ngata.

are respected as gifts from Tangaroa, the god of the sea—a *taonga* and literal body of resources that should be used from tip to tail. In 1837, Māhia became the principal whaling station in the mid-eastern section of the North Island, conflating *whakapapa* and more viscerally based whaling traditions for local Māori and committing this sacred site to commercial whaling after generations of Indigenous relationships with, and harvest of, whales.

Since commercial whaling ceased in 1964, Aotearoa has been a staunch advocate of the whale conservation that characterizes the modern whaling period. The Marine Mammals Protection Act 1978 regulates cultural access to, and use of, those whales that continue to beach. Māori are now usually allowed only their teeth and bones, and further conventions restrict their movement—possibly

their ownership³—of *taonga* made from these, circumventing the gifting of prestigious items within and beyond kin groups. This was the case with Paikea’s pendant. It was rejected by the museum in 2013 because an international convention prevented the movement of whale products across international borders, and was returned to Paikea in July 2017 only after an extensive permissions and paperwork process and considerable international collaboration.

Paikea and the challenge posed by his pendant call our attention to the collision and consequences of Māori and other whaling traditions in Aotearoa. This case study permits a fine-grained and intimate view into Te Aitanga a Hauiti’s relationships with whales and ancestors, and whale-ancestors. As we become acquainted with Paikea, and reacquaint him first with his people and then with a whaletooth *taonga*, the “veritable ontology” that is *whakapapa* opens further avenues for consideration of the cross-cultural environmental, economic, and relational histories that converge around whales, whale people, and whaling in Aotearoa.⁴

**Paikea: he tahito, he tipua, he taniwha, he tohorā,
he tangata, he tekoteko**

Paikea is an ancestor of the people of the eastern seaboard of Aotearoa—New Zealand. Versions of the Paikea story are known in other parts of the Pacific and provide an explanation for how this particular ancestor reached Aotearoa.⁵ Whatever the version, it is commonly accepted that he alone survived a marine disaster called Te Huripūreiata through his mobilization of his marine ancestors, his family of whales, who helped him reach Aotearoa. Paikea is described as riding on the back of a whale, or transforming into a whale, and is referred to accordingly as *he tahito, he tipua, he taniwha, he tohorā, he tangata, he tekoteko*—an ancient being, an extraordinary being, a denizen of the deep, a whale, a man, a sentinel for his people.

Paikea is also the Māori name for southern humpback whales, part of *te whānau puha*—“the family of animals that expel air”—collectively known by the name for the southern right whale, *tohorā*.⁶ The transformation chant of Paikea, *Te Karakia Whakakau a Paikea*, describes his *whakapapa* connection to *tohorā* (whales) through his mother (the matrilineal breath) and the mutuality of their breath and flesh (Tis your breath, and mine also), an indissoluble relationship between human and whale that assures survival. With this call, Paikea

the man summoned his whale kin to save his life, to calm the waves, and to carry him as whalerider and whale from Hawaiki to the shores of Aotearoa:

*Ka hura, ka hura
Te manawa uha
Ka hura, ka hura
Te manawa po
Ko tō manawa, ko tōku manawa
Ko Houtina, ko Houmāota
Ki te ripia, rei ana
Whakahotunuku, whakahoturangi
He rokihau, he taketake, he hurumanu
Te moana i rohia
Hōatu tō kauhou taniwha ki uta e*

Revealed so is the matrilineal breath
Revealed so is the simmering breath
Tis your breath, and mine also
Firm and fresh
Cutting and saturated by
The swelling tides below and above
Calm then the restless sea
So that we may reach the shore

—A section of *Te Karakia Whakakau a Paikea*, the transformation chant of Paikea, English translation by Wayne Ngata

The transformation of Paikea is also celebrated in the *haka* composed in 1880 by Wi Pēwhairangi of Tokomaru Bay, just north of Ūawa, which refers specifically to Paikea the *tekoteko*, now in New York, the *whare whakairo* of Te Kani a Takirau that he graced, and his *whaka-papa* connections:

| | |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| <i>Uia mai koia whakahuatia ake</i> | Ask and you will be told |
| <i>Ko wai te whare nei e?</i> | What is the name of this house? |
| <i>Ko Te Kani</i> | It is Te Kani |
| <i>Ko wai te tekoteko kei runga?</i> | And who is the sentinel on top? |
| <i>Ko Paikea! Ko Paikea!</i> | It is Paikea! It is Paikea! |
| <i>Whakakau Paikea hi!</i> | Paikea who transformed |
| <i>Whakakau he tipua hi!</i> | Into an ancient being of the sea |

| | |
|--|------------------------------------|
| <i>Whakakau he taniwha hi!</i> | Into the great denizen of the deep |
| <i>Ka ū Paikea ki Ahuahu</i> | And came to shore at Ahuahu |
| <i>Kei te whitia koe</i> | He is not one and the same as |
| <i>Ko Kahutiaterangi</i> | Kahutiaterangi |
| <i>E ai tō ure ki te tamāhine</i> | And he did marry the daughter |
| <i>A Te Whironui</i> | Of Te Whironui |
| <i>Nāna i noho Te Rototahe</i> | Who lived at Te Rototahe |
| <i>Aue, aue, he koruru koe, e koro e</i> | You are now a figurehead, old one |

—English translation by Wayne Ngata

It is this mutuality of Paikea the man, the ancestor, and “ancient being of the sea” that underscores the *whakapapa* connecting Te Aitanga a Hauiti to whales.

***Whakapapa* as Practical Ontology**

Although often translated as genealogies, *whakapapa* is more broadly encompassing and generative. As we have explained elsewhere, in their activities in Ūawa and further afield, Toi Hauiti

mobilizes [*sic*] *whakapapa* as philosophy, empirical analysis and political action. Their ties to Hauiti, to each other, and to their *taonga* tuku iho (treasures passed down) operate as a kind of practical ontology, enabling the continued vitality and flourishing of *Hauititanga* (Hauiti ways of being) into the present and future.⁷

This is especially significant for the descendants of Hauiti, who number some seven hundred in the township of Ūawa but are dispersed in their thousands throughout Aotearoa and beyond. They have embraced digital technologies and social media to maintain their connections with one another, and their activities in the digital realm and face-to-face often coalesce around *taonga* and in particular their active curation of their own *taonga* in museum collections worldwide. Toi Hauiti convene around art projects, within and beyond museums and galleries, designed to articulate and apply *mātauranga* Hauiti—ancestral Hauiti knowledge—in modern situations. For three decades, Toi Hauiti have worked with museums holding parts of their ancestral house, Te Kani a Takirau, the embodiment of a prominent chief of the eastern seaboard tribes of the North Island of Aotearoa–New Zealand, and other related *taonga*.

The application of the term *taonga* with increasing frequency to material objects of Māori—or Polynesian—origin or design obscures both its broader conceptual purchase and its specificity. *Taonga* may be tangible or intangible; objects, places, people; stories handed down; *karakia* (ritual incantations), *haka* (performing arts), and *mōteatea* (chants and songs); the processes and products of arts such as *tā moko* (tattoo), *whakairo* (carving), *whatu* (weaving), and *raranga* (basketry). *Mātauranga* Hauiti holds that all of these may instantiate ancestral presence,⁸ and all are defined according to the quality of their relationships. As Wayne Ngata explains, “Artefacts that have become detached from their stories and *whakapapa* are only potential *taonga* until these connections are re-animated and the object is restored as the living face of those relationships”—reconnecting and maintaining relationships with *taonga* such as Paikea and other components of Te Kani a Takirau is vital; this is the stuff of *whakapapa*.⁹

Like Paikea before him, Te Kani a Takirau (c. 1790s–1856) was a charismatic leader, a man of such *mana* (personal efficacy) and *tapu* (sacredness) that he was instantiated as a carved *whare* following his death. He was the grandson of Hinematiaro (born c. 1750), revered as a great Queen of the east coast, and lived during the time that British explorer Captain James Cook arrived in Ūawa in October 1769. A *poupou* (carved wall panel) from a *whare whakairo* being assembled for Hinematiaro, collected at this time from the island of Pourewa, is now at the University of Tübingen in Germany and has been visited several times by Toi Hauiti since its rediscovery there in the 1990s.¹⁰ Both the *whare* of Te Kani a Takirau and the panels assembled for the *whare* of Hinematiaro are *taonga* that reproduce their *whakapapa* reaching back to Hawaiki.

Perhaps because of his distinguished *whakapapa*, which would have imbued him with a particular view of sovereignty, Te Kani a Takirau did not sign the Treaty of Waitangi, the founding document of New Zealand, despite establishing good working relationships with European traders, protecting missionaries and clergy in his area (but never becoming a Christian), and encouraging the development of a small settlement and a mission at Ūawa. Nor did he accept an offer to become the Māori King, reportedly saying, “My Kingship comes from my long line of ancestors. My mountain Hikurangi is not one that moves, but one that remains steadfast,” underpinning his responsibilities to his local people.¹¹ Recalling his descent from Paikea, Te Kani a Takirau is said to have carried a whalebone *mere* (a striking weapon

and oratory aid), and in 2012 his whalebone *heru* (standing comb) was the recipient of a Toi Hauiti delegation at the British Museum where it now is.

