

Heroic Whalers Hunting Whale-Mothers: Gender in the Early-Modern Japanese Whaling Industry

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Abstract:

This paper reconsiders the overwhelmingly masculine business of whaling in Tokugawa Japan (1603-1868) and the ways that gender played a role in the process of whaling, in the uses of some of its products, and in ideas about whales themselves. The gender divisions within whaling groups paradoxically are often overlooked because women barely appear in Japanese whaling sources. While other nations' whaling industries were also centered on men, baleen had a major influence on women's fashion in Europe and America. However, Japanese uses of baleen remained within the more male-centered cultural sphere. At the same time, rethinking Japanese whaling as a gendered practice helps explain the ways that whales themselves were equated with women through cultural expectations about women's roles like caring for children. The intersectionality of shared marine environments and cultural specifics explored here highlights the importance of considering both labor and gender roles within maritime spaces.

As maritime historian Lisa Norling notes, "Seafaring has traditionally for centuries, maybe for millennia been one of the most rigidly and completely gender segregated of all forms of labor."¹

As a result, stereotypes associated with seafaring are so thoroughly male that the gender divide has become naturalized and ahistorical. And as Elliott Gorn points out for the American whaling industry, "so long as virtually men alone were whalers, we do not bother to think about gender...why did this particular occupation end up being so gendered that we hardly can imagine it otherwise[?]"² The same could be asked about whaling in early modern Japan (approximately concurrent with the Tokugawa period, 1603-1868), where nearly all of the sources about whaling focus on men, leaving the question of women's roles generally ignored.

Despite these calls to reconsider gender roles and the impacts of gender divisions in the history of maritime labor (including whaling), the greatest recent interest in this topic appears to be

focused more on contemporary maritime policy and fisheries management.³ More work needs to be done by historians thinking about the impacts of highly gendered spaces of maritime labor on commodities and cultures in the past. Speaking particularly about American whaling culture, Norling argues that "seafaring has traditionally been one of the most strikingly gendered pursuits," and calls for a reexamination of historical gender roles in maritime spaces in order to rethink the "symbolic importance and the substantive absence of women from maritime culture then and from most maritime history now."⁴ Clearly for Norling, the fact that the majority of people going to sea in ships were men was a major contributing factor to the stark gender divide in American whaling as well as other seafaring labor. Although early modern Japanese whaling was shore-based rather than ship-based, with the boats coming back to land at the end of the day, interestingly, these whalers maintained the same stark gender division with men on the boats and women on the shore, begging the question of how much of this gender division comes from the structure of the whaling process, and how much from coincidental similarities in different cultures' approaches to the ocean. Close examination of specific cultural adaptations (like a particular type of whaling) to the problems of maritime labor can help mitigate the tendency to flatten the maritime environment into a monolithic space and the assumption that working on and in the ocean naturally must always result in similar pressures for gender division across many cultures and eras.

The gender division within Tokugawa whaling influenced the kinds of interactions that people might have with whales and their products during the period. Tracing gender's impact on the culture of the period more broadly is more difficult than in the case of the much more well-documented American whaling industry of the same general era. However, enough sources remain to gesture towards ways in which Tokugawa men and women could have developed

different perspectives on whales and on the whaling industry arising from the gendered division of labor by whalers. Although modern Japanese whaling is organized very differently, with far less connection to local village populations, surveys of attitudes towards whaling in Japan today show that perspectives now on the relationship between whales and people are still somewhat divided by gender. For example, a 2009 survey of Japanese students found that male students approved of whaling mostly for intangible reasons (because whaling culture is important, for example) while female students were much more inclined to disapprove of the more practical issue of serving whale meat to children, and to disagree with pro-whaling rhetoric from the whaling industry.⁵

Since it is not possible to survey people of the Tokugawa period on their attitudes towards whales or on how their gender influenced their interactions with whales, the kinds of questions we can answer about the earlier whaling industry are not the same as those that apply to the gendered perception of whaling today. Instead, there are a few very different areas of investigation which hint at the spaces where the intersection of whales and gender might be most fruitful in historical Japan. These include the role of women in distributing whale products and in supporting whaling groups without going out on the water, the ways that products like baleen reflected broader gendered cultural roles, and the ways that whales were interpreted as human-like gendered beings and fit into human perceptions of the natural world.

Gendered Whalers

Beginning with the gender-divided process of catching whales, whale products and curiosity about whales and whalers circulated throughout Japan and influenced the broader culture of the Tokugawa period.⁶ Along with other newly specialized fisheries, such as for herring or bonito, whaling became important as part of a general expansion of the use of coastal resources during

this period. Initially, whales were hunted by a coordinated group of small open rowboats that would chase and surround their target, throwing harpoons at the whale to injure and slow it down. The final killing blow was made by a harpooner who leapt from the boat onto the back of the injured whale and stabbed it with a long blade. By 1675, whalers added a net set between boats in open water, into which they drove the whale, harpooning it once the whale was thoroughly entangled and slowed (Figure 1). At least some of the founders of whaling groups were former warriors who, with the advent of the Tokugawa peace, transferred their martial skills to whale killing rather than human warfare.



