Chapter 1


In 1981 the International Whaling Commission (IWC) banned whaling with some exceptions. Japan till today objects to the whaling ban. The Japanese position is

1. There is no ecological reason to abandon commercial whaling entirely, since scientific reports show that there are adequately sustainable stocks of certain speices of whale.

2. Whaling should be continued since those involved otherwise suffer undue hardship.

3. on cultural arguments, small type coastal whaling (STCW) should be allowed on the same ground as aboriginal whaling that is allowed as a separate category by the IWC in 1981.

In addition to the arguments presented above, there is another argument that protection of annimal speices lead to the destruction of the ecological balance and coexistence with humans. In the article, “Learning experience: Roger Locandro recalls his classes in Newfoundland and Labrador,” Rutgers Focus, October 30 1998, Roger Locandro of Cook College writes

“Many students who, at one time, may have supported Greenpeace and who firmly opposed hunting have tempered their views when they saw the other side of the issue for themselves. Whales and seals—overprotected through laws and regulations—consume an ever-increasing percentage of the fish stock. Students have learned to weigh the fate of the beautiful animals against the fact that many families have been torn apart because their livelihood has disappeared with the fish. The migration of young people who have been forced to leave their homeland and search for work in far-off provinces is Newfoundland’s greatest tragedy.
Whaling has a lot to do with Commodore Perry’s visit to Japan, leading to the ending of the national policy of isolation enforced by the Tokugawa Shogunate for more than two and a half centuries starting in the 17th century. Let us briefly discuss Japanese and American whaling, Japanese contact with the West, Tokugawa’s national isolation policy, and Commodore Perry’s visit to Japan.

**Japanese and American Whaling**

Japanese whaling goes back to the 6th or 7th centuries or even earlier. Whaling has been an intrinsic part of Japanese culture, a way of life. This way of life is lost now that whaling is banned. Whale meat, once a cheap source of protein, is now an expensive gourmet delicacy. (See “Japan, Feasting on Whale, Sniffs at ‘Culinary Imperialism’ of U.S.” the New York Times, August 10 2000.) One of the major differences of American whaling and Japanese whaling is that Americans hunted whales for the oil while Japanese ate whale meat and used every part of the whale.

**American Whaling:** The U.S. was the leading whaling nation in the world in the 19th century. By the 1820’s whaling stocks in the Atlantic had been exhausted and the American whaling industry found new and fertile fishing grounds in the Northern Pacific. Throughout the 1830s and 40s Nantucket and New Bedford whaling invested heavily in the Northern Pacific.

In 1820 the rich whaling grounds between Hawaii and Japan were discovered by American and British whalers and within a few years hundreds of whaling ships from the U.S. and other western powers were operating in Japanese waters. In 1846 there were about 300 ships from the U.S. alone.

Not surprisingly, perhaps, the activities of western whalers coincided with—and are widely believed to have caused—a drastic reduction in the number of whales caught by the Japanese in their nets, for the whales were caught before they reached coastal waters and came within reach of the small Japanese rowing boats. For example, the catches registered by the Katsumoto/Maeme net-group on Iki Island went down from 138 whales in 1845 to only 14 in 1856.

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The Americans in the early 19th century replaced the Dutch and the British as the leading whalers in the world. Originally catching right whales from shore stations in New England, from about 1760 the Americans started to catch sperm whales further out to sea as a result of declining catches of right whales. At first they went to Davis Strait, Baffin Bay and other Arctic waters, but within a decade whaling ships from New England had started catching in the southern Atlantic. The first American whaling ships rounded Cape Horn and entered the Pacific in 1791.