The *whakapapa* line that follows simplifies the direct descent of Te Kani a Takirau and his grandmother Hinematiaro from Paikea; it also includes Hauiti, the eponymous ancestor of Te Aitanga a Hauiti:

Paikea

Rongomaituahō

Te Aomārama

Tātaiarorangi

Te Huapae

Te Rangihopukia

Hinehuhuritai

Manutangirua

Hingangaroa

Hauiti (c. 1600s)

Hineterā

Tūtekohi

Tamatanui

Hurawaikato

Te Whakahiōterangi

Te Whakapuīorangi

Pōnui

Konohi

Marukauiti

Tānetokorangi

Hinematiaro (c. 1750 onward)

Ngārangikahiwa

Te Kani a Takirau (c. 1790s–1856)

Both Hinematiaro and Te Kani a Takirau are interred at Whāngārā, the home of their ancestor Paikea. Their *whakapapa*, their *taonga*, and their burial place demonstrate the immediacy of the relationship between today's descendants of Hauiti and their ancestor who crossed the great Moananui a Kiwa without need of a *waka* (canoe): Paikea the whale rider, Paikea the whale. The *whakapapa* thus establishes, and these *taonga* further instantiate, both familial and temporal connectedness between Te Aitanga a Hauiti and their ancestors: *tangata*, *tipua*, *taniwha*, *tohorā*—whales.

What Does It Mean to Be Whale People?

Thanks to the international success of Witi Ihimaera's novel *Whalerider* and its adaptation as a film of the same name, Paikea is perhaps the best known of the whale-riding ancestors of Aotearoa.¹² The Paikea narrative underpins a certain type of relationship with whales, one of *kaitiakitanga* (care or stewardship). This is conceptualized in *whakapapa* terms, as described, and in connection with voyaging knowledge contained in oral histories. Whales guide *waka* to land, through dangerous seas and channels, and are called upon to smooth rough waters for safe passage. Twin-hulled *waka hourua* (ocean-going canoes) replicate the physical qualities of a pair of whales cresting waves in tandem. *Tere tohorā, tere tangata*—where whales journey, people follow—is a *whakatauki* (proverbial saying or teaching) that encapsulates the essence of this synergy.

The experiences of one of this chapter's authors and his *whānau* (extended family) during noninstrumental blue sea voyaging attest to an ongoing relationship between whales and *waka* and offer anecdotes to ponder.

—In 2012, Wayne Ngata and Piripi Smith flew from Tahiti to Mangareva to join the *waka* Ngahiraka Mai Tawhiti. “Our plane landed en route on a small island to drop off and pick up people. While waiting there, two whales breached about 20 metres off-shore. They stayed there for some time and it gave pause to think we were returning to their territory soon. In sailing from Mangareva to Rapanui we encountered a pod ‘playing’ on the edge of a squall. Again, it reminded us that we were in their territory and to take heed of that.”

—Arriving at the entrance to a lagoon with just a narrow passage through its encircling reefs, the crew of another *waka hourua* were told to wait for the island's *kaitiaki* (guardians) to guide them ashore. Wayne's niece, Hera Ngata-Gibson, has spoken evocatively of her wonder at the pod of small cetaceans who arrived to lead them safely through the narrow channel.

—Sailing in calm seas, Pwo (master) Navigator Jack Thatcher became aware of the *waka hourua* vibrating slightly beneath his feet for an extended period. The rhythm suggested an ocean swell, but none was apparent. Looking over the side, he discerned the bulk of a whale beneath the *waka*, gently rubbing its back against

the hulls. As he watched, it rolled over to expose a single eye above the water; these master navigators, man and whale, contemplated one another before the whale gently moved on.

These experiences underpin a relationship of care between Māori and whales already encoded in *whakapapa* that seems to preclude the involvement of Māori in deliberate, let alone commercial, whaling.

Yet Māori not only harvested beached whales but also forced the beaching of individuals or pods when it was possible to do so. Whales offered many important resources, all identified in Te Reo Rangatira (the Māori language) and examined and understood by *mātauranga* Māori (Māori knowledge system): meat (*kiko*), which could be eaten fresh or dried for future use; milk (*waiū*), from nursing mothers; oils (*hinu*) for polish, scent, and *rongoā* (healing); baleen (*hihi*), sinews (*uaua*) and blubber (*ngako*). Whale bones (*parāoa*), with their characteristic grain, were harvested for weaponry and adornment, and the creamy, slightly translucent ivory of their teeth (*rei*) was reserved for high status *taonga*. A beached whale offered a wealth of raw materials that ensured its careful dismemberment.

This visceral relationship with whales was also *whakapapa* based. The relationship between the great ancestral chief Tinirau and his whale Tutunui provides an illustration. Like Paikea, Tinirau was a whale rider and able to offer others safe passage across the water on the back of Tutunui. But Tutunui was a *kaitiaki* in an additional sense, as a provider of flesh as a feast food for important guests, which he allowed Tinirau to carve from his living body. Coveted by others, Tutunui was eventually forcibly beached, killed, and eaten by the *tohunga* (important learned person) Kae, after safely carrying Kae home from a visit with Tinirau. A carved motif on the *maihi* (bargeboards) of many *whare* and *pātaka* (food storehouses), known as *pakake* or *taratara ā kae*, depicts whales and is believed to have originated from the killing of Tutunui.

Another oral history recalls the safe passage of the *Tākitimu*, one of the great *waka* to arrive in Aotearoa from Hawaiki, which followed the wake of a pod of whales during a great storm. Ruawharo, the *tohunga* on the *Tākitimu*, carried the *mauri* (or lifeforce) of whales with him to Māhia, where he left it so it might attract whales to this area. It was so successful in calling whales that Māhia has been associated with strandings and beachings ever since.

During the commercial whaling period, many Māori embraced both new ways of whaling and the whalers who brought them to

Aotearoa: boarding whaling ships and traveling the world, hosting onshore whaling stations from 1820 such as the one at Māhia, creating *whakapapa* bonds with whalers through marriage and bloodlines, and joining European and American crews in the flensing of whales in such quantities that by 1840 right whales had been practically eliminated from the waters of the Southern Hemisphere.¹³

In 1843, German naturalist Ernst Dieffenbach, who had lived and worked in Aotearoa, drew a striking comparison between whales and trees:

The shorewhalers, in hunting the animal in the season when it visits the shallow waters of the coast to bring forth the young, and suckle it in security, have felled the tree to obtain the fruit, and have taken the most certain means of destroying an otherwise profitable and important trade.¹⁴

This comparison is especially pertinent given a special relationship between whales, the giants of the ocean, and the giant of the forest in Aotearoa, the *kauri* (*Agathis australis*), a mighty conifer found in the northern districts of the North Island. *Mātauranga* of the tribes of Te Tai Tokerau (Northland) describes the origin of Parāoa the sperm whale as a land-dwelling creature and friend of the ancient *kauri*, in an origin story that accords with scientific explanations for their emergence and evolution. It depicts Parāoa deciding to live in the sea, at a time when Gondwanaland was breaking apart and ancient Aotearoa beginning to sink. As a parting gift, Parāoa gave Kauri his skin, to protect him when the seas rose.¹⁵ Kauri remained on dry land, his beautiful timbers and strong, straight trunk adorned not only with the skin of Parāoa but also its blubber equivalent: kauri resin.¹⁶

Like the *parāoa*, the *kauri* was felled in great numbers from the late eighteenth century, its timbers milled and exported to build ships and homes. It was also bled alive; the gift of Parāoa extracted as kauri gum, weakening trees and leading to the subsequent milling of even those valued and set aside for this extractive purpose.¹⁷ In a little over a century, most *kauri* forests had been logged. The relationship between Parāoa and Kauri is profound in its depiction of the qualities that would lead to their devastation. Yet whereas *kauri* continue to be commoditized as an extractable resource in Aotearoa, albeit with conservation constraints, the timing of the death of the last whale for commercial purposes is noted with some specificity on

government websites, drawing a bold line under such practices here. “At 4 pm on 21 December 1964, the last whale in New Zealand waters was harpooned.”¹⁸ For a short time thereafter, it seems that the flesh of beached whales continued to be harvested by local *iwi*—Wayne Ngata recalls his own father traveling to Okitu in Gisborne following a stranding there in 1969 and bringing home whale meat that he enjoyed as a delicacy (though the younger members of his *whānau* did not). Hunting whales in New Zealand waters was finally made illegal in 1978.