Figure 1: Men of the Ikitsukishima whaling group attacking an entangled whale cow-calf pair. Oyamada Tomokiyo, Isanatori ekotoba (Edo, 1832) vol 2 p 26 at <https://dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/2576169> Courtesy of the National Diet Library of Japan.

This may explain why the rise of whaling groups coincided with the gradual centralization of power over the warring states, with its most extensive growth only after the Tokugawa peace, and also why the whaling boats only contained men. As the country withdrew from overseas

military activity, samurai who had comprised the naval forces and acquired maritime experience, but renounced their status and become commoners with the pacification of the country, searched for occupations suitable for their skills. Some found they could apply their fighting skills in the planning and execution of coordinated attacks on whales.

Harpoon and net whaling both required more than just naval fighting skills, however, so the lack of women in the actual whale hunting portion of the group's work cannot entirely be explained by an assumption that only men could be warriors. Each group situated people in three different areas: out on the water, at shore-based lookout and signaling posts, and on the beach processing captured whales. On average, each harpoon whaling group employed a total of around 300 people, both on the water and on the shore.⁷ Each one of the whaleboats generally had around a dozen crew aboard, with somewhere between 10 and 20 boats used by any given harpoon group.⁸ The rest of the personnel required included a small group of shore lookouts and managers, and a much larger group of less-skilled people required to cut up and process the whale parts on the beach and in the processing sheds (Figure 2). They also required funding, which meant ties to merchants or local elites with enough capital to help pay for the equipment required before any whales could be caught and sold. Net whaling groups were often bigger than harpoon groups, because they still used chaser boats similar to the only style of boat used in harpoon whaling, but also required net boats to set out the entangling net, plus a pair of lashed-together boats to tow the entangled whale to shore (nets allowed whalers to catch the less buoyant and faster humpback and gray whales, which sink when dead, unlike right whales that were the main target of harpoon whaling groups). In the nineteenth century, Taiji's net whaling group had 300 crew in the boats alone (rather than combined with the shore processing numbers).⁹ The groups in the Saikai area of Kyushu were even larger, with some sending out over fifty boats.¹⁰ The number of

whales a group that large could catch required even more people on shore for processing, including day laborers for whom the records are sparse. One count of a Kyushu whaling group estimated that the land-side members totaled upwards of 113 people with anywhere from 200 to 370 additional day laborers.¹¹ Thus, the shift to net whaling in the late seventeenth century also meant a shift in the degree of local involvement in whaling, since more and more people were drawn in as workers.



Figure 2: Processing a whale on the beach in Ikitsukishima, Kyushu. Oyamada Tomokiyo, *Isanatori ekotoba* (Edo, 1832) vol 2 p 34 at <https://dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/2576169> Courtesy of the National Diet Library of Japan.

Most of the people involved in the whaling group were men, but not all of them. One fisheries historian argues that whaling developed as a specifically male specialty in tandem with the development of abalone diving as a specialty for women in Mikawa and Ise Bays, where the first whaling groups also appeared, which may explain why whaling groups specifically excluded

women from the boat crews. Women were sometimes employed in making nets or otherwise preparing gear for the whaling season, and in some cases as part of the mass of day laborers in the processing sheds during the whaling season, even though none worked in the boats themselves.¹² This gendered division of labor gets very little consideration in general histories of Japanese whaling, in part because there is very little discussion of women's roles in whaling groups within the primary sources. Still, with a strong gender division within Japanese society at this time, it could be productive to reconsider not just where women fit into whaling groups, but also the ways that whaling, as a presumed male-only occupation, reified masculine ideals. There are some gestures towards whalers as models of masculinity in the postwar period (when there was much more concern about the feminization of defeated Japan under American occupation), but it could be useful to also consider the ways that valorization of the warrior hero harpooners served a similar purpose in an earlier cultural context.¹³

The few references to women's roles in Tokugawa whaling indicate that, while they were not part of the groups' activity on the water, they could be involved in processing the whale onshore and in distributing whale meat, at least in the region near a whaling village. Images of processing whales show that women and children would sometimes steal fresh meat from a whale carcass, implying in those cases that they were not directly involved in the whaling group.¹⁴ Women peddlers carried products from fishing villages and houseboats up into the mountains.¹⁵ At least one reference remains from an official traveling to the whaling village of Taiji in 1717, who noted: "On the way [to Taiji] I saw a rustic old village wife carrying a bamboo winnowing basket with some small packets. Inside all of these was whale meat. I asked her, and she said that the other day in Taiji village, they succeeded in catching two large whales." Unfortunately, this is all the detail he provides, so it is unclear whether the meat was for her own use or whether she was

one of these local peddlers.¹⁶ While these references are not nearly as broad as those we have for men's roles in whaling, they do hint at a larger story of women's roles which were part of involving the whole community in the whaling process. The act of harpooning a whale may have been highly masculine, but whaling as a whole was a larger effort that left spaces for women as well, even when most business records fail to note their presence.

