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Japanese Whaling: Polls, Perceptions and Pointers to the Future

Alan MEADOWS

Introduction

Whaling remains a deeply divisive and emotionally charged issue. To some, whales are seen as gentle and intelligent leviathans of the deep, creatures so special that killing them is not only cruel and unnecessary, but a morally indefensible act. Yet to advocates of whaling they are just another living marine resource, to be utilized in a sustainable manner if population numbers permit. This pro-whaling position has been adopted by successive Japanese governments ever since the implementation of the moratorium on the commercial hunting of whales came into effect in 1986. But what opinions do the youth of Japan have with regards to whales and their country's whaling policy?

This paper seeks to explore this and related questions by presenting the results of a new survey taken of university students living in the Tokyo area. Whilst examining what these young Japanese people think about whaling, the poll is also an attempt to gauge how well-informed they are about some of the facts and points of issue that are central to the ongoing whaling debate. The poll results will be considered in the light of the findings of a number of other larger-scale surveys, conducted both within Japan and beyond, in an attempt to ascertain whether any underlying trends can be discerned.

The results of the survey will be presented under the following seven categories:

- I. Images that respondents have of whales.
- II. Opinions on commercial whaling.
- III. Awareness of current Japanese whaling activities.
- IV. Whaling as part of Japanese culture.
- V. The future of Japanese commercial whaling.
- VI. Whale watching.
- VII. Level of interest in the whaling issue.

Particular attention will be paid to the level of support for a resumption of commercial whaling, the low levels of whale meat consumption among young people and the growth in popularity of the whale watching industry. Consideration will be given to whether the latter two factors are likely to change perceptions held of whales and whaling within Japan in the future. Finally, it will be suggested that some pointers towards the illusive goal of a negotiated settlement to the whaling dispute are present within the polling data in the form of support for a potential compromise based around Japanese coastal whaling.

Attributes of Informants and Method

A total of 511 Japanese students studying at three universities in Tokyo were surveyed: Hosei University, Departments of Global Politics and Global and Interdisciplinary Studies; Tokyo Medical University, Department of Medicine; and Waseda University, School of Law. The students were asked to complete the questionnaires during regularly scheduled classes between January and May 2012. They were not told of the survey in advance nor did they receive any related classroom instruction or lesson materials prior to the survey being given.

In an attempt to minimize any bias inherent in the questions a ten-

tative survey form was initially drawn up and piloted with 25 students.¹ Internal consistency was measured and several modifications made to the language employed in some of the questions, as well as the order in which they were presented. Extra options were added to some multiple choice closed-ended questions, and the use of open-ended questions was employed only when it was felt that the particular point under investigation did not lend itself to the multiple choice format.² All sections of the questionnaire were written in Japanese and English, and the respondents were invited to write additional comments or opinions, in the language of their choice, at any point in the survey if they so wished.

It should be said from the outset that this survey draws upon a convenience sample of students studying in the Tokyo area, rather than a nationwide, stratified random sample, and one must remain mindful of the dangers of hasty statistical extrapolation to the general Japanese population. Nevertheless, this writer believes that the relatively large sample size of the present survey, together with the consideration given to a range of other surveys undertaken by different polling groups, provide a useful insight into how Japanese people view the key issues surrounding the whaling debate.

As can be seen in Tables 1 and 2 below, 261 (51%) of the students who

Table 1 Gender of Respondents

Gender	Count	Percentage
Male	261	51%
Female	250	49%
Total Count	511	100%

Table 2 Age of Respondents

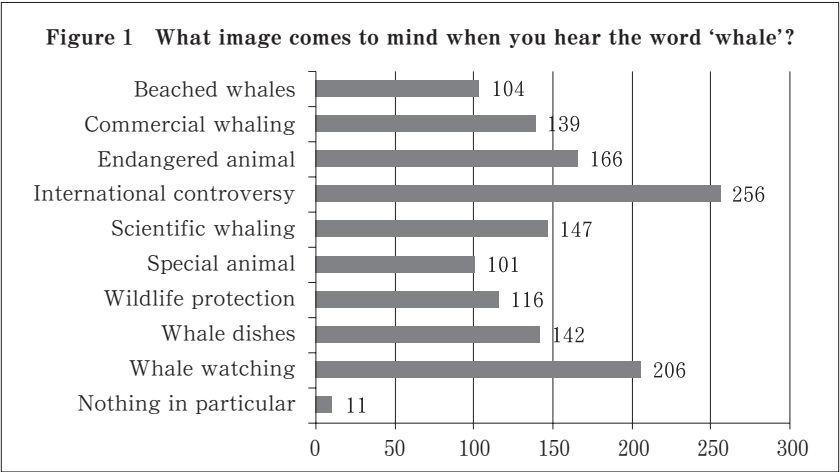
Age	Count	Percentage
15-19 years old	320	62.6%
20-24 years old	187	36.6%
25-29 years old	4	0.8%

participated in the survey were male, and 250 (49%) were female, with the majority at or below the age of nineteen.³

Survey Results and Analysis

I. Images

The first survey question asked respondents what image or images spring to mind when the word ‘whale’ is heard. They were free to select as many choices as they wished, and could include additional answers if they felt that the options available were insufficient. The image most frequently chosen was “international controversy” (50%), followed by “whale watching” (40%) and “endangered animal” (32%).



Twenty-two respondents offered their own answers, which are listed in Table 3 below. Of these responses, 14 related to environmental protection pressure groups (11 wrote “Sea Shepard”, two “Greenpeace” and one “environmental NGO”).

**Table 3 What image comes to mind when you hear
the word ‘whale’? Other responses**

Image	Number of respondents
Sea Shepard	11
Biggest animal	5
Clever	2
Greenpeace	2
Symbol of the sea	1
Nature	1
Cute mascot	1
Traditional food	1
Regional food	1
Environmental NGO	1
The Cove	1
Earthquake	1
Strong	1

Discussion

This particular question mirrors one that appeared in two earlier online Greenpeace questionnaires conducted within Japan in 2006 and 2008. In the former, which surveyed 1,047 people between 15 and 59 years of age, Greenpeace reported that the most common responses were “whale watching” (77%), “whale dishes” (62%), “scientific whaling” (47%) and “beached whale” (44%). The report which appeared two years later surveyed 1,051 people between the ages of 15 and 59, and found that the most common response was again “whale watching” (74%), followed by “whale dishes” (65%), “research whaling” (56%) and “beached whale” (40%) (Greenpeace Japan 2006: 8; Greenpeace Japan 2008: 9).

In the two surveys, the number of respondents who gave “international controversy” as one of their replies rose from 33% in 2006 to 39%

in 2008, and as we have seen that figure is an even higher 50% in the present survey. This growing tendency to associate whales with the controversy surrounding Japan’s international whaling activities is most likely a reflection of the media coverage given in recent years to the clashes in the Southern Ocean between Japanese whaling ships and the Sea Shepard Conservation Society. These Antarctic confrontations have at times escalated into something akin to a naval engagement, with a Sea Shepard boat sinking after being struck by a coastguard vessel patrolling with the whaling fleet in early 2010.⁴ Furthermore, the Australian government’s decision to initiate legal proceedings against Japan with respect to its scientific whaling programme in the Antarctic (the JARPA II case) in May 2010 has doubtless also contributed to an increased awareness of the dispute among the Japanese public (BBC 27th May 2010; Maquieira 2010; The Hague Justice Portal).

The significance of the high number of respondents in all three polls who said that “whale watching” came to mind when they thought of cetaceans is of particular interest, and will be considered in more detail later in this paper.