Paikea the Tekoteko

The house Te Kani a Takirau, with Paikea on top, was carved in the late nineteenth century and opened in 1880. At this time, sporadic whaling was still taking place south in Māhia and Tūranga (Gisborne) as a seasonal activity. To the north of Ūawa, shore whaling remained an important occupation for the people of Te Whānau ā Apanui until the mid-1920s.

The *whare whakairo* acknowledged Paikea to maintain and reinforce the Hawaiki origins and narratives of the people of the east coast, and recognize the status, *mana* and prominent Hawaiki lineage of Te Kani a Takirau. Many *tāhū wānanga*—important bodies of knowledge from Hawaiki—came with Paikea, forming the basis of Paikea’s house of learning, *Whitireia* at Whāngārā, and the house of learning of his descendant Hingangaroa, *Te Rāwheoro* in Ūawa.

Paikea is a living embodiment of a Polynesian relationship with Tangaroa and with the houses of learning that taught and passed on the lore of Tangaroa, particularly the knowledge of carving, which reached heights of potency and prowess at *Te Rāwheoro* that are still revered today. Moreover, he is credited with bringing crucial knowledge pertaining to the cultivation of *kūmara* at a time when this sweet potato, a tropical crop made labor intensive in the temperate climate of Aotearoa, seemed likely to die out. Its subsequent and ongoing thriving in the gardens of the east coast is attested to by Hinematiaro’s renown for *manaakitanga* (hosting of guests) with an abundance of *kūmara*.

Paikea was a man, who became a hero. He is embellished in oral literature and marine lore, and he is credited with ensuring the necessary skills and knowledge of Hawaiki were transplanted and adapted to the new land of Aotearoa. Paikea the *tekoteko* is this man, this hero, this ancestor, in all of his manifestations, made material.

In *tekoteko* form, Paikea is a naturalistic carving of a man standing atop a figurative face, or *koruru*. Carved from a single piece of wood, he stands 164 centimeters tall (just over five feet). Paikea is well proportioned, facing forward, his hands—each with five fingers—clasped across his lower abdomen. His legs are foreshortened; he was made to be looked up to. At the top of his head, a projection suggests a topknot of hair. His face is carved and painted with a distinctive *moko kanohi* (facial tattoo) and his name is written across his chest in elegant script, leaving no doubt about his identity.

Atop the *whare* of Te Kani a Takirau, Paikea commanded a view across the windswept and drift-wood strewn beaches of Ūawa, past the bay's spectacular cliffs and out to sea, to the great ocean he had traversed from Hawaiki, the domain or *marae* of Tangaroa, the source of many *taonga*.

*Ko te moana, ehara rawa i te wai kau. No Tangaroa ke tena marae.
He maha ona e hua e ora ai; nga manu o te rangi te iwi ki te whenua.
The sea is not any water. It is the marae of Tangaroa. It yields life
for many things; the birds in the sky; the people upon the land.¹⁹*

He looked out at this view for about twenty years before being taken from Te Kani a Takirau to cross the oceans again, this time to join the collection of one Major General Horatio Gordon Robley.

How Paikea Got to New York

It was perhaps due in part to his splendid *moko kanohi* that Paikea the *tekoteko* drew the attention of Robley, a man now infamous for his interest in Māori tattoo that extended to the amassing of a collection of preserved tattooed Māori heads, known as *toi moko*. In a quirk of history, the cover of his 1896 book *Maori Tattooing* featured a self-portrait by Te Pēhi Kupe, a Māori rangatira and war leader of the Ngāti Toa people, made in Britain in 1825 during what has been described as the first Māori OE (Overseas Experience, a New Zealand colloquialism for an extended, usually working holiday in the United Kingdom).²⁰ Te Pēhi Kupe is now known to have inspired Herman Melville's character Queequeg, a protagonist in perhaps the most famous novel about whales and whaling, *Moby Dick*.²¹

This intersection of *tā moko* (Māori tattoo practices) with whaling histories and their products deserves further attention, particularly as

it pertains to Robley and his collections. He was a regular petitioner of the American Museum of Natural History (AMNH), offering artefacts for purchase. After failed attempts from 1899 to 1906 to “return” his collection of *toi moko* to the New Zealand government for the sum of £1,100, he sold thirty-five *toi moko* and two pieces of tattooed thigh skin to the AMNH President Morris K. Jessup.²² In 1907, Jessup gifted these, and other Māori artefacts received from Robley, to the museum. Among the artefacts gifted in 1907 are *tā moko* chisels (*uhi*) with whalebone blades and a box containing the powdered and burnt resin of the *kauri* tree (*kāpia*) “used in tattooing”—the *parāoa* and the *kauri* reunited to bring lines of *whakapapa* to the skin.

Paikea the *tekoteko* was not part of the Jessup gift. Paikea was purchased by AMNH from Robley in 1908, along with a whalebone *patu*, several cloaks, canoe prows, and other fine examples of Māori carving. Records associated with this acquisition are scant, and we do not know the circumstances that led to the dismantling of Te Kani a Takirau and the removal of Paikea by Robley. We do know that at some point before 1907, Paikea was shipped to London before being shipped to New York, where he has remained since 1908.

We might ponder the impact of whaling in Ūawa at the point when the *whare* was dismantled—could economic conditions have led somehow to the sale and removal of Paikea? We have elsewhere described the difficulty of assessing the past from the vantage point of today:

It could be argued that *taonga tuku iho* lost some form of value when they were subject to the foreign forms of trade where the value context changed. Māori continue to ask themselves, “why did our ancestors sell this *taonga*, or that house, or that object?” Do we judge their intentions and actions by our standards and values of today? Or do we focus on the original intent and value accorded to the *taonga* at the time it was created and imbued with a life force in order to carry out its purpose? These questions continue to challenge perceptions of *taonga* and object. The genealogy, the life force (*mauri*) and the stories that are attached to *taonga* are what draw their descendants to engage with them.²³

Although the circumstances of his own journey remain hazy, it is the *mauri* of Paikea that called his people to New York.

2013—American Museum of Natural History

In 2013, the AMNH was hosting a touring exhibition from the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, *Whales: Giants of the Deep*.²⁴ A semicircular banner depicting a whale's tail flukes emerging from the ocean occupied the high archway of the museum's main entrance—a *tekoteko* of sorts. The exhibits included a full skeleton from a *parāoa* sperm whale and interpretive displays about the connection between whales and Māori. The exhibition would be a pivotal attractor both for Toi Hauiti and for other Māori engaged with *taonga*. While Te Papa Tongarewa staff were in New York in March to open the exhibition, they also entered into face-to-face talks about the *toi moko* and other Māori and Moriori remains in the AMNH collection.²⁵ A formal repatriation request was issued in May 2013 and in December 2014 some 107 ancestors were repatriated to Aotearoa, including those collected by Robley.²⁶

The exhibition was in its third week when fifteen members of Toi Hauiti, including students, young leaders, and artists, traveled from Ūawa to spend a week in New York with Paikea. The confluence of exhibition and visit materialized in a series of educational events delivered by Toi Hauiti to public audiences.²⁷ These events gave them opportunities to spend time with Paikea each day; to sing to him; to tell his stories; to recount his and their *whakapapa*; to touch him, stroke him, cry, and laugh with him—to care for him.

During each event, Lance Ngata, a young carver, performed the call of Paikea, brandishing a *mere* and wearing a near luminous whale tooth pendant around his neck as he chanted to the ancestors of Paikea—his ancestors. At the end of the week, Lance took the pendant from his neck and fastened it around Paikea's—a whale tooth *taonga* for a whale ancestor. Paikea was returned to the stores of the AMNH wearing a gift to keep him warm, and one that appropriately honoured him as *he tahito, he tipua, he taniwha, he tohorā, he tangata, he tekoteko*—an ancient being, an extraordinary being, a denizen of the deep, a whale, a man, a sentinel for his people.

The following Monday, Paikea's people had already arrived home in Aotearoa by the time the AMNH curator arrived at her desk. There, she found the *taonga*, Paikea's pendant, and a note asking for additional information. The pendant could not stay in the stores with Paikea until it had been properly accessioned. What was it made from? Inquiries were made and apologies extended. It was established that a



Figure 13.3. Toi Hauiti with Paikea, April 2013. Photo courtesy of Billie Lythberg.

pendant made from whale tooth was in breach of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), an international treaty drawn up in 1973 to ensure that international trade in specimens of vulnerable wild animals and plants, such as whale bones and teeth, does not threaten their survival.²⁸ Not only could it not stay with Paikea, it could also not stay in the United States.