Gendered Whale Products

Given the importance of whalebone or baleen for women's fashion in Europe and America, it is interesting to note that baleen use was not actually one of the spaces where women's consumption seems to have been a driving force in Japanese whaling. Despite the strong gender divide within Japanese society and within whaling groups, gendered uses of whale products within Japan were quite different from those within Western cultures whose whalers were also overwhelmingly male.

The substance known as whalebone or baleen was one of the least perishable parts of a whale. It grows from the jaws of Mysticete whales in place of teeth, making long, flexible panels set closely together. Baleen whales will take in a large mouthful of the ocean and press out the water through their baleen with their tongues, crushing the krill or other small organisms in the water column against the baleen and then scraping their meal down their throats. Baleen is composed mostly of keratin, an animal protein which is also found in horn, hooves, claws, fingernails and hair. The type of keratin in baleen is a hard keratin which, like horn, can be softened and reshaped in hot water.¹⁷ The vertical grain of baleen also makes it possible to cut into strips of any width. These properties, along with its strength and lightness, are what made it useful for constructing many different objects.

Although baleen was used in a variety of other ways, such as for umbrella spines or riding whips, the strongest cultural impact of the substance known as whalebone in Europe and America was definitely in the fashion industry.¹⁸ Unlike other possible substances for stiffening corsets, "as the whalebone absorbed the heat of the body, the stays would have taken on the shape of the body," making for a more comfortable support that was not completely softened by the heat.¹⁹ It is unclear whether the demands of fashion drove Euroamerican whalers' search for baleen, or whether the availability of baleen gathered as a byproduct of whaling for oil drove the fashion industry. Whalebone was important in the construction of both men's and women's upper-class clothing at least as early as the 16th century, supplied as one of only two products of the European whaling industry (the other being oil). Certainly as the prices for whale oil dropped after the discovery of petroleum in Pennsylvania in the late 19th century, baleen took a larger and larger market share for American whalers, but it is difficult to say whether the demand for small strips of baleen would have been enough to drive any whaling industry alone, since so much baleen can be harvested from only one whale. While other substances like spring steel could be used in corsets, the wide availability of flexible baleen strips which, among other things, would not rust when washed, certainly helped influence the development of corset-based fashions for women.

In Japan, clothing styles were quite different, at least before the Meiji era's modernization and Westernization push after 1868. The gendered uses of baleen were therefore much more subtle, but baleen did leave its mark on the culture of the period, particularly for men. It was used occasionally as fishing cord, in stiffening the shoulders of male formal hunting clothes, in wrapping sword hilts, decorating armor, and in other assorted places like tea trays or the construction of folding headrests for traveling samurai.²⁰ The lack of particularly feminine

examples in this list may have to do with the greater association in Japan of whaling with martial and therefore masculine pursuits, or it may have to do with an incomplete historical record for artifacts that were more specifically within the feminine sphere. The fact that Japanese whaling groups operated within sight of shore could very well have created a stronger association between the process of whaling and the uses of whale parts than existed for Western whalers, where men spent years at sea away from the rest of their society, bringing back oil and baleen divorced from the whole form of the whale.

Still, the two most important uses of baleen in Japan were in places where people did not necessarily even know it existed, and these also are decidedly masculine: in *bunraku* theater puppet heads and in *karakuri* clockwork dolls. Because spring steel was unavailable in Japan during the Tokugawa period, without baleen springs, puppet heads could not have had moveable features, and *karakuri* dolls would not have been possible at all. In much the same way that baleen was the preferred substance to use in corsetry and other stiffened Western clothing, even when other options existed, baleen springs in Japan were preferred over any other substance like bamboo which might have shared some of the necessary springiness.