II. Commercial whaling

The second question on the survey asked respondents whether or not

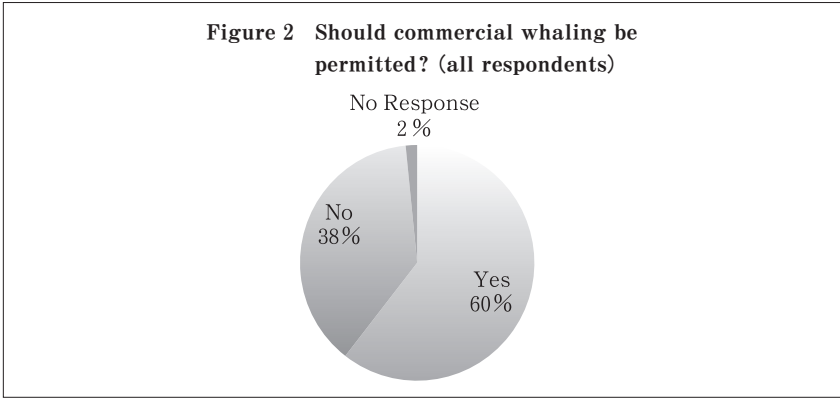


Figure 3 Should commercial whaling be permitted? (male respondents)

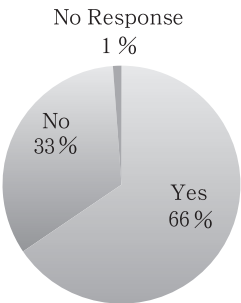
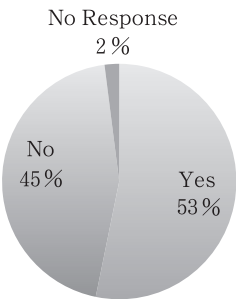


Figure 4 Should commercial whaling be permitted? (female respondents)



they felt that commercial whaling should be permitted. For reasons outlined below this particular question was framed in a simple yes/no format. In total, 309 respondents (60%) said that they were in favour of this form of whaling. When broken down by gender, there was a majority in favour among both male and female respondents, although support was markedly higher among males, with 171 (66%) answering in the affirmative, than females, with 133 (53%) expressing their approval.

Discussion

The degree to which the Japanese general public is supportive of a

resumption of whaling in its full-blown commercial form is a key question in the whaling debate. The yes/no format employed here allowed a direct comparison to be made with the results of two much larger scale global online polls conducted by the BBC and CNN. Both news organisations asked similar questions and reported that over 60% of respondents were in favour of a resumption of commercial whaling. In the CNN survey, a total of 24,457 people were asked if commercial whaling should be “re-introduced”, to which 14,870 (61%) replied “yes” and 9,587 (39%) “no” (CNN 20th May 2002). The BBC asked if commercial whaling should be “permitted”, with 67% of respondents answering in the affirmative and the remainder against (BBC News 6th June 2002).

The results of these two sizable polls do provide interesting parallels to the present survey, with the percentage of respondents in favour of commercial whaling being broadly similar. Other surveys conducted within Japan itself also produced comparable data. A nationwide telephone poll of 2,082 Japanese people conducted by the *Asahi Shimbun* reported that 65% of respondents said they supported “scientific” whaling, with 21% opposed. Two thirds of the men and 56% of the women surveyed expressed their support (*National Geographic News* 8th February 2008; *The Telegraph* 9th February 2008).

More recently, the popular Japanese streaming video website *Nico Nico Douga* conducted an online poll in which 92,430 people responded to the question “should Japan continue to defend whaling or shift to anti-whaling?” Sixty-seven per cent of the respondents said that it should do the former (72.5% of the men and 61.4% of women), 24% expressed no preference either way and just 9% said that an anti-whaling stance should be adopted (*Nico Nico Douga News* 7th January 2010). Another Japanese poll conducted in the following year for the Associated Press asked 1,000 people “do you favour, oppose or neither favour nor oppose commercial whaling, that is the killing of whales in order to sell their meat and to make products from their body parts?” The poll found that 52% were in favour, 35% neither favoured nor opposed the practice and 13% expressed

their opposition (Associated Press 2011).

The two Greenpeace Japan polls mentioned above invited respondents to “agree”, “disagree” or “neither agree nor disagree” with the resumption of commercial whaling. In the earlier of the two polls, 35% were in favour, 26% were against, and 39% of those surveyed were neither for nor against. The 2008 survey found 31% for, 25% against, and 44% in the “neither” camp (Greenpeace Japan 2006: 4; Greenpeace Japan 2008: 4).

It should be said at this stage in our discussion that a healthy degree of scepticism is always advisable when considering the results of public polls. In the case of online polls, multiple voting or other types of fraudulent activity can never be entirely ruled out. One must also bear in mind the geographical distribution of the respondents. In the AP poll for example, the sample was heavily weighted towards Japan’s two major cities, with a third of respondents from Greater Tokyo and 18% from Osaka. Different results may well have been produced had the poll focused more on rural areas, particularly those near the coast. That, of course, is also true for the survey results presented in this paper, with its population sample drawn exclusively from students studying in the Tokyo area.

The sequencing and wording of the questions, and the degree to which this may induce respondents to give the kind of answers that the organisation sponsoring the poll might be seeking, are also factors that need to be taken into account. In the case of the Greenpeace Japan surveys, for example, respondents were only asked to give their opinion on a resumption of commercial whaling at the very end of the questionnaire, after being informed in some of the preceding questions that the Japanese government was providing an annual subsidy of some 500 million yen to enable whaling to take place in “internationally designated sanctuaries”. They had also been told that endangered species were being targeted, and that the culling was being done “*in the name of* ecological research” [emphasis added].

Meanwhile, Greenpeace Asia-Pacific CEO Steve Shallhorn has criticized the wording of the *Asahi* survey, claiming that asking people

whether they agree with “scientific” whaling is much more likely to result in a positive response than asking them if they agree with “commercial” whaling (*The Telegraph* 9th February 2008). A similar case can be made against the positive pro-whaling tone employed in polls sponsored by the Japanese government. In its 2001 survey, we find interviewees being asked how far they would agree with whaling if it were “managed in a rational and sustainable way.” As many as 75% agreed with whaling operations when described in these terms, with 15% having no opinion and only 10% of respondents disagreeing (Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries 16th March 2002).

Another example of loaded questioning can be found in a poll commissioned by the anti-whaling group the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW), in which people living in the UK were questioned about their attitude towards Icelandic whaling. Rather than being asked simply whether or not they agreed with that country’s whaling programme, respondents were quizzed on how far they agreed with the statement “I disapprove of Iceland’s decision to kill whales.” Prior to giving their answer, respondents were informed that Iceland was using “exploding harpoons” and that the killing was taking place despite the existence of an international ban (Iceland had actually withdrawn from the IWC and was therefore technically no longer subject to the moratorium). With whaling thus portrayed as both a brutal and legally questionable practice, it is perhaps not surprising that some 82% of those surveyed replied that they did indeed disapprove of the hunt (IFAW 26th May 2009).

On occasion, accurate reportage of the data can also leave much to be desired. A case in point is a Greenpeace announcement, first made online in 2009, which stated that “69% of Japanese do not support whaling in the Southern Ocean” (Greenpeace International Website). The supporting evidence for this claim is derived from the above-mentioned 2006 Greenpeace Japan survey, which asked “do you agree or disagree with the idea to resume commercial whaling?” As we have already seen, 35% supported a resumption, with 26% opposed and 39% saying that they neither

support nor oppose it. The dubious lumping together of the “neither” group with those who clearly stated that they were opposed to any resumption is self-evident, yet at the time of writing this misinterpretation of the data remains on the Greenpeace website.

Some of the actors involved in the whaling debate apparently find it difficult to resist the temptation to employ persuasive language or other devices in order to obtain favourable data to buttress their particular agenda. The upshot, as we have seen, is that polls taken by different organisations tend to show contradictory results. Perhaps all that can be said in closing here is that in the present survey an effort was made to purge the questions of any persuasive or biased language. The results indicate that around 60% of respondents are favourable towards a resumption of commercial whaling (in some unspecified form), with more males than females holding this view. This is broadly in line with the Japan-based polls outlined above, and plots a similar level of support for commercial whaling to that recorded in the global polls conducted by the BBC and CNN.