Conveniently, another of Paikea's descendants had heard his call and was traveling to New York. He would be able to collect the *taonga* and return it to Aotearoa. Beyond even his *whakapapa*, he was especially well suited for this responsibility: Karl Johnstone was then director of the New Zealand Māori Arts and Crafts Institute and was in New York to attend the United Nations to discuss the UN's Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People. Beyond this, Karl wears the twin of Paikea's pendant around his neck, a gift from Lance Ngata when he split a single tooth in half to make two *taonga*. While at AMNH to receive the *taonga*, Karl was able to make a gift of his own through his identification of a *pātaka* (Māori storehouse) in the Margaret Mead Hall as the work of renowned carver Tene Waitere. This *pātaka* bears distinctive *pakake* whale motifs on its *maihi*.

It is testament to the goodwill of Toi Hauiti and their genuine interest in long-term relationships with the museums caring for their *taonga* and ancestors such as Paikea that this incident was handled with sensitivity and grace. But to begin to frame this event and the intention of a future return, Wayne Ngata offered the following *whakatauki*: “*He taonga tuku noa tē hoki mai ai / A gift given freely, not to be returned.*” We might infer from this not only that the refusal of the whale tooth pendant was a slight, but also that the circumstances that lead to Paikea’s acquisition by AMNH in 1908 did not tally with such a sentiment.

Toward the Return of the *Taonga*

Some fourteen thousand kilometers separate Ūawa and the AMNH: two flights, a full day and night of travel, and thousands of dollars per person. The logistics required to return the *taonga* to Paikea would include multiple airfares in order to bring an adequate group back to New York to make good the gift, both for Paikea as recipient and for Toi Hauiti as donors, not to mention leave from jobs, school, family. The return would also require considerable research, paperwork, and fees to identify and satisfy the requirements of not only CITES but several other acts and conventions enacted to constrain precisely the procurement and movement of an item made from whale tooth. Resembling the “simmering breath” of Paikea, in colloquial terms this *kaupapa* (project) was “put on the back burner” until the time was right.

In 2015, an opportunity arose to revisit New York as part of a documentary series being made for the Māori TV broadcaster in Aotearoa. A storyline was developed that featured the return of the *taonga* for an episode of *Artefact* focused on Māori ancestors and blue water navigation. The cogs started to turn as resources became available for both the research required to secure permissions for the *taonga* to travel, and for Toi Hauiti to travel with it.

The legal protection of whales in and by Aotearoa is convoluted and fascinating, especially when viewed through the lens offered by Paikea. As Te Papa Tongarewa curator Colin Miskelly has demonstrated, in a paper that covers the protection of New Zealand’s indigenous aquatic fauna in exhaustive and (for this chapter’s authors) exhilarating detail, the first era of protection was reactive, issuing a series of acts imposing closed seasons on particular species and

limiting the take of others. These began with the Whaling Industry Act 1935, which protected southern right whales (*Eubalaena australis*, *tohorā*) and pygmy right whales (*Caperea marginata*). This followed the New Zealand government's signing, in 1931, the international Convention for the Regulation of Whaling negotiated by the Economic Committee of the League of Nations. In 1949, the Whaling Industry Regulation Act extended a September–April closed season to baleen whales, which was reaffirmed in 1961; while an amendment to the Whaling Industry Regulation Act 1961 enacted in 1964 gave full protection to humpback whales (*Megaptera novaeangliae*, *paikea*) and a May–August closed season to sperm whales (*Physeter microcephalus*, *parāoa*). Colin Miskelly notes that by this time *paikea* humpback whales were already “economically extinct” in New Zealand waters.²⁹ The hunting of all whales in New Zealand waters was made illegal in 1978 by the Marine Mammals Protection Bill.

The shifting definition of New Zealand waters brings nuance to the various acts and their geographical extent—an extent that whales with their ocean highways simply do not observe. When the first known request to protect whales was received in 1916 by what was then the Dominion of New Zealand it had no power to legislate beyond a three-mile limit. By 1978, when legislation had become proactive, the Marine Mammals Protection Bill was able to provide for “the complete protection of all marine mammals, whether dead or alive, within New Zealand fisheries waters—i.e., within 200 nautical miles (370.4 km) of land.” Of relevance to this chapter, Miskelly notes that stimulus for this all-encompassing act included “the clandestine (though not illegal) export of more than 100 specimens of stranded whales and dolphins to a Dutch museum by marine biologist Frank Robson between 1970 and 1975”; thus museum-display procurement helped bring about the protection of even dead whales from “souvenir scavenging.”³⁰

Before these acts, three attempts had been made to protect individual marine mammals: dolphins who had shown “a desire for association with man” (in the words of a member of Parliament seeking protection for the second of these). These named individuals were Pelorus Jack, a Risso's dolphin that accompanied vessels across the mouth of the Malborough Sounds from 1888 to 1912; Pelorus Jack II, a Hector's dolphin in the waters of the Cook Strait from 1944 to 1968; and Opo, a Bottlenose dolphin, who for an extended time in 1955 visited and interacted with people in the Northland bay of

Opononi. These visitors predated the acts that would later protect marine mammals, yet all were offered specific protection, albeit *ultra vires*, under the Sea Fisheries Act 1894 and its subsequent amendments. These were in excess of the legal power of this act because the dolphins were not fish—a point not lost on commentators. Moreover, it was not within the power of the act to protect individuals; but rather to protect fish as a species or kind. In the case of Pelorus Jack, such details were neatly obfuscated by what Miskelly calls a “sleight of hand” when the dolphin was described as a “fish or mammal” and the individual was safeguarded by extending protection to the species within the individual’s known habitat.³¹ It seems wonderfully appropriate for a story about whales, whale people, and Paikea that the first legislative attempts to protect marine mammals in Aotearoa not only were prompted by their apparent relationship with humans but also brought the consideration of named individuals to the attention of jurisprudence.

So where did Paikea’s pendant fit into this legal schema? To identify which acts would apply to the *taonga* it was necessary to determine with absolute certainty the history of the tooth itself and its association with Māhia. Lance Ngata reported that he had carved the *taonga* in 2012 from a whaletooth given to him by his tutor, master carver Clive Fugill. The whale was a mature *parāoa* that beached on the Māhia Peninsula in the late 1960s. This was enough information to trace the tooth back to a sole sperm whale bull that had beached on Māhia on May 1, 1967. The records were surprisingly detailed; the whale was fifty-five feet long, it is number 385 in the NZ Whale Stranding Database and the coordinates of its stranding were latitude 39°S, longitude 177°E.

It has already been noted that Māhia is an area of spiritual significance that attracted whales. They would swim right up the channel of Ikawhenua, or Te Pakake a Ruawharo, until they were alongside the whale-shaped rock known as Te Ara a Paikea, the pathway of Paikea. On top of this rock was a spring known as Te Puna a Tinirau, the spring of Tinirau, after a place in the ocean where whales are said to originate. Ruawharo, the *tohunga* on the *Tākitimu*, had scattered sand from Hawaiki here—was this the *mauri* of the whales he hoped to attract? Is this why the *parāoa* beached?

None of these details mattered for the acts and conventions to be satisfied, beyond date and species. The paperwork amassed to travel with Paikea’s pendant included



Figure 13.4. Paikea and Whakakau. Photo courtesy of Greenstone TV.

—a Permit to Export from Management Authority of the Department of Conservation, New Zealand, to satisfy the Trade in Endangered Species Act 1989 and CITES, dated April 28, 2017;

—an email from the US Fisheries and Wildlife Service advising the inspection process required at the US border and other required documentation, dated May 4, 2017;

—a Declaration for Importation or Exportation of Fish or Wildlife from the US Fisheries and Wildlife Service, filed May 19, 2017;

—a Marine Mammals Protection Act 1978 Permit to Hold, Import and Export from the New Zealand Department of Conservation, granting the right to export the tooth between May 9 and December

31, 2017, and dated May 15, 2017, a permit that included a photograph of the pendant so that no substitution could be made; and—a letter from the US Department of Commerce National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, acknowledging receipt of an affidavit and supporting documentation from Wayne Ngata to establish that the whale had died and the tooth been procured before the effective date of the US Marine Mammals Protection Act (December 21, 1972), and that the tooth had been held in a secure environment since 1967 and had not been involved in commerce.

As a condition of this import permit, the tooth was not allowed to enter into commerce in the United States: it could not be sold. Finally, a cover letter from the Senior Museum Registrar of the AMNH outlined the importation process and associated inspection at the US border and listed the permits attached. Thrillingly, it also stated that “The pendant will be given to the Māori ancestor figure Paikea, a carved wooden figure in the AMNH Collections known as the whalerider.” Not only would Paikea receive and be able to keep his *taonga*, he would also own it.

The permit process included an additional step: a public gazetting of the intention to export this *taonga*. It had to be made through the local, regional newspaper, and a period of one month allowed for objections to be lodged. This stipulation was set because the status of the material from which the *taonga* is made transcends the evaluations made by acts and conventions. Sperm whale teeth are associated with high rank and are revered in *whakataukī* celebrating strength, endurance and chiefly qualities: *He rei ngā niho, he parāoa ngā kauae*—if you have a sperm whale’s teeth, you must have a sperm whale’s jaw to carry them.³² Thus the process of obtaining a permit for export includes a period during which objections may be made.