Bunraku puppet theater rose in popularity in parallel with the rise of *kabuki* theater, particularly amongst the growing class of non-samurai but often wealthy townsfolk in the Tokugawa period, people who had sophisticated tastes in entertainment but did not have access to the more traditional forms of high society theater. In competition for audiences, both bunraku and kabuki became increasingly complex with stage tricks and lavish costuming, borrowing plays and conventions in both directions. Between 1727 and the 1740s (nearly a century after the rise of net whaling groups and therefore increased access to baleen), puppet makers had added moveable parts to the formerly solid wooden heads of their puppets (Figure 3).²¹ Inside the hollowed-out



Figure 3: Male bunraku puppet head with moveable eyes, and mouth driven by baleen springs.
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=1430415> Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

head, they attached a curved baleen strip used as a spring. One end was fastened to the inside of the head, with strings attached to the other end of that spring. The strings were tied to moveable eyes and mouths, and then threaded down to levers on the handle for the puppet head. When the puppeteer pulled one of these levers, the spring would bend as the string moved the mouth or eyes. When he released the lever, the released tension in the spring would pull the mouth or eyes back to the resting position. Some bunraku puppets used today are still

repaired with baleen, an indication that the properties of this substance are considered

essential to the effect of manipulating the puppet's eyes and mouth.²² The most expressive faces, with moveable eyebrows, eyes, and mouths, were generally reserved for male characters, and all of the puppeteers were men, so in this case whales (or at least their parts) remained within a heavily masculine domain even though the audiences were more mixed.²³

For many of the major types of clockwork karakuri dolls, the spring was a tightly-coiled strip of baleen which functioned the same as the spring-steel coils used in Western clockwork. The release of tension keeping the flexible material coiled drove the movement of the clockwork

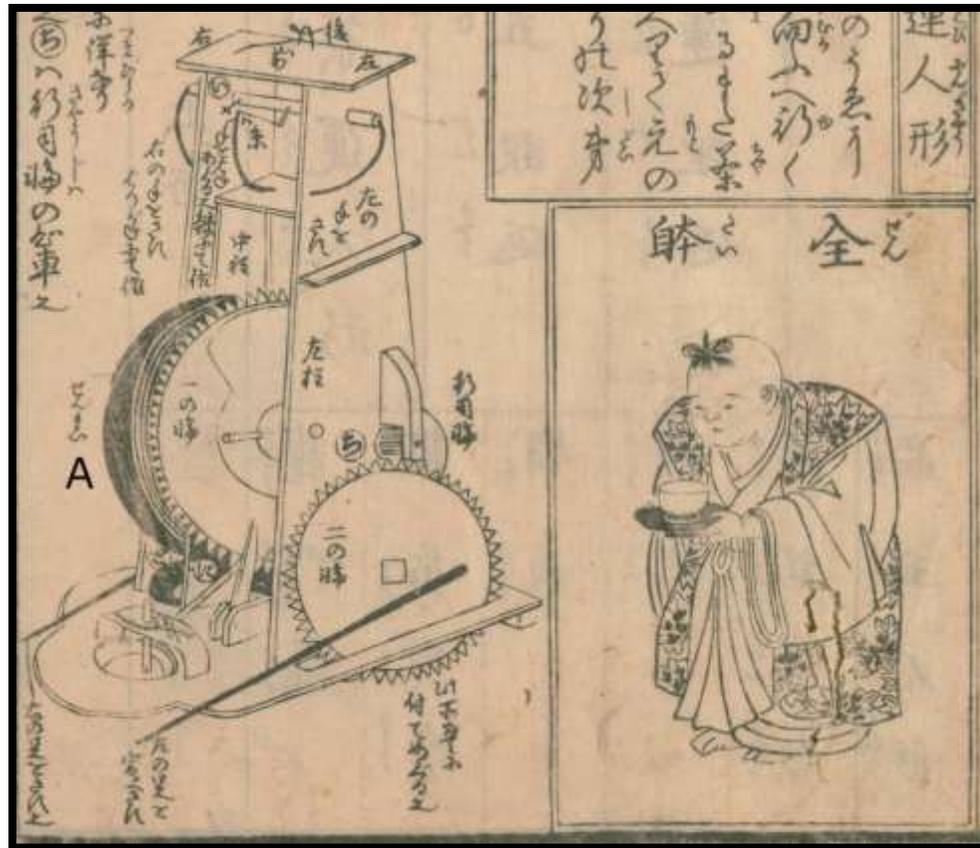


Figure 4: Inner workings of a tea-serving karakuri doll (left) and what the doll looked like fully clothed (right) driven by the curled baleen spring marked A. Hosokawa Yorinao, *Karakuri zui* (Tokyo: Suharaya Ichibei, 1796) vol 2 p 4 at <https://dl.ndl.go>.

parts (Figure 4).²⁴ These dolls came in a wide variety of forms, but the most impressive versions for use inside a house (instead of, for example, the complex festival floats with moving dolls incorporated into them which had developed long before the rise of organized whaling in Japan) were quite expensive, and therefore reserved for people at the level of domainal lords or other high-ranking members of society, since these were often built into a platform within a room of the mansion. Smaller portable ones were more popular, and intended for entertainment during social gatherings, including a tea or sake-serving doll, an archery doll, and a writing doll. All of these show off the kinds of skills a sophisticated warrior in Tokugawa society should have, as tea ceremony, archery skill, and scholarship were all part of samurai culture by this point. However, the dolls were not just for entertainment: a major text exposing the hidden secrets of karakuri

clockworks describes them as tools for studying what makes something lifelike, and how construction of a lifelike mechanism could teach people about the things they replicated.²⁵

Therefore, this whale product was helping people, mostly men, better understand the natural world as well as entertaining them.