III. Awareness of current Japanese whaling activities

The third section of the questionnaire sought to examine how well informed respondents were about the existence, scale and scope of current Japanese whaling activities. They were asked where they thought Japa-

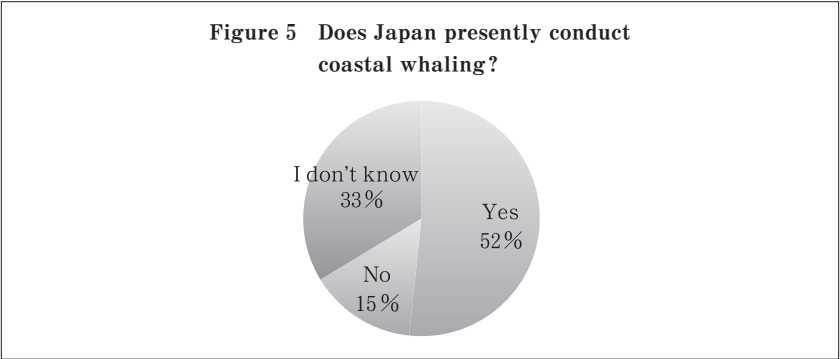


Figure 6 Does Japan presently conduct whaling in international waters?

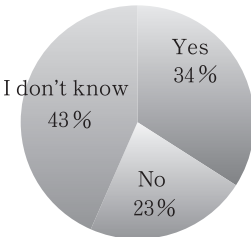


Figure 7 Does Japan presently hunt whales for scientific research?

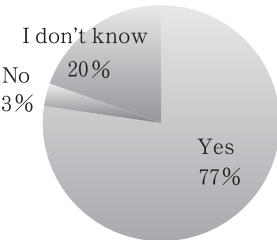
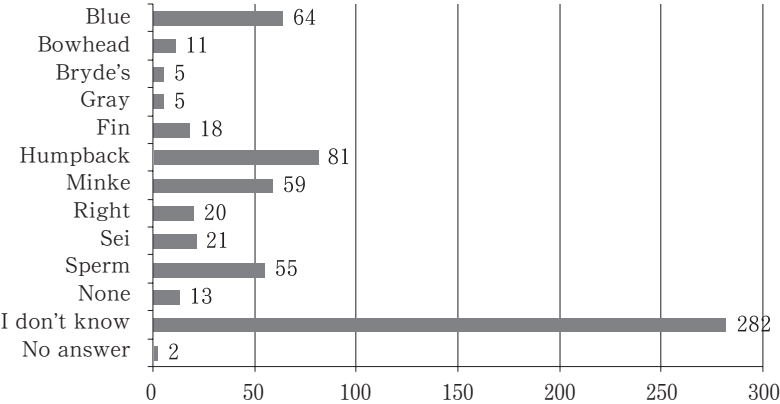
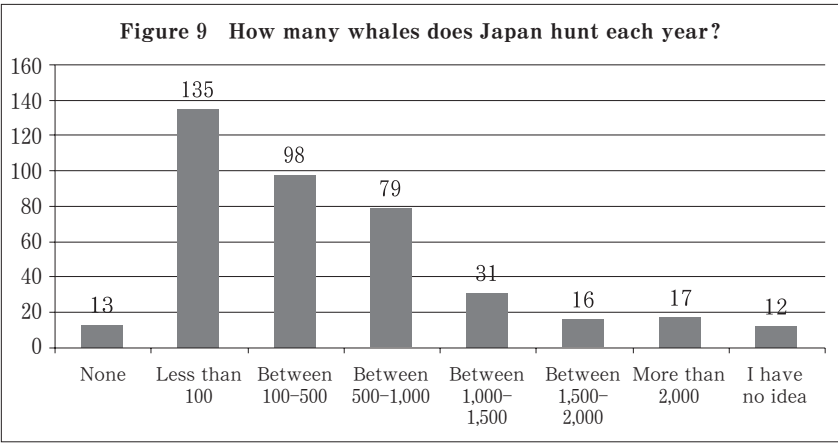


Figure 8 Which of these types of whales does Japan presently hunt?





nese whaling might take place, whether or not Japan is currently conducting scientific whaling, and the type and number of whales that are being hunted each year. The results can be seen in Figures 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9.

Discussion

Although Japan agreed to abide by the global moratorium on commercial whaling in 1986, it has continued to whale by invoking its right, under Article 8 of the International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling (ICRW), to undertake scientific research. This lethal research is carried out by the government-controlled Institute of Cetacean Research (ICR) and consists of the Japanese Whale Research Programme under Special Permit in the Antarctic (JARPA/JARPA II) and the Japanese Whale Research Programme under Special Permit in the North Pacific (JARPN/JARPN II). The regulations allow for the Japanese government to sell the meat obtained from the slaughtered whales, which is regarded as a by-product of the research, in order to cover some of the costs incurred. Needless to say, this is a highly contentious issue, and critics often condemn the research programmes as little more than commercial whaling in disguise.

Regarding the number of whales hunted each year, JARPA II, which

began in the austral summer season of 2009/10, currently permits a take of $850 \pm 10\%$ (+ or -10% allowance) Antarctic minke whales, 50 fin whales and 50 humpback whales annually. JARPEN II allows for a take of 100 common minke whales, 50 Bryde's whales and 10 sperm whales in the western North Pacific (IWC). Yielding to strong pressure from the United States, Japan suspended its planned take of humpbacks — an iconic species in the eyes of many anti-whaling campaigners — and to date has refrained from targeting them.

The annual catch data show that the actual number of cetaceans taken has fallen in recent years (see Appendix B). At the time of writing, the final figures for the 2011/12 season were still unavailable, but the Japan Fisheries Agency has already announced that the Antarctic fleet caught only 267 whales (266 minke and one fin) out of the usual target of approximately 900 cetaceans (BBC 9th March 2012). Therefore, the total take will most likely be lower than the previous year, mainly as a result of the increasingly disruptive activities of the Sea Shepard organisation in the Southern Ocean.

Nevertheless, between the commencement of the moratorium in 1985/86 and the end of the 2010/11 hunting season Japan had caught a total of 13,663 animals, and in the last five years for which full data is available an average of 810 whales per year have been taken under the special permit system. These figures do not include the 20,000 or so smaller cetaceans such as dolphins and porpoises taken annually in Japanese coastal waters, a practice lying outside the remit of IWC moratorium (IWC Website; Japan Fisheries Agency Report).

Given the widespread media coverage of the efforts of Sea Shepard and others to impede the Japanese scientific whaling programme in the Antarctic in recent years, it is perhaps not surprising that 77% of the students surveyed in the present poll were aware that the Japanese government is currently conducting scientific whaling. However, and perhaps this is a reflection of the lack of in-depth reporting of the issue by the Japanese media, when it comes to the details of the hunt, the respondents

were rather less well informed. A substantial number of them were unclear as to exactly where the whaling actually occurs. Only 174 (34%) were aware that Japanese whaling is conducted in international waters, with 222 (43%) saying that they did not know where the hunts were taking place. When asked if Japan conducts whaling in its own coastal waters, just over half (52%) of the respondents replied that it did.⁵

The survey also indicates that respondents are largely unaware of the actual species being caught. The majority (55%) said that they did not know, with only 12% correctly naming the minke as being targeted, despite the fact that this species makes up the vast bulk of the annual whaling quota. Sixteen per cent believed that the humpback was being killed (it is not, but is listed as a potential target in the catch quota), and 13% erroneously thought that the blue is being hunted (listed as endangered on the IUCN Red list of threatened species, Tokyo has frequently stated that this species requires absolute protection).