Moreover, whalebones and teeth are invested with the *mana* (efficacy) of Tangaroa. Māori curator at the Metropolitan Museum of Art Maia Nuku explains:

Whales in particular were deemed to be the *ata*, the shadow or embodiment of Ta’aroa [Tangaroa], the original god from whom all others derived. Their bones were not merely symbolic or ornamental, they were relics quite literally fused with the essence of Ta’aroa . . . Strong and lasting, they were his *iho* or essence made

permanent. Since the bones of one were also deemed to be the bones of all, this whalebone or ivory worked metonymically to index the entire lineage and all its members.³³

By taking a tooth to New York, Toi Hauiti were taking a relic of the great creator Tangaroa. By taking a tooth to Paikea, they were bringing him the family of whales. Fortunately, no objections were raised during the month the gazette was published.

One final obstacle concerned the toggle of the *taonga*, to which little attention had been paid. It was albatross bone, another protected species of significance to Māori. Because not enough time to obtain permits for this to travel was available, a pragmatic solution was reached: the toggle was replaced with beef bone after Wayne Ngata determined that “beef bone is now in the *whakapapa*.” The *taonga*, like Paikea before it, was now ready to traverse the ocean, the *marae* of Tangaroa, to join Paikea in New York.

2017—Whakakau Paikea hi!

The delegation that clustered by the group entrance to the AMNH on May 31, 2017, like the one in 2013, included artists, young people, and young leaders. Unlike 2013, this time they were flanked by a small documentary crew: a director, a director of photography, and a sound engineer. The meeting with Paikea would be captured as it unfolded for the documentary series that had enabled the return of the *taonga*. The group was led through the ground floor displays of the museum and up to the Anthropology Stores. They assembled in a display-case lined corridor in front of the doors of the storeroom where Paikea waited. Finally, the doors were opened. . . .

What followed is hard to capture in words but can be seen in the documentary itself: an outpouring of emotion expressed initially through the formalities of oratory, song, and *haka*. Wayne Ngata addressed Paikea as an ancestor, collapsing the distance of four years since their last reunion and introducing him to other members of his kin. The pendant was once again placed around his neck, but this time with the certainty that it would never be taken off. As the *rei puta* became Paikea’s it received a name of its own, Whakakau, a name that instantiates the transformation of this great ancestor. Tears flowed, camera shutters clicked, and in true Toi Hauiti “digital native” style the whole reunion was streamed live on Facebook to schoolchildren



Figure 13.5. Lewis Whaitiri shares a *hongi* with Paikea. Photo courtesy of Greenstone TV.

in Ūawa. Prior to the *rei puta* embarking on its journey back to Paikea, it had been passed from one child to another as they recounted the story of their ancestor. It came to Paikea warmed by the hands of his youngest descendants, and they watched as it was given back to him.

Just as a great exhibition of whales had coincided with the group's first visit in 2013, another whale at the AMNH was again commanding attention, calling people to the museum. The great blue whale model that is the most popular of all the exhibits at the museum was receiving its annual clean and the focus of many television cameras, at the same time as Paikea was reinvigorated by his people, receiving their breath in the greeting known as *hongi* and feeling their hands on his skin.

Conclusion

This story has focused on the expansive history and generative *whaka-papa* of Paikea the ancestor and Paikea the *tekoteko* at AMNH to call attention to cross-cultural environmental and economic whaling histories and legacies, and their impact on Te Aitanga a Hauiti's relationships with whales and ancestors, and whale-ancestors. What does it mean to heed the call of Paikea? What does it mean to be whale people in the era of modern whaling?

Modern whaling in Aotearoa consists of whale-watching ventures and of the harvest of bones and teeth from beached whales by sanctioned *iwi*. Where the former is concerned, it is controlled by the Marine Mammals Protection Regulations 1992, which set out conditions governing commercial marine mammal guiding to view. The best-known whale-watching operation in Aotearoa is Whale Watch Kaikoura, on the east coast of the South Island. It was founded by Kati Kuri, an *iwi* who claims descent from Paikea through his youngest son, Tahu Pōtiki. The business's founding narrative describes their elder Bill Solomon looking to the past and to their whale-riding ancestor at a time when their town was experiencing extreme hardship—it is a *whakapapa*-driven enterprise.³⁴ So too is the harvest of bones and teeth from whales and other marine mammals that strand, which has been permitted since 1998 by provisions in the Marine Mammals Protection Act 1978 (this activity had been illegal for the twenty years that intervened). Meanwhile, Department of Conservation policy still prevents meat being taken for human consumption, ostensibly because of the risk of contamination by organic pollutants and heavy metals rather than any moral position.

Iwi with enduring relationships to *tohorā* are recovering and reasserting *mātauranga* as it pertains to the appropriate recovery of resources and drafting their own protocols.³⁵ Ngāti Awa *tohunga tohorā* (whale expert) Ramari Stewart, who has become a stalwart for the recovery of ancestral whaling practices, describes the extraction of whale bones as “bathing in the blood our ancestors.”³⁶ She can recognize individual whales by the patterns of their callosities, which she calls their *moko*.³⁷

Whales once extirpated from our waters are now returning, with some surprising results. In 2011, a study conducted by the University of Auckland in collaboration with the Department of Conservation determined that southern right whales were recolonizing the mainland coast of Aotearoa–New Zealand. A write-up of the research in the *New Zealand Herald* offers unexpectedly poignant insights into their *whakapapa*.

The findings from DNA prints of individual whales suggested the mainland New Zealand population was wiped out by hunting and the returning whales were from the remnant sub-antarctic population, [Professor Scott Baker] said. Lead author Emma Carroll, a PhD student from the University of Auckland, said the study

supported the theory the whales had a kind of cultural connection to regional calving grounds through a process called maternal fidelity which is passed from a mother to calf during the first year of life. “This maternal fidelity contributed to the vulnerability of these local populations, which were quickly hunted to extinction using only open boats and hand-held harpoons,” Ms Carroll said.³⁸

The first *tohorā* calf to be born in mainland Aotearoa–New Zealand waters since whaling ended was identified in July 2012, off the Southland Coast, establishing a new cultural connection of maternal fidelity between whale and *whenua* (land)—“revealed so is the matrilineal breath.”³⁹

Paikea has many times called his descendants and his ancestors to New York. Māori novelist Witi Ihimaera, himself a descendant, was inspired to write *The Whale Rider* in 1985 while living in New York near the Hudson River. “I heard helicopters whirling around and the ships in the river using all their sirens—a whale had come up the Hudson River and was spouting,” Ihimaera recalls. “It made me think of my home town, Whangārā and the whale mythology of that area.”⁴⁰

Since Toi Hauiti’s visit in 2013, the call of Paikea has been answered by individual descendants who are granted an audience with him in the stores of AMNH, which seems now to have become his *whare*. He calls through the words of his own *waiata* as they form in the mouths of children, and the kicking legs of babies who are said to be born doing his *haka*. He has called for his *taonga*, made from the tooth of a whale beached at Māhia, where the wind whistles through a hole on the summit on the sacred mountain Taupiri and sounds a whale’s call:

Ka hura, ka hura
Te manawa uha
Ka hura, ka hura
Te manawa pore
Ko tō manawa, ko tōku manawa
 Revealed so is the matrilineal breath
 Revealed so is the simmering breath
 Tis your breath, and mine also . . .

He has shared breath with his visitors and strengthened their vision to reconstruct the *whare* of Te Kani a Takirau, possibly in digital form, and to one day bring Paikea home to Ūawa.

Paikea the *tekoteko* has prompted conversations about his rights, as an ancestor and a living face of Te Aitanga a Hauiti, to receive guests and retain gifts that are his due, even if these are not easily accommodated by international treaties. The many Fijian *tabua* (smoked whale tooth valuables) confiscated each year by New Zealand Customs are further examples of the impact that CITES, in particular, is having on the movement of the ancestral valuables of Indigenous peoples—an impact that needs to be factored into research demonstrating that CITES is conversely having little or no positive impact on the species it aims to protect.⁴¹ More than 90 percent of specimens seized at New Zealand’s border under CITES are destroyed, but after a request from Fiji authorities in the early 1990s, *tabua* have been collected and stored by the Department of Conservation. On May 29, 2017, just two months before the pendant was returned to Paikea, 146 *tabua* were returned to Fiji in the first repatriation of its kind for New Zealand Customs.⁴²

Being whale people in the modern whaling era requires both the maintenance of *whakapapa* relationships with whales that exceed and transcend the short-term aberration that was economic whaling, and the skillful navigation of national and international laws introduced to address their subsequent economic extinction. Toi Hauiti, Paikea, and the *rei puta* Whakakau have focused attention on the restrictions imposed on Te Aitanga a Hauiti to care for their ancestors—Paikea and the whales—in ways commensurate with Mātauranga Hauiti. These ongoing discussions are generating new insights into what it means to be whale people in the modern whaling era.