The subtlety of the influence of this particular marine product in areas where people did not even see it, let alone necessarily associate it with the animals from which it came, makes its cultural meaning quite different from that of whalebone stays in corsets. The use of baleen in these popular entertainment and learning products was incidental to the focus of whaling group production. Just because they made use of a secondary product of the industry, however, does not mean they were not important. For one thing, baleen in these clockwork mechanisms and puppets, as well as in all the other assorted uses like sword hilts and costumes, shows how marine products could spread far beyond the coast and become intertwined with the entertainments of the populace in cities and the countryside. The hidden workings of baleen springs captured public interest by facilitating the expressiveness of *bunraku* puppet theater, traveling clockwork doll shows and privately owned *karakuri*. While audiences for all of these did not need to know that whale parts were involved, the lack of baleen springs would have dramatically changed the effect of the shows or toys. Furthermore, the contrast of these masculine uses with the more feminine corsetry and hoop skirts prevalent in the West reminds us of the highly culturally dependent influence a very male-centered whaling industry had on the gendered expectations for its products.

Gendered Whales

In contrast to Japan's male-dominated whaling groups and masculine cultural spaces for at least some whale products, in stories whales themselves were often feminine, and cast into human family roles. One example of this comes from an old story within local folklore on the Pacific coast of Japan, a bit south of the location of Ise Shrine. Ise Shrine is the center of emperor worship in Japan and was a major pilgrimage destination in the Tokugawa period, particularly for women. This story explains the current mountain location of what used to be a small seaside shrine by noting that two angry whales sent a fierce storm that caused this shrine to float away. The two whales are described as married, so presumably they were thought of as a male and female whale, and were both headed for the larger Ise Shrine on pilgrimage. They appeared in a dream to the priest at the small local shrine, saying they wished to pass his area of the coast safely. The local fishermen failed to listen to the priest and chased the whales, who were injured but escaped. After the retaliatory storm the whales supposedly sent, the shrine was rebuilt out of the angry whales' reach up on the nearby mountain.²⁶ While the story was originally intended to explain the reconstruction of a shrine in a different location, the appearance of married whales highlights the ways that human social constructions were applied to nonhuman actors within this period.

The whales that would have appeared in this dream were likely the species most familiar to coastal Japanese observers during this period, when whaling groups in this area hunted right whales, gray whales, and humpback whales as they passed along southwestern Japan's shores during their annual migrations. None of these species are particularly sexually dimorphic, which means that two whales seen swimming together could be any combination of sexes. But the story explicitly assumes that the whale is a married couple, implying one male and one female, and

perhaps further hinting that their pilgrimage is important for them to successfully carry out their marital duties and have a child (whale calves are referred to in Tokugawa-period Japanese with the same written character used for human children).

Female whales often appeared in warning dreams, where they would tell the dreamer not to kill them when the whale physically appeared along the shore the next day. These dream-whales were sometimes described as women. It is unclear whether this meant that they looked like whales but the dreamer knew they were female, or if they looked like human women but the dreamer knew they were simultaneously whales. In any case, these dreams could come to members of the whaling group, or to others unaffiliated with the group such as local priests. Whoever had the dream, if others did not listen to the warning and caused the death of a whale, the village would be cursed.

Usually a mother whale with her offspring or a pregnant whale was the one who appeared in someone's dream, so whalers who avoided killing female whales after such a dream would be more likely to avoid the curse. However, it is very difficult to sex a whale from a quick glimpse of their upper back as they breathe, so whalers would often only discover what they had captured (a male or female, pregnant or not) after hauling the dead whale ashore for processing.