IV. Whaling Culture

The next section of the questionnaire relates to the so-called 'cultural argument' that has become something of a mainstay in the Japanese government's case for a resumption of commercial whaling. Respondents were asked the extent to which they feel that whaling is a traditional part of Japanese culture. A majority (58%) said that they either "agree" or "agree somewhat", 23% expressed some level of disagreement and 19% said they were undecided.

Questions 9 to 12 relate to *gyoshoku bunka*, or whale eating culture. A large majority of those surveyed said that they have little or no experience of eating whale meat, with 234 respondents (46%) having never eaten it, while another 213 (42%) have only ever eaten it between one and five times in their lives. Ten per cent said that they had eaten it within the last year. Fifty-two per cent expressed an interest in eating the meat if given the chance (40% "maybe yes" and 12% "definitely yes"), while 47% (40% "no" and 7% "definitely no") stated that they would not like to

Figure 10 What do you think of the following statement: ‘whaling is a traditional aspect of Japanese culture’?

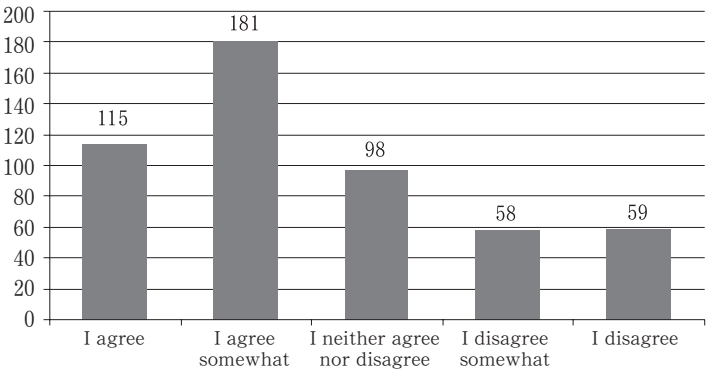


Figure 11 How many times have you eaten whale meat?

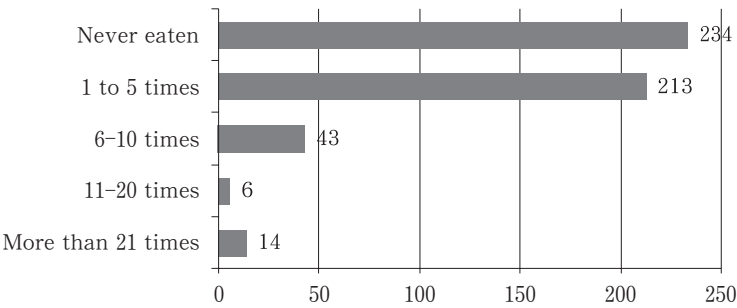
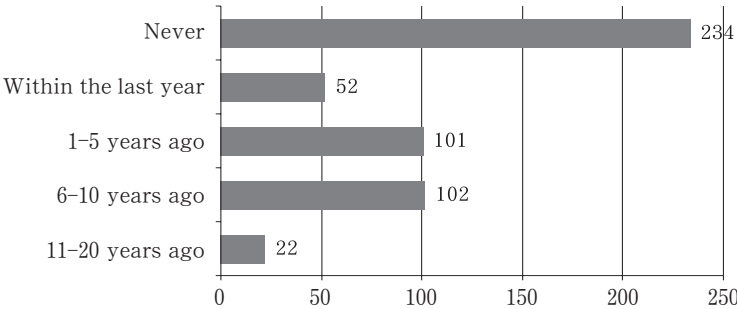
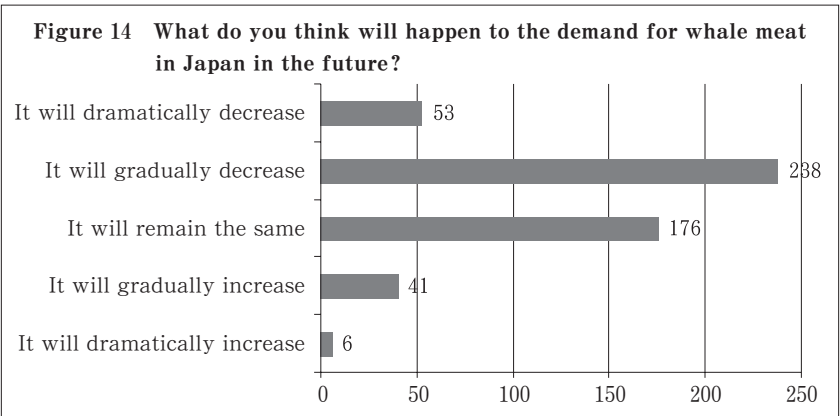
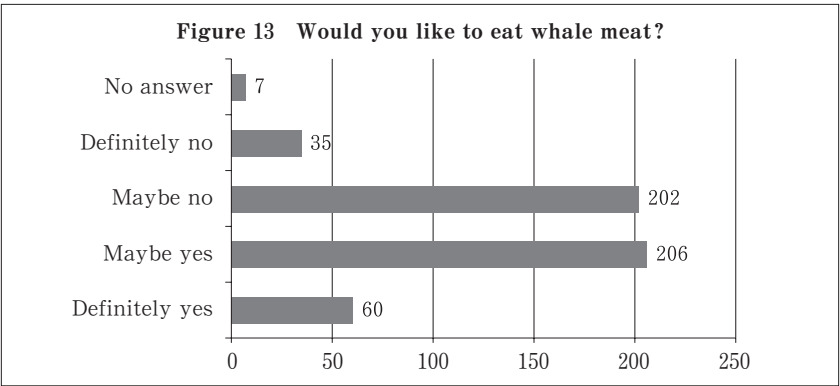


Figure 12 When was the last time you ate whale meat?





eat it.

The respondents were then given the opportunity to state why they were, or were not, interested in eating the meat, and a breakdown of the responses given can be seen in Tables 4 and 5 below. Although many of the students left this section of the questionnaire blank, quite a variety of reasons was obtained. It is interesting to note that the most common ones relate to positive or negative perceptions of the taste of the meat rather than any strong concerns about moral or environmental issues, or anxiety about dying Japanese traditions.

The majority of respondents said that they expect the future demand

Table 4 Reasons given for wanting to eat whale meat

Reason given	Number of respondents (in some cases more than one answer was given)
I want to try it / Because I have never eaten it / Curiosity	64
Because I like the taste / Because it is delicious	32
Because it is a part of Japanese tradition / culture	11
Because I heard that it tastes good	8
Because I cannot remember the taste / I want to try it again / Because I haven't eaten it in a long time	7
Because it is nutritious	3
Because the meat is inexpensive	3
Because the chances to eat it are limited	2
Because I want to eat an endangered animal	2
Because I like eating meat	1
Because there is no reason not to eat it	1

Table 5 Reasons given for not wanting to eat whale meat

Reason given	Number of respondents (in some cases more than one answer was given)
Because it doesn't taste good	41
Because I have heard that it doesn't taste good	33
Because I am not interested in eating it	21
Because there is no need to eat whale	11
Because I do not consider whale as food	8
Because whales are endangered	8
Because whaling is such a contentious topic	7
Because eating the meat is dangerous / The meat contains dioxins/poison	4
Because whales are special animals	4
Because other meat tastes better	2
Because I feel sorry for whales	3
Because the meat is expensive	3
Because I am a vegetarian	2
Because I am repulsed by the idea of eating whales	2
Because I do not like the colour/smell of the meat	2
I prefer to see whales alive	2
Because it is difficult to find the meat in the shops	1
Because I am against whaling	1
Because I am scared of Sea Shepard	1

for whale meat to either gradually decrease (46%) or dramatically decrease (11%), with 34% expecting it to remain the same while only 9% thought that it would rise in the future.