Glossary

| | |
|--------------------------|--|
| <i>Hauititanga</i> | Hauiti ways of being |
| <i>Mātauranga Hauiti</i> | ancestral Hauiti knowledge systems |
| <i>Mātauranga Māori</i> | Māori knowledge systems |
| <i>Te Reo Rangatira</i> | the Māori language |
| <i>Kauri</i> | Kauri (<i>Agathis australis</i>) |
| <i>Paikea</i> | humpback whales (<i>Megaptera novaeangliae</i>) |
| <i>parāoa</i> | sperm whale (<i>Physeter microcephalus</i>) |
| <i>tohorā</i> | southern right whales (<i>Eubalaena australis</i>) |
| <i>haka</i> | action chant, performing arts |
| <i>he tahito</i> | an ancient being |

| | |
|----------------------|--|
| <i>he taniwha</i> | a denizen of the deep |
| <i>he tīpua</i> | an extraordinary being |
| <i>heru</i> | standing comb |
| <i>hihi</i> | baleen |
| <i>hinu</i> | whale oils |
| <i>iwi</i> | tribe |
| <i>kaitiaki</i> | guardians |
| <i>kaitiakitanga</i> | guardianship |
| <i>kāpia</i> | burnt kauri resin used for <i>tā moko</i> |
| <i>karakia</i> | ritual incantations |
| <i>kaupapa</i> | project; principles and ideas which act as a base or foundation for action |
| <i>kiko</i> | whale meat |
| <i>koruru</i> | carved face at apex of meeting house |
| <i>kūmara</i> | sweet potato |
| <i>maihi</i> | bargeboards |
| <i>mana</i> | personal efficacy |
| <i>manaakitanga</i> | hosting of guests |
| <i>mauri</i> | lifeforce |
| <i>mere</i> | a striking weapon and marker of status, also used as an oratory aid |
| <i>mōteatea</i> | chants and songs |
| <i>ngako</i> | blubber |
| <i>pākake</i> | carved motif depicting whales; also, <i>taratara ā kae</i> |
| <i>parāoa</i> | whale bones; also, sperm whale (<i>Physeter microcephalus</i>) |
| <i>pātaka</i> | food storehouses |
| <i>patu</i> | a striking weapon and marker of status, also used as an oratory aid |
| <i>poupou</i> | carved wall panel |
| <i>raranga</i> | basketry |
| <i>rei</i> | whale teeth |
| <i>rei puta</i> | whaletooth pendant |
| <i>rongoā</i> | healing |
| <i>roopu</i> | group |
| <i>tā moko</i> | tattoo, also <i>moko</i> |
| <i>tāhū wānanga</i> | the important bodies of knowledge from Hawaiki |
| <i>taonga</i> | treasure |

| | |
|------------------------|--|
| <i>taonga tuku iho</i> | treasures passed down from the ancestors |
| <i>tapu</i> | sacredness |
| <i>taratara ā kae</i> | carved motif depicting whales; also, <i>pakake</i> |
| <i>te whānau puha</i> | ‘the family of animals that expel air’ |
| <i>tekoteko</i> | gable figure |
| <i>tohunga</i> | important learned person |
| <i>tohunga tohorā</i> | whale expert |
| <i>toi moko</i> | preserved tattooed head |
| <i>uaua</i> | whale sinews |
| <i>uhi</i> | tattoo chisel |
| <i>waka</i> | canoe |
| <i>waka hourua</i> | double-hulled canoe |
| <i>whakapapa</i> | ties of kinship and affinity |
| <i>whakairo</i> | carving |
| <i>whānau</i> | extended family |
| <i>whare whakairo</i> | carved ancestral meeting house |
| <i>whatu</i> | weaving |

Notes

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1. Aotearoa, “land of the long white cloud,” is the Māori name for what is now more commonly called New Zealand. Aotearoa–New Zealand is a naming convention that reflects the bicultural relationship of Tangata Whenua (“people of the land”: Indigenous Māori) and Tangata Tiriti (“people of the Treaty of Waitangi”: non-Māori). In this chapter, after this first use, Aotearoa is used in preference to the composite term, New Zealand being used only where historically or technically required.
2. Phillipps, “Ika-Whenua.”
3. Under the provisions of the New Zealand Wildlife Act 1953, all dead specimens or part thereof held by *iwi* or other parties remain the property of the Crown. The following special condition is generally included in Wildlife Act authorities granted to hold dead specimens: “This Authorisation gives the Authority Holder the right to hold absolutely protected wildlife in accordance with the terms and conditions of the Authorisation, but the wildlife remains the property of the Crown. This includes any dead wildlife or parts

- thereof.” New Zealand Department of Conservation, email, April 27, 2017. In practice, the Crown’s right to retrieve *taonga* made from, for example, whale-bone, whale teeth, or the feathers of native birds is rarely if ever exercised.
4. Sahlins, *Islands of History*, 14. See also Salmond, “Transforming Translations (part I).”
 5. These place him variously as the son of Uenuku of Hawaiki and the younger brother of Kahutiaterangi, or as the son of Tāneuarangi of Aotearoa, or as an alter ego of Kahutiaterangi when he took the form of a whale.
 6. Haami, “Te whānau puha—whales.”
 7. Lythberg, Ngata, and Salmond, “Curating the Uncommons.”
 8. Lythberg, Ngata, and Salmond, “Curating the Uncommons.”
 9. Ngata, Ngata-Gibson, and Salmond, “Te Ataakura.”
 10. Ngata, Lythberg, and Salmond, “Toi Hauiti and Hinematiaro.”
 11. Reedy, “Ngāti Porou.”
 12. Ihimaera, *Whale Rider*. The film *Whale Rider*, directed by Niki Caro, was first released in 2002.
 13. Moehanga (or Te Mahanga) of Ngāpuhi became the first recorded Māori visitor to England when the whaler Ferret berthed in London, after boarding the ship when it visited the Bay of Islands late in 1805. For an example of *whakapapa* bonds bloodlines, see Stevens and Wanhalla, “Intimate Relations; New Zealand Department of Conservation Te Papa Atawhai, “Whaling,” <http://www.doc.govt.nz/nature/native-animals/marine-mammals/whales/whaling> (accessed July 31, 2021). To flense a whale is to remove its skin and thick blubber; commercial whalers sought the oil boiled out of blubber and in particular the special qualities of “spermaceti” oil extracted from the head of the sperm whale.
 14. Dieffenbach, *Travels in New Zealand*, 1:7.
 15. Waipoua Forest Trust, “History of the Waipoua Forest,” <http://waipoua.nz/info/history> (accessed July 31, 2021).
 16. Waipoua Forest Trust, “History.”
 17. Orwin, *Kauri*.
 18. Phillips, “Whaling.”
 19. Te Ahukaramu, “Marine Disposal,” MS-Group-0162, National Library.
 20. O’Malley, *Meeting Place*.
 21. Sanborn. *Whipscars and Tattoos*.
 22. He is believed to have had forty *toi moko* at this time. He kept five of his favourite *toi moko* and later sold them, after again offering these to the New Zealand government. American Museum of Natural History, “The Robley Collection,” <https://www.tepapa.govt.nz/sites/default/files/media-release-repatriation-history-of-the-robley-collection-2014.pdf> (accessed July 31, 2021).
 23. Lythberg, Newell, and Ngata, “Houses of Stories,” 201.
 24. Originally titled *Whales Tohorā*. The exhibition ran at the AMNH from March 2013 to January 2014.