Furthermore, such dream-whales did not always warn people away from killing: one example tells how a wealthy member of the whaling group's management dreamt of a whale during a period when they had not been able to catch any. While the mother bringing along her calf in the dream begged for forbearance as they swam through the open sea near Kayoi, in return for safety on the first pass, she promised to swim into their nets on her way back, presumably after her calf had grown enough to be left on its own.²⁷

Perhaps because whales have regular migration routes along both the Japan Sea and Pacific coasts of Japan, legends about not capturing whales often frame the whale's movement as a pilgrimage, where the prohibition on taking the whale passing by the first time is thus related to allowing them to complete their pilgrimage.²⁸ One example of a dream-legend with this rationale, tells how the mother whale explained that she had a difficult delivery and was going to visit Ōhibi's temple, and thus asked to be captured on her way back rather than before she completed her pilgrimage.²⁹ In another case, a spirit appeared to the head priest of Jōrinji in 1758 and told him that "a large whale with a child inside its belly is passing through the open sea, but until she safely gives birth to a child I wish you to remain quiet."³⁰ Another version of this story says that the beautiful woman who appeared to the priest in the dream said she was inside a pregnant whale and that was why they should hold their hunt after the whale had delivered, promising the whalers that they could catch the whale upon its return without her inside.³¹ Unfortunately, although the priest rushed down to the beach, the whalers had already killed the pregnant whale from his dream.³²

The blurring of the lines between female whales and human women in these dreams illustrate how conceptions of gender provided important lenses for interpreting both human and whale behavior. The compassionate behavior seen by female whales protecting their calves, even at the risk of their own death, made them seem more human-like even as whalers exploited this tendency to capture the mothers by first entangling their young (see Figure 1). In turn, it seems that at least some people dreamt of such whales in terms of their expectations for human women, which may have interesting implications for the highly masculine profession of whaling and how they thought about their work targeting whales. They were not battling to the death with a warrior male like Moby Dick, they were killing whales which might be pregnant and begged for

at least their calves to be allowed to live. This is not just a reflection of the difference between American and Japanese whaling cultures, but rather shows how the ways that American whalers focused on capturing the largest (and therefore male) sperm whales had different concerns about the nature of their fight with whales than how Japanese whalers focused on capturing whales swimming close to shore. These coastal whales are from different, less sexually dimorphic species and also would include a large proportion of pregnant whales or whales with young calves migrating between breeding and feeding grounds.

This is not to say that all imagined whales were cast into feminine roles in Japanese stories, or masculine roles for Americans. After all, the typical cry of the American whaler on sighting a whale spout was "there *she* blows!" from a distance at which any more detail than the whale's species was unknown. Other Japanese stories, particularly the more literary comic stories by famous authors regarding a whale stranded in the Shinagawa River in Edo (now Tokyo), made their characters male whales rather than female. Takizawa Bakin's story inspired by this stranding begins with a faux-encyclopedia entry which cribs from actual natural history knowledge and introduces the different written characters for male and female whales, using only the one for males after that point. This is the character that generally was used for the word whale, with the one specifying female whales a much more specialized and rarer word.³³ In Jippensha Ikku's story inspired by the same incident, his whale-headed character at the start of the story is male, and although the gender of the whale later in the story is less clear, the speech patterns do not seem feminine.³⁴

Final Reflections

These examples of different intersections of gender and whaling in Tokugawa Japan highlight the ways that gender divisions for human workplaces can expand to shape even our interactions with other species whose interior selves are opaque to us. Even in the case where the same animal part was transformed into a culturally-influential commodity with gendered connotations, uses of baleen in Europe and the United States were quite different from those in Japan. Thus, the complex intersectionality of environment and society results in different solutions even when there appear to be broad similarities in division of labor and gender roles within maritime space. Even if a history of Japanese whaling must be mostly focused on the actions of men, because they are the only ones out capturing a whale, that history is richer by asking why we see so few women in the working of the whaling groups, and what effect that has on the influence of those groups in Japanese culture more broadly. Thinking about where gender is visible and where it is not creates a much richer story about how people worked with (and upon) whales and how our assumptions about the way the world works can be filtered through familiar human social structures and expectations of behavior. Recognition of similarities between humans and other species with or without visibly different sexes is often made unconsciously through a lens of assumptions about human gender and society, as the stories about whale mothers show.

The awkward fit between socially-embedded human identities and human imagination of those same identities for other species like whales is also a reminder that close observation of and interaction with nature does not require understanding "nature" as something separate from the human. Particularly in a space like the ocean where human experience is perforce mediated by technologies that allow people to work and survive in that environment, there is no way for people to experience or become close to completely untouched nature. As much as scholars have