Discussion

The Japanese government often argues that the country's long history of whaling has nurtured a variety of culturally significant practices spanning art and literature, folk festivals and religious observance. Yet the most important and enduring aspect of this culture is said to be the uniquely Japanese *gyoshoku bunka*. As many foreign visitors to the country soon become aware, few things in Japan are as symbolically laden as food, and the various ways in which regional cuisines have developed are the source of great pride for many Japanese people.⁶ With regards to whaling, it has been argued that the traditions associated with the gifting of whale products and the consumption of the meat itself provide extremely important markers of group identity in Japanese whaling communities (Government of Japan 1991: 197; Kalland and Moeran 1992: 147).

Even Sea Shepherd's Paul Watson, one of the fiercest critics of Japanese whaling, acknowledges that some Japanese towns and villages can justifiably lay claim to a continuous whaling tradition stretching back hundreds of years, and it is within these communities that the strongest case for the importance of *gyoshoku bunka* can be made (Watson 2006). In the small whaling town of Ayukawa in Miyagi Prefecture, for instance, over 92% of people polled said that they like whale meat, with 98% stating that they had eaten it in the year before the moratorium came into effect (Government of Japan 1991: 209–212).

However, Watson and others assert that towns such as Ayukawa and Taiji in Wakayama Prefecture are far from typical, and that Japan's whaling traditions are extremely limited, both in terms of historical time and geographical range. They point to the fact that the practice of consuming whale meat only became widespread during a relatively short period after the Second World War, when the American occupation forces promoted

the consumption of whale in order to help avert a potential disaster caused by acute food shortages. During this time, whale meat became an indispensable source of protein in the Japanese diet, providing some 47% of total protein consumption (Abel 2006: 325).

Since that post war peak there has been a dramatic decline in annual whale meat consumption, which plummeted from 2,359 grammes per person in 1962 to 261 grammes in 1985, a fall of almost 90%. In 1985, just before the global whaling moratorium came into force, and a time when whale meat was still relatively plentiful, it made up a mere 0.017% of the total Japanese domestic consumption of marine products (Australian National Task Force on Whaling 1997: 14).

Data from this and many other polls indicate that most Japanese are unaccustomed to eating whale meat and are not particularly interested in incorporating it into their diet in the future. An *Asahi Shimbun* poll in 2002, for example, found that only 4% of a national sample of 3,000 said that they sometimes eat whale meat, 53% said they had eaten it “a long time ago” while 33% said that they had never eaten any whale products (The Free Library March 2002; *The Monthly* August 2006). Similarly, Greenpeace Japan’s 2008 nationwide survey reported that 56% of respondents stated that they had not eaten whale “for a long time” (although it is unclear exactly what time period this vague expression refers to), 23% said that they “sometimes” or “very rarely” eat the meat, and 22% said that they had never eaten it (Greenpeace Japan 2008: 10). More recently, an AP poll which asked respondents how interested they were in eating whale meat reported that 12% said they were “extremely interested”, 21% “moderately interested”, 26% “a little interested” and 41% “not interested at all” (Associated Press 2011).

This lack of interest in eating whale has resulted in large amounts of unsold meat being held in cold storage. Some disagreement exists over the exact amount of meat that is held in this way, but the figure is large and appears to be growing. Statistics from the Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Ministry in 2010 show that 4,918 tonnes of frozen whale meat

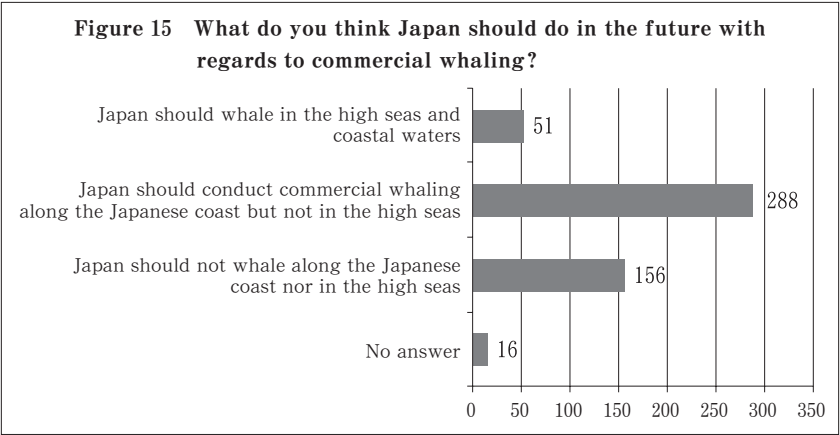
were stockpiled, and that amount had reportedly grown to somewhere between 5,790 to 6,000 tonnes a year later (*The Japan Times* 26th January 2010; ABC News 5th January 2011). More recently, it has been reported that 75% of whale meat was unsold at auction (*The Japan Times* 14th June 2012).

Japanese officials do not deny that much of the whale meat available for consumption remains in storage due to “sluggish sales” (*The Asahi Shimbun* 31st May, 2010). However, they insist that the historical and cultural significance of whaling remains. As one Fisheries Agency official put it, “even though most Japanese people do not wear Japanese kimono or go to watch Noh plays every day, they are undoubtedly part of Japanese culture. The contention that whale meat eating is not a part of Japanese culture since not all Japanese people eat the meat in everyday life, therefore, does not stand” (Morishita: 2003: 3).⁷

That may indeed be the case. However, for the Japanese government to achieve its stated aim of resuscitating the commercial whaling industry, a major boost in domestic demand will be required. The polling data suggests that this is unlikely to occur. A whole generation has grown up with little or no experience of eating whale, and which, on the basis of the evidence in this survey at least, foresees a future in which the demand for the meat is likely to decline still further.

V. The future of Japanese commercial whaling

The next section of the survey asked the students what Japan should do in the future with regards to commercial whaling. Only 51 people (10%) thought that Japan should whale in both the high seas and in Japanese coastal waters, 288 people (56%) replied that Japan should conduct commercial whaling along the Japanese coast but not in the high seas, while 156 people (31%) said they thought that no commercial whaling should take place at all.⁸



Discussion

Deadlock at the IWC over the issue of Japan’s whaling programme has continued for many years. The anti-whaling bloc remains determined to close the ‘loophole’ that allows Japan to conduct lethal scientific research, and turn the moratorium into a permanent ban. On the other side of the divide, the pro-whalers seek a return to the days of officially sanctioned whaling for profit, in both coastal and pelagic waters. Although neither side is content with the present situation, there appears to be little willingness to make the kind of significant concessions that would be required in order to alter the status quo. However, a potential solution to this diplomatic impasse, based around a controlled coastal hunt, does exist, and if the results of this particular survey are indicative of the population as a whole, it is one that the majority of the Japanese public would be likely to support.

A compromise involving coastal whaling is certainly not a new idea. Back in 1997, the Irish delegation to the IWC put forward a proposal whereby whaling nations such as Japan would be allowed to hunt within their respective 200 mile territorial waters in return for agreeing that the rest of the world’s oceans be designated as a whale sanctuary where no

hunting, 'scientific' or otherwise, would be allowed. The Irish also proposed that there would be no international trade in whale products that resulted from this coastal hunt (IWC Chairman's Report 1998: 35).

Although Japan and Norway did offer their guarded support for the idea at the time, saying that they were prepared to consider it in more detail, the proposal ultimately failed because countries such as the USA and Australia were unable to countenance the re-institution of commercial whaling in any shape or form. However, certain influential anti-whaling actors did indicate a willingness to move from their hitherto rigid preservationist (i.e. no whaling) position. The World Wide Fund for Nature, for example, was broadly supportive of the idea, stating:

Although the Irish initiative would effectively provide a seal of approval to some coastal whaling, it would ensure that whaling would remain strictly limited and stringently controlled. It would close the door on the aspirations of other countries which may presently be anticipating taking advantage of the growing anarchy swirling around the IWC. It would reaffirm the authority of the commission before it is too late. It is, in short, the whales last best hope.