25. *Moriori* are the Indigenous people of the Chatham Islands (Rēkohu), east of New Zealand.
26. Museum of New Zealand | Te Papa Tongarewa, "Largest Repatriation of Ancestral Remains in New Zealand's History Announced," December 1, 2014, <https://www.tepapa.govt.nz/about/press-and-media/press-releases/2014-news-and-media-releases/largest-repatriation-ancestral> (accessed July 31, 2021).
27. Lythberg, Newell, and Ngata, "Houses of Stories."
28. CITES, <http://www.cites.org> (accessed July 31, 2021).
29. Miskelly, "Legal Protection," 92.
30. Miskelly, "Legal Protection," 96, 95.
31. Miskelly, "Legal Protection," 87.
32. Orbell, *Natural World*.
33. Nuku, "Unwrapping Gods."
34. See Hēnare et al., "Te Ohu Umanga Māori."
35. For example, Ngāi Tahu has a "Beached Marine Mammal Protocol (2003)" prepared in accordance with the Ngāi Tahu Claims Settlement Act 1998, which lists whales as a *taonga* species in Schedule 97 and includes provisions for the use and management of cultural materials. Department of Conservation is required to consult with Ngāi Tahu over anything that might affect whales and whale resources, and the Protocol details the procedure to be followed in the event of a whale stranding. Ngāi Tahu, *Beached Marine Mammals*; see also Te Ohu Kaimoana, *Submission*.
36. Te Ohu Kaimoana, "Bone Lady," 4.
37. Davis, "Whales Out My Window."
38. New Zealand Press Association, "Endangered Whales Return to New Zealand Waters," *New Zealand Herald*, June 27, 2011; for more, see University of Auckland, "Southern Right Whales," <http://mmeg.wordpress.fos.auckland.ac.nz/southern-right-whales> (accessed July 31, 2021).
39. Radio New Zealand, "Southern Right Whale born in New Zealand Waters," July 23, 2012, <https://www.radionz.co.nz/news/national/111362/southern-right-whale-born-in-new-zealand-waters> (accessed July 31, 2021).
40. Film Education, "Whale Rider," 2003, 4, <http://www.filmeducation.org/pdf/film/WhaleRider.pdf> (accessed July 31, 2021).
41. Heid and Márquez-Ramos, "Wildlife Trade Policy."
42. Radio New Zealand, "Repatriation of Tabua back to Fiji 'a Rare Event,'" May 29, 2017, <https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/331812/repatriation-of-tabua-back-to-fiji-a-rare-event> (accessed July 31, 2021).

Whale Peoples, Pacific Worlds

Joshua L. Reid

EARLIER HISTORIES OF PACIFIC WHALING appeared as romanticized, oversimplified narratives. Manly white hunters nobly opened to the Western world vast swaths of the Pacific Ocean and its islands and coasts while pursuing dangerous prey that they transformed into lucrative commodities. Recently, the history of Pacific whaling has grown as scholars have applied new avenues of analysis and brought whaling histories into conversation with a broader array of historical fields, such as social history and gender. For example, nineteenth-century maritime life and industry intersected with more intimate, home dynamics as the demands of lengthier Pacific voyages increasingly clashed with Victorian domesticity.¹ Historians critically note the role of whaling in the expansion of European, US, and Japanese empires—and scientific knowledge, global capital, and international diplomacy—in the Pacific.² Additionally, they examine the consequences that whalers and whaling brought to Pacific lands, waters, peoples, and species. Diseases decimated Indigenous populations across the ocean, drawing survivors into increasingly more exploitative relationships that further pressured local resources.³ In some places, this facilitated a littoral form of settler colonialism as largely white whalers replaced Indigenous men who had disappeared or died in the maritime industries; these outsiders married into local Native communities and stayed on as beachcombers, traders, settlers, and colonial officials.⁴ And sea mammal populations, particularly whales, experienced succeeding collapses as white commercial hunters decimated one fishery and moved on to the next.⁵ Despite these new approaches, historical examinations of Pacific whaling have remained one-dimensional. They largely relate a traditional narrative of active European and European

American whalers and polities—the usual historical agents—executing their wills on the passive Pacific, whose environments, peoples, and species could do little more than play the role of victims.

The chapters in this volume explore different narratives, charting new histories of Pacific whaling. They illustrate that a broader array of methodologies and sources, such as local newspapers, old collections of whale recipes, oral histories, a careful attention to Indigenous languages, and culturally specific material items can uncover a more inclusive history of who whaled, where, and why. They demonstrate a more diverse set of whaling economies that did far more than simply transform whales into oil and baleen. Instead, they reveal that many nations and peoples beyond the usual historical actors used whaling to claim and control marine and terrestrial spaces, to develop and sustain local economic development, to establish and enforce boundaries, and to exercise power. All the authors push back against the notion of a passive Pacific, specifically when it comes to the peoples of this ocean and its marine environment. Together, these chapters illustrate that whaling was much broader than the killing and commodification of whales. Excitingly, they help substantiate the emerging field of Pacific worlds.

In broadening whaling narratives beyond the straightforward but challenging task of transforming whales into commodities, these new whaling histories demonstrate that Pacific peoples “lived with whales,” to adapt a conceptually useful phrase from historian Nancy Shoemaker.⁶ Bathsheba Demuth’s examination in this volume of a moment of cross-cultural encounter in the Arctic of 1852 poses several questions that help us consider how hunters “live” with whales: what is a whale and what is its value? Together, these invoke a third, related question: why whale?

Answers to these questions are, of course, historically rooted in specific places and times and reflect the worldviews of particular societies. As discussed in this volume and during the symposium that gave rise to it, Indigenous peoples whaled for culturally specific reasons beyond the Western-oriented market economy. Ngarrindjeri whalers sought access to cash and goods that would have increased their status in Aboriginal societies, simultaneously laboring at nearby whaling stations so that they could maintain ancestral connections to Kondoli (whales) in a changing settler-colonial world of nineteenth-century Australia. Indigenous Arctic peoples invested cetaceans with agency, seeing whales as giving themselves to their communities for

subsistence purposes and to make them wealthy and powerful as whale commodities proliferated throughout local, regional, and global exchange networks. These Indigenous peoples recognized that this only occurred when harpooners had practiced the right ritual preparations that demonstrated that they respected the gift of whales. According to Māori authorities and some Coast Salish leaders, the reciprocal respect they gained from whales meant that they could call leviathans ashore. Within their societies, Indigenous whalers distributed meat, blubber, and bone throughout villages, thereby affirming and augmenting their status as respected authorities.

Because whaling meant something more than the killing and rendering of whales, Indigenous whaling peoples such as Iñupiat, Ngarrindjeri, Chukchis, and Kāi Tahu—along with the Makahs of the most northwestern point of the contiguous United States—can be more accurately described as “whale peoples” than as hunters laboring to transform leviathans into commodities.⁷ Seeking to define what this means, several of the authors here interrogate this classification and together map out three related commonalities of whale peoples. The first commonality is that they are *in relations* with whales. Many Indigenous peoples recognize varying degrees of relations that others define as kin-based or political, which often overlap from a Native perspective. Elsewhere, Athabascan Dian Million theorizes the Indigenous connections between relationality and identity, explaining that “the meaning of *Indigenous* as it is defined by all those cultures who identify themselves as such has always been in their relationship to a ‘land,’ that place they were in relationship to without anthropocentric bias, relationships that disciplined action and cohered Indigenous persons and societies.”⁸ For whale peoples, these relations included marine waters and whales themselves and were expressed in various ways, demonstrating that what was relevant for one people was not as critical for others. For example, Paieka, the whale-riding ancestor from Hawaiki, the original Māori homeland, reflects relationality literally through *whakapapa* (genealogy) that connects the past to the present and the future.

Other whale peoples illustrate that relationality with whales included both men and women, an important correction that pushes our understanding of whaling beyond a starkly male-centered activity. For example, the work of Māori women was central to the success of nineteenth-century shore whaling stations in New Zealand. Similarly, Iñupiaq, Chukchi, and Yupik wives supported effective *umiaq* captains

by calling the whale and sending off the crew with her prayers. Makah wives of whalers often helped in the ritual preparations of harpooners and remained solitary and still during a hunt because they believed that a whale would mimic her actions.⁹ In these Indigenous societies, whaling helped bind families and communities together, as each gender assumed responsibility over various aspects of the hunt, welcoming the whale ashore, and dividing the catch.

Nearly all Indigenous whaling societies see whales as another people with whom they are related, reflecting what scholars sometimes define as a kincentric ecology.¹⁰ Whales are part of the extended community of kin that “extends beyond human relationships” to include a wide range of other-than-human relations.¹¹ This endows leviathans with agency, just like any other people, and explains why many Native whalers speak of whales as giving themselves to harpooners.¹² Even non-Natives—including some whalers in the mid-nineteenth century, as Lissa Wadewitz argues, or twentieth-century animal rights activist Ryan Tucker Jones discusses, both in this volume—sometimes think of whales as individuals endowed with agency.¹³

Because whale peoples are in relations with whales, they have a host of ritual practices, beliefs, and ceremonies related to whaling. These mark a second key characteristic of whale peoples. Often done to honor the whale, these practices reflect *values of stewardship and responsibility* for these beings with which they have relations. For instance, before the 1999 hunt—the first in at least seventy years—the Makah crew engaged in more than a thousand hours of ritual preparation. This was in addition to a similar period spent on physical preparation, getting in shape to bring a canoe alongside a whale during a hunt and coordinating these efforts as a crew pulling in unison. Additionally, ceremonies highlight the importance that this relationship plays in the social life of whale people. In the mid-nineteenth century, Makah harpooners performed mock whale hunts as part of the engagement ceremony when they sought a marriage partner. A ritual like this demonstrated the whaling prowess of the potential groom and his ability to care for his family and people. But it also illustrated just one of the ways that whaling infused many aspects of their lives. Aboriginal Ngarrindjeri and k̄anaka maoli (Native Hawaiians), among others, also observed ceremonial practices respecting whales.