tried to show that the myth of Japanese closeness to nature is myth rather than reality, it is hard to destroy.³⁵ Perhaps that is because, despite the ideal of closeness to nature manifesting in a higher concern for wilderness with no human traces, in reality closeness to nature can also mean finding a way to interpret the natural world on human terms, eliding the division between human and other in service of human needs. The natural world in this way is so close that it becomes synonymous with the human world, and in that framework anthropomorphism in interpreting the behavior and lives of nonhuman animals like whales would be unremarkable. If humans have gendered differences shaping their lives and behavior, then in a world where everything is interpreted as part of the human sphere, one would expect other animals to operate along similar lines unless proven otherwise. Close observation of whales while hunting them showed people that the whale-mothers had strong, compassionate ties to their young. It follows, then, that within a model of the world heavily weighted towards human experience and understanding, that those whales should appear in dreams as human women worried about safe delivery of their babies. But such understanding did not prevent whalers in masculine warlike roles from exploiting the presence of potential whale-mothers and literally profiting from their deaths, since whales were also natural resources. It is not a merely a reflection of modern family ideals that the catchphrase "good wife, wise mother" was held as the standard for women in the service of Japanese imperial expansion in the period directly following the Tokugawa.³⁶ Rather than looking for how understanding whale-mothers brought people closer to nature, we might instead look for ways in which the social status of women led men to feel comfortable objectifying and making use of the bodies of beings they also saw as compassionate wives and mothers.

End Notes

- 1 Lisa Norling, *Maritime History and Gender, Gender Dynamics in Maritime America* (Mystic, CT, 2012), http://educators.mysticseaport.org/scholars/lectures/gender_dynamics/.
- 2 Elliott J. Gorn, "Seafaring Engendered: A Comment on Gender and Seafaring." *International Journal of Maritime History* 4:1 (June 1, 1992) p 219. <https://doi.org/10.1177/084387149200400115>.
- 3 See, for example, Natasha Stacey et al., "Enhancing Coastal Livelihoods in Indonesia: An Evaluation of Recent Initiatives on Gender, Women and Sustainable Livelihoods in Small-Scale Fisheries," *Maritime Studies* (June 6, 2019), <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40152-019-00142-5>; Liv Toril Pettersen, "From Household Business to Shareholding Companies—Impacts on Gender Relations and Influence in Fisheries and Fish Farming in Northern Norway," *Maritime Studies* (November 12, 2018), <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40152-018-0122-8>, and other recent articles in the journal *Maritime Studies*.
- 4 Lisa Norling, *Captain Ahab Had a Wife: New England Women and the Whalefishery, 1720-1870* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000) p. 1–2.
- 5 Julia Bowett and Pete Hay, "Whaling and Its Controversies: Examining the Attitudes of Japan's Youth." *Marine Policy* 33:5 (2009): 775–83. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.marpol.2009.02.012>
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- 7 Nakazono Shigeo, "Reikishi ni miru hito to kujira (2): Nihon kinsei no baai," p. 75–89 in *Gurōbarizēshon to han-gurōbarizēshon no sōkoku : hōgei o tegakari to shite : Heisei 16-nendo--Heisei 19-nendo kagaku kenkyūhi hojokin kiban kenkyū (A) (2) kenkyū seika hōkokusho*, Arano Yasunori, ed. (Tokyo: Rikkyō Daigaku Nihongaku Kenkyūjo, 2008) p. 81.
- 8 Taiji Akira. *Taiji Kakuemon to kujirakata*. (Wakayama: Nishioka sōgō insatsu, 2001). p. 14.; Nakazono, "Reikishi ni miru hito to kujira (2)," p. 81.
- 9 Taiji, *Taiji Kakuemon to kujirakata*, p. 16–17.
- 10 Nakazono, "Reikishi ni miru hito to kujira (2)," p. 82.
- 11 Torisu Kyōichi, *Saikai hōgei no shiteki kenkyū* (Fukuoka-shi: Kyūshū Daigaku Shuppankai, 1999) p. 20–21.
- 12 Miyamoto Tsuneichi, *Umi no tani* (Tokyo: Miraisha, 1975) p.149–52, argues that whaling developed as a specifically male specialty in tandem with the development of abalone diving as a specialty for women in Mikawa and Ise Bays, which may explain why whaling groups specifically excluded women from the boat crews. Contemporary sources provide no explanation for the exclusion, although the high status of a harpooner came from his demonstration of martial skill and bravery, which may have contributed to the perception that work in the whaling boats was only suitable for men.
- 13 Publications directed specifically at boys in postwar Japan described Antarctic whaling hyperbolically: "Japanese fisheries boast to the world of their taking whales! Storms or icebergs or dense fog, these kinds of dangers are braved by manliness!" Iizuka Reiji, "Nanbyōyō ue kujira wo ou," *Shōnen sekai*, (1949): frontispiece.
- 14 Nakazono, "Reikishi ni miru hito to kujira (2)," 133–34.
- 15 Segawa Kiyoko, *Hisagime: josei to shōgyō* (Tokyo: Miraisha, 1975) p. 111–14.