(Seaweb June 1999)

Nevertheless, most anti-whaling countries, together with conservation groups such as Greenpeace and Sea Shepherd, remain adamantly opposed to any such proposal. They continue to insist on nothing short of a global whale sanctuary, which they argue would create a permanent safe haven for whales in all of the world's oceans. In the meantime, Japan, by way of its scientific whaling programme, together with Norway and Iceland, by lodging formal objections to the moratorium, continue to hunt whales in defiance of the ban.

VI. Whale Watching

The next section of the questionnaire relates to whale watching. As

we saw earlier, 40% of the respondents replied that this relatively new branch of the tourism industry came to mind when they heard the word ‘whale’. A very large majority (463 people, or 91%) said that they had never been whale watching, but many (370, or 72%) expressed an interest in taking part in such a trip.

Discussion

The growing popularity of whale watching, and what effect this may have upon attitudes towards whaling, has attracted considerable attention in recent years. In the first major report into the global whale watching industry, published back in 2001, Erich Hoyt calculated that it had

Figure 16 Have you ever been on a whale watching trip?

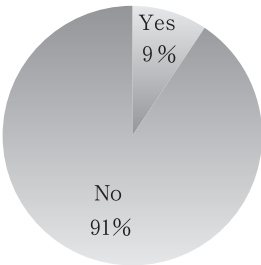
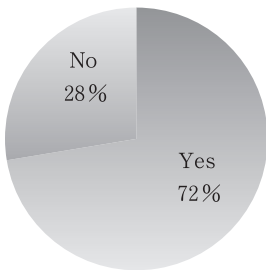


Figure 17 Would you like to go on a whale watching trip?



already grown into a \$1 billion a year business. At that time, his research showed that whale watching tours were being conducted in 492 coastal towns around the world, thereby providing “valuable, sometimes crucial, income to a community [along with] a sense of identity and considerable pride” (Hoyt 2001: 3).

Within Japanese coastal waters, whale watching reportedly grew much faster than the average global rate throughout the 1990s. Between 1994 and 1998, it registered a 16.8% rise, and from 1991 to 1998 the annual average increase was an even more impressive 37.6%. In 1998, some 102,785 Japanese went whale and dolphin watching, spending an estimated \$33 million. The most commonly watched cetaceans were humpbacks, Bryde’s, minke, and sperm whales, as well as bottlenose and other dolphins. According to Hoyt, Ogata and the Ogasawara islands are the main centres for whale watching in Japan. The former recorded its 100,000th whale watcher in the year 2000, while Ogasawara attracted 12,000 whale watchers in 1999 (Hoyt 2001: 4–5).

More recently, it has been reported that 13 million people went whale watching in 2008, generating global revenues in excess of \$2.1 billion. The Australian organisation Economists at Large, which compiled a report for the International Fund for Animal Welfare, estimated that 3,300 operators were offering these trips in 119 countries and territories, thereby providing employment to around 13,200 people (IFAW 2009).

In a decade that had witnessed substantial disruption to world travel due to events such as the 9/11 attacks in the USA, the travel concerns generated by SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome), and the global credit crisis, the report went on to say that the industry had nevertheless grown at an average rate of 3.7% per annum between 1998 and 2008. The fastest growth occurred in Asia, which saw a 17% yearly increase. Within Japan itself, which has the largest cetacean watching industry in Asia by total expenditure, the report states that whale watching grew at an average rate of 6.4% per year (IFAW 2009: 23–24; 135; 141).

The growth in the popularity of whale watching inevitably leads one

to consider what effect greater familiarity with whales in the wild is likely to have upon the public's attitude towards whaling in general. Surveys conducted in other parts of the world seem to indicate that whale watchers react negatively to commercial whaling and are likely to be reluctant to go on whale watching cruises in countries where whaling takes place. In Tonga, for example, 83% of yacht-borne visitors and 95% of aircraft-borne holidaymakers were opposed to the commercial hunting of whales (Orams 2001). Meanwhile in Iceland, 91.4% of whale watchers said that they would not take a whale watching trip if that country resumed its commercial whale hunt (Parsons and Rawles 2003).

In fact, evidence suggests that tourists may even boycott trips to such whaling countries altogether. Therefore, in addition to whale watching itself, whaling activities could impact on other forms of tourism and tourism-related sectors (Herrer and Hoagland 2006). However, unlike many other whale watching destinations in Asia, nearly all whale watching tourists in Japan are domestic nationals (IFAW 2009: 135). With little need to be concerned about the potential sensitivities of incoming foreign tourists, the official Japanese government line is that whale watching and whale eating are not mutually exclusive. As Masayuki Komatsu, the former Director of Research and Environment Protection of the Fisheries Agency and Deputy IWC Commissioner, puts it: "first, you go whale watching. Then, on shore, you go eat whale sushi!" (*The New York Times* 19th October 2002). That view is shared by Rod Campbell, who states that in Japan "dolphin watchers are often day-trippers and families, who have fun watching the playful dolphins, without considering the issues that trouble the pro- and anti-whaling factions. Dolphin watching is fun and lucrative" (IFAW 2009: 142).

Yet if there were to be a return to full scale commercial whaling in Japanese coastal waters, perhaps along the lines of the Irish Proposal mentioned above, then the supposed compatibility of the two industries would be severely tested. Quite apart from the attitude of whale watching tourists, there is the issue of practicality. Whales swimming in areas where

whalers are active are likely to be less abundant and more wary of any and all boats, thereby diminishing the chances of a close whale watching encounter. Moreover, it follows that the most inquisitive whales, which are more likely to swim close to tourist boats, are also the ones most likely to be killed by the whalers.

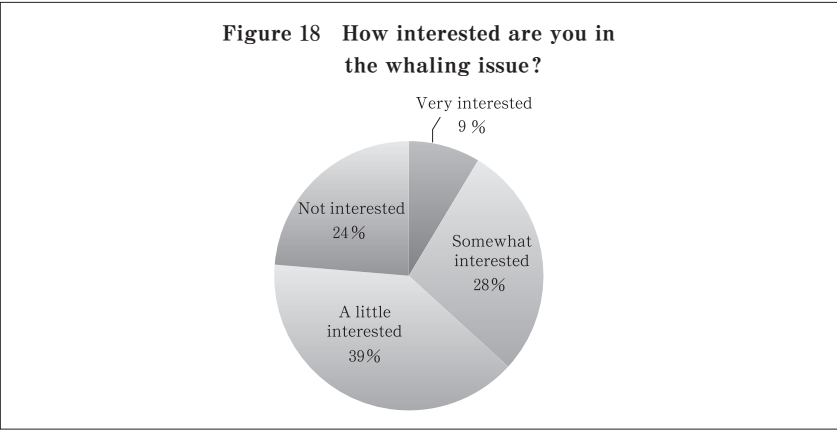
The Japanese authorities may well be underestimating the influence that whaling can have upon the whale watching public. As has been seen in Iceland, if coastal whalers ply their trade in the same waters as whale watching boats, there is an increased chance of the two directly meeting, a situation likely to lead to stronger negative attitudes among whale watchers towards whaling. In much the same way as a meat eater may be forced to question his dietary preferences upon witnessing the reality of the slaughter process in an abattoir, so too may whale watchers have their attitudes towards whaling challenged upon witnessing firsthand the bloody reality of a harpoon strike.

VII. Interest in the whaling issue

The final question in the survey asked how interested the respondents were in the topic of whaling. In total, 390 of them expressed some degree of interest, with 44 saying that they were “very interested”, 144 saying that they were “somewhat interested”, and 202 replying that they were “a little interested.” Almost a quarter (121 respondents) said that they were not interested in the issue.