Moreover, for whale peoples, these practices of stewardship and responsibility reflected and shaped governance exercised by whale

peoples, particularly through the authority of harpooners. Because of the enormous amount of food and wealth they provided to villages, Makah whalers often held the highest positions of authority in their communities and even regionally. Their authority came from their ability to care for their families and extended relations within the village through the distribution of high-value whale products, such as blubber, bone, and whale oil. As respected leaders, Makah whalers were often the primary point of interaction in encounters with outsiders during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Whalers were the ones who took the lead in negotiating the 1855 Treaty of Neah Bay with the US government, in which Makahs reserved for themselves the right to hunt whales and seals and to continue fishing as they had done for generations. Their descendants continue to hold positions of authority at Neah Bay today. Similarly, governance aspects characterize whaling among Kāi Tahu women and men, and likely the social organization of Ngarrindjeri whaling communities. The *kaitiakitanga* (care or stewardship) exercised by Māori Te Aitanga a Hauiti over their ancestor Paikea illustrates another example of the governance practices of a whale people.

The relations that whale peoples have with whales *stretch long into the past and remain relevant today and into the future*, a third characteristic that whale peoples share. Archaeology often affirms these historical roots. The finds at Ozette, a Makah village just south of Cape Flattery, reveal that this tribal nation has been whaling for at least 2,700 years. This is why whales figure prominently in the creation stories of whale peoples. After a great flood brought humans to Cape Flattery, they transformed the region and its surrounding waters into their homeland and became the Q^widičča?atš (kwi-dihch-chuh-aht)—the People of the Cape—by establishing villages where they could harvest whales. Swooping down from his nest high in the mountains and casting lightning snakes to stun whales, Thunderbird taught them how to whale, a practice that defined their identity and made the waters around Cape Flattery into Makah marine space. For Kāi Tahu, whales appear in voyaging traditions and in stories about the creation of Aotearoa's southern landscape. Similarly, Tikigaq villagers at Point Hope, Alaska, tell about a whale that died and created the headland where their community is located.

Indigenous knowledge pertaining to these sea mammals and whaling reflect the substantial length of time that a community has been a whale people.¹⁴ Makahs studied and learned the behaviors of

several types of whales they regularly hunted. This included whale anatomy—they had to know where and when to strike so that harpoons and lances would work best—and navigation of marine waters so they could safely hunt and return home. The only way Makahs and other whale peoples could accumulate this knowledge was over generations of being in relations with whales. Because this relationship is historical, it has changed over time as whale peoples embraced new technologies and opportunities to hunt whales or maintain their relations with whales. For instance, when iron became increasingly available to Makahs in the early nineteenth century, whalers began making harpoon heads and lances from it. In 1855, the People of the Cape used the treaty-making process to reserve for themselves and their descendants the right to hunt whales. By the 1860s, they tried using firearms to hunt whales, but found that they were not as effective as traditional gear. By 1905, they were regularly hiring steam-powered tugboats to help them tow their catch back to villages. None of these innovations diluted the customary practice of whaling or made the hunters any less Makah—instead, these adaptations helped them maintain their distinct identity as the People of the Cape amid the changing settler-colonial world. Many of the chapters in this volume attest to similar historical strategies pursued by Kānaka Maoli, Ngarrindjeri Aboriginal Australians, Kāi Tahu of Aotearoa, Ainu peoples of Japan, and Arctic communities on both sides of the Bering Strait.

The new whaling histories in this volume also help us better understand the plurality of Pacific worlds, an emerging field in history.¹⁵ These whaling histories underscore that the meaning of a “Pacific world” differed from the shores of Aboriginal Australia, Aotearoa, the South Pacific, the Salish Sea, northern Japan, and the Arctic—or to the Europeans and European Americans who sought to exercise some measure of control over the Pacific. Furthermore, they illustrate how a Pacific worlds analysis uncovers the connections between the local and the global as this ocean basin is better understood historically as a complex assemblage of different regions. This should come as no surprise when we remember the difference in scale that a Pacific-centered analysis offers. Despite the staggering scale of this ocean, however, this lens of analysis appears useful, particularly when we choose to focus on the threads or networks—such as whaling—that knit together the various Pacific worlds. Whalers, whaling ships, whale products, and even whales themselves made this vast

Pacific a more intimate space, connecting hunting grounds, villages, ports, and peoples across great distances.

These histories also highlight the centrality of the Pacific. Previous whaling histories take a traditional world systems approach, framing the Pacific as the periphery to particular centers of capital and power. If we think about whaling from the perspective of the local peoples and powers in the Pacific, many sites in this ocean resemble central hubs for various networks of peoples, valued items of exchange and commerce, ideas and technologies, and diseases, to name a few. Moreover, these new histories emphasize the importance of and opportunities presented by mobility across and among various Pacific worlds. Whaling gave numerous individuals, including Indigenous peoples, the opportunity to explore the larger world for myriad purposes.

Finally, many of these new histories on Pacific whaling confirm that Pacific worlds were first and foremost Indigenous spaces—and that they remain so today in many places. This is evident in the way that Paterson and Wilson approach their examination in this volume of Ngarrindjeri whalers through the frame of reconciliation rooted in Indigenous perspectives and epistemologies, not those of the settler colonial nation-state. Similarly, Māori efforts to “heed the call of Paikea” by visiting their ancestor at New York’s American History of Natural History do the same. Through historical and contemporary Indigenous networks that cross the Bering Strait, Alaska Yupik and Iñupiaq hunters helped Siberian Chukchis learn to whale once again in the years after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Makahs most dramatically articulated that Pacific worlds remain Indigenous spaces by harpooning a gray whale in 1999.

By taking a broader and more inclusive view, these new histories of whaling in the Pacific illustrate the potential for what some scholars might have once written off as a specialized and antiquated corner of historiography. New methodologies, theoretical approaches, and analytical perspectives instead point to many of the rich possibilities that Pacific whaling histories have to offer.

Notes

1. Norling, *Captain Ahab Had a Wife*. See also Creighton, *Rites and Passages*.
2. Davis, Gallman, and Gleiter, *Pursuit of Leviathan*; Watanabe, *Japan’s Whaling*; Haines, “Lighting up the World?”; Dorsey, *Whales & Nations*; and Lüttge, “Whaling Intelligence.”

3. Kindell, “Brothel of the Pacific.”
4. Dening, *Islands and Beaches*; and Warrin, *So Ends This Day*. Nancy Shoemaker provides the intriguing example of Elisha Apes, a Pequot whaler from New England, who became part of the British settler class in New Zealand because he was not Māori. Shoemaker, *Native American Whalers*, 145–161.
5. Iglar, *Great Ocean*, 99–128; and Richards, *World Hunt*, 165–217.
6. Shoemaker, *Living with Whales*.
7. Information about the Makahs of Washington State and their historical and contemporary whaling practices is from Reid, *The Sea*. I draw in this Northwest Coast Indigenous example to help illustrate some of the common themes in this volume.
8. Million, *Therapeutic Nations*, 116.
9. For a more complete analysis, see Gunther, “Reminiscences.”
10. For an introduction to and examples of this topic, see Salmón, “Kincentric Ecology”; Nadasdy, “Gift in the Animal”; Nelson and Shilling, *Traditional Ecological Knowledge*; Kearney, “Returning.”
11. Fixico, *American Indian Mind*, 7.
12. For an insightful discussion about the agency of whales, see Demuth, *Floating Coast*, 15–70.
13. Historian Jason Colby explains how post–World War II ideas about personhood for cetaceans emerged through orca captivity and the observations of whale behavior made by scientists and visitors to parks such as SeaWorld. See Colby, *Orca*.
14. For an introduction to Indigenous knowledge, or what some call “traditional ecological knowledge,” see Menzies, *Traditional Ecological Knowledge*.
15. Pacific worlds is a growing field of historical scholarship. For an introduction and sampling of the literature, see Hau’ofa, Waddell, and Naidu, *New Oceania*; Chappell, *Double Ghosts*; D’Arcy, *People of the Sea*; Te Punga Somerville, *Once Were Pacific*; Matsuda, *Pacific Worlds*; Iglar, *Great Ocean*; Cook, *Return to Kahiki*; Rosenthal, *Beyond Hawai’i*; and Mawani, *Across Oceans*.

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The **Squaxin Island Tribe's Ancestor's Voice** is a group effort of the tribe's Museum, Library, and Resource Center, and the Cultural Resources Department. Both are dedicated to providing our people and clients the most culturally accurate information about who we are. We have chosen to use the term Ancestor's Voice because no one person can speak for the tribe because we have many families who may have conducted their traditions differently. It is to these families and ancestors to whom we owe our gratitude. The Squaxin Island Tribe Ancestor's Voice team who assisted with this chapter were Rhonda Foster and Margaret Henry from the Cultural Resources Department, and Charlene Krise from the Museum, Library, and Resource Center.

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