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- 16 Kikuchi Motoshū of Kii, *Sanzan kiryaku*, likely written sometime around 1802. Original text reprinted in Taiji Gorōsaku, “Kumano Taijiura hōgei no hanashi,” 1937, p. 29-86 In *Kujira, iruka no minzoku*, Tanigawa Ken’ichi, ed. Nihon Minzoku Bunka Shiryō Shūsei 18 (Tokyo: San’ichi Shobō, 1997) p. 74–75.
- 17 Julie A. Lauffenburger, “Baleen in Museum Collections: Its Sources, Uses, and Identification,” *The American Institute for Conservation of Historic & Artistic Works* 32, no. 3 (1993): 214–16.
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/3179545>
- 18 See the "Interlude: A Short Digression on Fashion" section of Richard Ellis, *Men and Whales* (New York: Knopf, 1991) p.131–40.
- 19 Lynn Sorge-English, *Stays and Body Image in London: The Staymaking Trade, 1680-1810* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2011) p. 60.
- 20 For a discussion of baleen in sword grips, see Lauffenburger, “Baleen in Museum Collections,” 214–16. Cormorants are referenced in Akimichi Tomoya, *Kujira wa dare no mono ka* (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 2009) p. 53–55. A foldable headrest is shown in the collection of cultural objects in Fukuoka-shi hakubutsukan, “Fukuoka-Shi Hakubutsukan Tokubetsu Kikakuten: Nihon to Kujira,” 2011, p. 128 and Lauffenburger, “Baleen in Museum Collections,” 220. A photograph of a helmet with baleen decorations can be seen in Fukuoka-shi hakubutsukan, “Fukuoka-Shi Hakubutsukan Tokubetsu Kikakuten,” 128.
- 21 Samuel L. Leiter, *Historical Dictionary of Japanese Traditional Theater* (Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press, 2006) p. 314.
- 22 Barbara C. Adachi, *Backstage at Bunraku: A Behind-the-Scenes Look at Japan’s Traditional Puppet Theatre* (New York: Weatherhill, 1985).
- 23 Donald Keene, *Bunraku: The Art of Japanese Puppet Theater* (New York, N.Y.: Harper & Row, 1973), p. 27.
- 24 Tatsukawa Shōji, *Karakuri*, Vol. 3. Mono to ningen no bunkashi (Tokyo: Hōsei Daigaku Shuppankyoku, 1969).
- 25 Hosokawa Yorinao, prologue, in Tatsukawa, *Karakuri*, 3:301.
- 26 Yamamoto Tōru, “Kumano no kujira meguri,” *Kumanoshi* 56 (2009): 6–15
- 27 Tatsukawa, *Karakuri*, 3:112.
- 28 Matsuzaki Kenzō, *Gendai kuyō ronkō: hito, mono, dō-shokubutsu no irei* (Tokyo: Keiyūsha, 2004) p. 94.
- 29 Akimichi, *Kujira wa dare no mono ka*, 112.
- 30 Yamamoto, “Kumano no kujira meguri,” 6.
- 31 Nakamura Ikuo, *Nihonjin no shūkyō to dōbutsukan: sesshū to nikujiki* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa kōbunkan, 2010) p. 89.
- 32 Yamamoto, “Kumano no kujira meguri,” 6; Nakamura, *Nihonjin no shūkyō to dōbutsukan*, 89.
- 33 Takizawa Bakin, *Kujirazashi shinagawa baori* (Edo: Tsuruya Kiemon, 1799)
<https://dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/9892879>. The generic word for whale today is usually written in a different script, as with all other biological names, but before this trend it was 鯨 (kujira or gei), which is also specifically for male whales. The character for specifying female whales is 鯨 (gei). Terajima Ryōan's encyclopedia *Wakan sansai zue* reprinted in Tōyō bunko 471, Shimada Isao, Takeshima Atsuo, and Higuchi Motomi, eds. 1985th edition (Tōkyō: Heibonsha, 1712) p. 198, has the same description for whale names, and Takizawa Bakin may well have copied it.

34 Jippensha Ikku, *Taigei hōnen no mitsugi* (Edo: Enomotoya Kichibei, 1799)
<https://dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/9892866>.

35 For example, Pamela J. Asquith and Arne Kalland, eds. *Japanese Images of Nature: Cultural Perspectives*, Vol. 1. Man and Nature in Asia. (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 1997) argued against idealized Japanese closeness to nature in 1997, but two decades later Barbara R. Ambros, *Bones of Contention: Animals and Religion in Contemporary Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2012) was still pushing back against it.

36 Shizuko Koyama, *Ryōsai Kenbo: The Educational Ideal of “Good Wife, Wise Mother” in Modern Japan*, Trans. Stephen Filler. Vol. 1. The Intimate and the Public in Asian and Global Perspectives (Boston: Brill, 2012).