Discussion

Amidst a backdrop of news dominated by stories of continued economic contraction, falling birthrates and post-Fukushima radiation fears one would hardly expect respondents to place whaling high on their list of pressing national problems. Nevertheless, the majority of the students surveyed here do say that they have some interest in the whaling issue. Not surprisingly, interest is highest when something spectacular happens in the high seas, and this is reflected in a *Nico Nico* poll which reported



that 60.7% of respondents were following the story of a collision in the Southern Ocean between a Japanese coastguard vessel operating alongside the whaling fleet and the *Ady Gil*, a Sea Shepard speedboat (*Nico Douga News* 7th January 2010).

Conclusion

This paper set out to investigate prevailing attitudes towards whaling within Japan, particularly among the young. It has attempted to assess how well informed the Japanese are about the whaling issue, how much interest they have in the whaling debate, and whether the polling data presented here and in other surveys can provide any useful insights into the possibility of a negotiated settlement to this fractious international dispute.

The conclusion reached is that a majority of the students polled here do seem to be in favour of a resumption of whaling in its commercial form, and that this appears to be consistent with other polls taken of the Japanese general public. However, differing responses to this question can all too easily be obtained according to the way in which the wording is framed and presented by the organisation conducting or sponsoring the

poll.

With regards to the level of awareness and interest in whaling, Morikawa has stated that the Japanese public “seems to spend very little time thinking about the whaling issue at all and its knowledge is shallow at best” (Morikawa 2009: 74). The polling results presented here partly back up this view. The respondents were reasonably conversant with the basic facts, if not some of the salient details, of the Japanese whaling programme. Nearly 80% of them were aware that Japan has been conducting a programme of scientific research which involves the killing of some whales. There was confusion, however, as to exactly where the hunting takes place, with over 40% erroneously believing that the whaling fleet was not active in international waters, although more than half of those asked were aware that some form of hunting does take place in Japanese coastal waters. There was a general underestimation of the number of whales killed each year and a great deal of ignorance as to the species of whale being targeted.

The polling data does seem to indicate that Morikawa has underestimated the level of interest in the topic, with 66% of respondents in the present survey expressing some degree of interest, although only 9% proclaimed themselves to have a strong interest in the subject.

Regarding the consumption of whale meat, polling data shows that few have eaten it in the recent past, and although just over half of the respondents surveyed here say they would be interested in eating it, most think that demand for the meat will decrease in the future. This writer feels that it would be a mistake to conclude that those respondents who say they do not want to eat whale meat necessarily think that it is *wrong* for others to do so. Japan is a country with quite distinct regional variations when it comes to food, and the Japanese tend to feel a great deal of pride in this culinary heritage. The majority of people in the big cities such as Tokyo do not eat whale, while many people living in traditional whaling communities such as Taiji do. The evidence seems to suggest that although geographically far removed from the few whaling towns

where the meat is still widely consumed, many city dwellers accept that people living in such towns should be free to eat whale if they so wish.

The growing interest in whale watching evidenced in this and other polls is an intriguing trend. There is no doubt that the Japanese, along with many other people around the world, are showing signs of a growing, non-consumptive, interest in whales and other marine mammals, and the business of shipping tourists out to see the animals in their natural environment now generates more revenue than the whaling industry itself (IFAW 2009). But it is unclear whether this will lead to the sort of attitudinal shift within Japan that the Australian National Task Force on Whaling envisioned when it asserted that the conservation and protection of whales is now accepted as a hallmark of a “civilized, ethical and moral community” (Australian Task Force 1997: 8–15).

Many of those who oppose Japanese whaling argue that the world is moving towards a new anti-whaling norm, but for the Japanese themselves the whale is not necessarily seen as being a ‘special’, human-like, spiritual or particularly friendly animal. Just as one may enjoy a visit to an aquarium in the morning and then eat fish in a restaurant for lunch, so there is no perceived contradiction in the act of watching a whale one day and then eating it the next.

Finally, although drawn from a relatively small population sample, the polling data presented here does suggest that there is general support for some kind of a compromise deal, in which IWC sanctioned whaling around the Japanese coast would be allowed in return for a cessation of all pelagic whaling. Although potential damage to the whale watching industry is an unknown quantity that needs to be considered very carefully, such an agreement would go some way to meeting the aspirations of both sides in the great whaling debate. It would provide the Japanese authorities with a face saving way to end its loss making and highly contentious Antarctic hunt and, if the overall numbers of great whales killed each year were to fall, would appease at least some on the anti-whaling side.

The general terms of a potential deal are well known and IWC mem-

ber states have debated a compromise package based around coastal whaling on several occasions in recent years. However, a pragmatic agreement seems as far away as ever. With neither side willing to yield ground in a meaningful way, the bitterly fought war over leviathan still shows no sign of abating.

Notes

- 1 The responses from these students do not form part of the final results presented here.
- 2 Multiple choice close-ended questions were preferred to open-ended ones since they are faster and easier to administer, and produce responses that are more easily analysed.
- 3 A small number of non-Japanese students also completed the questionnaire, but their responses have been filtered out since the purpose of the study was to investigate the opinions and attitudes of native Japanese university students.
- 4 The American cable channel 'Animal Planet' occasionally screens a documentary-style reality TV programme following the exploits of the Sea Shepherd Organisation in Antarctic waters, which it calls 'Whale Wars'.
- 5 This answer can be considered correct in the sense that some cetaceans are indeed being hunted in these waters. The moratorium prevents Japan hunting any of the so-called 'great whales' in its coastal waters, but the culling of smaller animals such as pilot whales and dall's porpoises does occur since it is unregulated by the International Whaling Commission.
- 6 Food can play this role even in countries where it might not be thought of as an obvious source of cultural pride. See for example the rancour surrounding the designation of sausages in Austria and Slovenia (BBC News 13th April 2012).
- 7 See Hobsbawn and Ranger (1983) for a thought-provoking description of how traditions are not necessarily as natural or self-evident as one might think. Tradition can be something that is constructed to implant certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, thereby suggesting continuity with the past.
- 8 Given that 38% of the students said that they were against commercial whaling earlier in the survey, clearly there is some inconsistency in the answers given here.

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(英語教育／法学部准教授)

Appendix A Survey Questions

このアンケートは、クジラと捕鯨についての研究のためのものです。以下の質問に全部お答えください。多くの質問には確かな答が見つからないかもしれません。その時は忌憚ないご意見を書いてください。回答いただいた内容は個人情報につき、一切の公表は致しませんので、宜しくお願い致します。

(This questionnaire is part of my research on attitudes towards whales and whaling. I would be most grateful if you could answer all the questions. In many cases there is no 'right answer' so feel free to give your own opinions. Your answers will be dealt with confidentially.)

Q 1. クジラと聞くとどんなイメージが思い浮かびますか。(複数回答可)

(What image comes to mind when you hear the word 'whale'? Feel free to select as many choices as you wish)

- ☐ クジラが陸に乗り上げる (Beached whales)
- ☐ 商業捕鯨 (Commercial whaling)
- ☐ 稀少動物 (Endangered animal)
- ☐ 国際論争 (International controversy)
- ☐ 調査のための捕鯨 (Scientific whaling)
- ☐ 特別な動物 (Special animal)
- ☐ 自然保護 (Wildlife protection)
- ☐ クジラ料理 (Whale dishes)
- ☐ ホエールウォッチング (Whale watching)
- ☐ 特になし (Nothing in particular)
- ☐ その他何かあれば、詳しく記入してください (Other. Please specify)

Q 2. 商業捕鯨を認めますか

(Should commercial whaling be permitted?)

- ☐ はい (Yes)
- ☐ いいえ (No)

- Q 3. 今、日本は日本の海域で捕鯨をしていると思いますか
(Does Japan presently conduct whaling in Japanese coastal waters?)
- ☐ はい (Yes)
- ☐ いいえ (No)
- ☐ わからない (I don't know)
- Q 4. 今、日本は日本海域以外で捕鯨をしていると思いますか
(Does Japan presently conduct whaling in international waters?)
- ☐ はい (Yes)
- ☐ いいえ (No)
- ☐ わからない (I don't know)
- Q 5. 今、日本は調査捕鯨をしていると思いますか
(Does Japan presently hunt whales for scientific research?)
- ☐ はい (Yes)
- ☐ いいえ (No)
- ☐ わからない (I don't know)
- Q 6. 捕鯨は日本の伝統文化と言われていますがどう思いますか
(What do you think of the following statement: 'Whaling is a traditional aspect of Japanese culture')
- ☐ そう思う (I agree)
- ☐ どちらかというとその思う (I agree somewhat)
- ☐ どちらとも思わない (I neither agree nor disagree)
- ☐ どちらかというと思わない (I disagree somewhat)
- ☐ 思わない (I disagree)
- Q 7. 日本はどのクジラを捕鯨をしていると思いますか
(Which of these types of whales does Japan presently hunt?)
- ☐ シロナガスクジラ (Blue)
- ☐ ホッキョククジラ (Bowhead)

- [] ニタリクジラ (Bryde's)
- [] グレークジラ (Gray)
- [] ナガスクジラ (Fin)
- [] ザトウクジラ (Humpback)
- [] ミンクジラ (Minke)
- [] セミクジラ (Right)
- [] イワシクジラ (Sei)
- [] マッコウクジラ (Sperm)
- [] 現在日本では捕鯨をしていない (Japan does not presently hunt any whales)
- [] わからない (I don't know)

Q 8. 一年で日本は何頭捕鯨していると思いますか
(About how many whales does Japan hunt each year?)

- [] していない (None)
- [] 100 頭以下 (Less than 100)
- [] 100～500 頭 (Between 100 to 500)
- [] 500～1000 頭 (Between 500 to 1,000)
- [] 1000～1500 頭 (Between 1,000 to 1,500)
- [] 1500～2000 頭 (Between 1,500 to 2,000)
- [] 2000 頭以上 (More than 2,000)
- [] まったくわからない (I have no idea)

Q 9. 今までに、クジラの肉を何回くらい食べましたか
(How many times have you eaten whale meat?)

- [] 食べたことはない (Never)
- [] 1～5 回 (1 to 5 times)
- [] 6～10 回 (6 to 10 times)
- [] 11～20 回 (11 to 20 times)
- [] 21 回以上 (More than 21 times)

Q 10. 最後にクジラの肉を食べたのはいつですか

(When was the last time you ate whale meat?)

- ☐ 食べたことはない (I have never eaten whale meat)
- ☐ 1 年以内 (Within the last year)
- ☐ 1～5 年以内 (Between 1 to 5 years ago)
- ☐ 6～10 年以内 (Between 6 to 10 years ago)
- ☐ 11～20 年以内 (Between 11 to 20 years ago)
- ☐ 21 年以上前 (More than 21 years ago)

Q 11. クジラの肉を食べたいですか

(Would you like to eat whale meat?)

- ☐ Definitely yes (ぜひ食べたい)
- ☐ Maybe yes (食べたい)
- ☐ Maybe no (たぶん食べたくない)
- ☐ Definitely no (ぜったい食べたくない)

Please give a reason for your answer (理由を書いてください)

Q 12. 将来、日本でクジラの肉の需要はどうかと思いますか。

(What do you think will happen to the demand for whale meat in Japan in the future?)

- ☐ すごく増える (It will dramatically increase)
- ☐ どちらかというが増える (It will gradually increase)
- ☐ 同じ (It will remain the same)
- ☐ どちらかというが減る (It will gradually decrease)
- ☐ すごく減る (It will dramatically decrease)

Q 13. 将来、日本は商業捕鯨をどうするべきだと思いますか

(What do you think Japan should do in the future with regards to commercial whaling?)

- ☐ 日本は国際領域、日本領域のどこ海でも商業捕鯨をすべきだ (Japan should conduct commercial whaling in the high seas as well as along the Japanese coast)
- ☐ 日本は日本領域内の海だけで商業捕鯨をするべきだ (Japan should

conduct commercial whaling along the Japanese coast but not in the high seas)

- ☐ 日本はどちらの海域でも商業捕鯨をすべきではない (Japan should not conduct commercial whaling either along the Japanese coast or in the high seas)

Q 14. クジラウォッチングツアーに参加したことがありますか (Have you ever been on a whale watching trip?)

- ☐ はい (Yes)
☐ いいえ (No)

Q 15. クジラウォッチングツアーに行ってみたいですか
(Would you like to go on a whale watching trip?)

- ☐ はい (Yes)
☐ いいえ (No)

Q 16. 捕鯨討論にはどれぐらい興味がありますか
(How interested are you in the whaling issue?)

- ☐ 大変興味がある (Very interested)
☐ 興味がある (Somewhat interested)
☐ 少しは興味がある (A little interested)
☐ 興味はない (Not interested)

最後に以下の内容を記入してください (Finally, please complete the following)

性別 (Gender)

- ☐ 男性 (Male)
☐ 女性 (Female)

Age (年齢)

- ☐ (15～19 歳) (15-19 years old)
- ☐ (20～24 歳) (20-24 years old)
- ☐ (25～29 歳) (25-29 years old)
- ☐ (30～34 歳) (30-34 years old)

国籍 (Nationality)

- ☐ 日本 (Japanese)
- ☐ 中国 (Chinese: Mainland China)
- ☐ 台湾 (Chinese: Taiwan)
- ☐ 韓国 (Korean)
- ☐ その他具体的に (Other: please specify)

Appendix B Japanese Special Permit Catches

	Area	Dates	Fin	Sperm	Sei	Brydes	Minke	Total
2006 (2006/07)								
pelagic	NP	May-Aug 06	0	6	101	51	100	258
coastal	NP	Apr-Oct 06	0	0	0	0	97	97
pelagic	SH	Dec 06-Feb 07	3	6	0	0	508	511
Total			3	6	101	51	705	866

	Area	Dates	Fin	Sperm	Sei	Brydes	Minke	Total
2007 (2007/08)								
pelagic	NP	Apr-Oct 07	0	3	100	50	100	253
coastal	NP	May-Aug 07	0	0	0	0	108	108
pelagic	SH	Dec 07-Mar 08	0	0	0	0	551	551
Total			0	3	100	50	759	912

	Area	Dates	Fin	Sperm	Sei	Brydes	Minke	Total
2008 (2008/09)								
pelagic	NP	Jun-Aug 08	0	2	100	50	59	211
coastal	NP	Apr-Oct 08	0	0	0	0	112	112
pelagic	SH	Dec 08-Mar 09	1	0	0	0	680	681
Total			1	2	100	50	851	1,004

	Area	Dates	Fin	Sperm	Sei	Brydes	Minke	Total
2009 (2009/10)								
pelagic	NP	May-Jul 09	0	1	101	50	43	195
coastal	NP	Apr-Oct 09	0	0	0	0	122	122
pelagic	SH	Dec 09-Mar 10	1	0	0	0	507	508
Total			1	1	101	50	672	825

	Area	Dates	Fin	Sperm	Sei	Brydes	Minke	Total
2010 (2010/11)								
pelagic	NP	Jun-Aug 10	0	3	100	50	14	167
coastal	NP	Apr-Oct 10	0	0	0	0	105	105
pelagic	SH	Dec 10-Feb 11	2	0	0	0	171	173
Total			2	3	100	50	290	445

Source: IWC (Special Catch Permits Since 1985)

http://iwcoffice.org/conservation/table_permit.htm