These were sailing ships, typically between 300 and 400 tons, manned by crews of between 30 and 40 persons. The ships carried several small rowing boats which were lowered and used in the actual hunt when whales were spotted. These boats carried a crew of six: a helmsman in the stern, four oarsmen and the harpooner in the bow. One or two harpoons tied to long ropes were thrust against the whale at close range. Usually the whale was not killed by these harpoons but raced off with one or more whaling boats in tow. When exhausted, it was finally killed by the helmsman who was also a skilled handler of the lance which he threw into one of the whale’s vital organs. The whale was then brought to the side of the ship where it was flensed. The blubber was stripped off and hoisted on board by pulleys. The heads of sperm whales were also hoisted on board, while the remains of the carcass, meat included, were dumped in the sea.

Unlike the British and Dutch who stored the blubber on board for later processing on land, the Americans returned to the old Biscayan method, long abandoned, of boiling the blubber in large brick furnaces on the whaling ship itself. This improved the quality of the oil, and enabled the whalers to remain at sea for an average of as long as three and a half years.

Facing the drastic reduction in the number of whales caught, the Japanese tried to adopt the American way of whaling. But the American method and the Japanese method were too different to make wholesale adoption feasible. The Japanese method was net-whaling, and the Japanese operated from shore stations and made full use of the whales. They were not prepared to change that. What they did do was try to make use of American hunting techniques, primarily by using bomb lances. The first experiments with firearms had been made by the British in the 1730s, but it took more than century before they were used to any significant extent. From the 1820s a series of inventions culminated in the bomb lance in the late 1840s.
The Japanese had early on made contact with American and British whalers. Foreign whalers were seen in increasing numbers off Japan’s coasts, and the sound of fire-arms could be heard from the shore. The first close observation might have occurred in 1823 when some Japanese allegedly boarded a foreign whaler off Hitachi. But also, in the next few years, a number of ship-wrecked Japanese sailors and fishermen were rescued by foreign whalers. One of these was Jirokichi, who, in 1838, was picked up by the American whaler James Loper after having drifted for six months in the Pacific. He returned to Japan in 1843 and gave a detailed description of American whaling. The most celebrated case is, however, that of Nakamura Manjiro who was rescued in 1841 by the three-masted American whaling ship, John Howland, under the command of William H. Whitfield from Fairhaven in Massachusetts. (See Frame 1 on page 7.)

**After World War II the Japanese were saved by whale meat:** By the end of World War II Japan had lost 94.6 per cent of her whaling vessel tonnage, as all her factory ships and most of the catcher boats had been sunk. Moreover, more than half the prewar whaling grounds were relinquished when the Japanese army had to retreat from Korea, Taiwan and the Kuril Islands. At the same time, the population as a whole became more dependent than ever on whale meat because of the severe food shortage in the immediate postwar years. General Douglas MacArthur, as Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers (SCAP), decided to encourage Japanese whaling. General MacArthur authorized Japan’s re-entry into international whaling. As a result the industry recovered remarkably quickly.

**Japanese Contact with the West, Sakoku Policy by Tokugawa Shogunate and Commodore Perry’s Visit to Japan:**

One of the earliest and well known Japanese contact with the West occurred in 1543 (some say in 1542) when a Portuguese ship, wrecked by a typhoon, drifted to the island of Tanegashima between Kyushu and Okinawa. The Portuguese sailors had flint guns and taught the Japanese how to make them. It is said that flint guns spread quickly through Japan and changed the way samurai waged war. Historically the most famous war that is said to have changed the war game completely is the Battle of Nagashino in 1575 between the armies of Oda Nobunaga and Takeda Shingen. (Those who saw Akira Kurosawa’s Kagemusha will remember that the movie ends with this battle scene.)
Six years after the Portuguese ship wrecked and drifted to Tanegashima, a Jesuit priest, Xavier, arrived in Kagoshima. He was the first Christian missionary to land in Japan, and many other priests came to Japan to evangelize the Japanese. By the 1850’s many Japanese people, including influential war loads (Daimyo) were baptized. At the same time, many other Daimyo were suspicious of Christian evangelism. Toyotomi Hideyoshi who succeeded in placing Japan under his control started to persecute Japanese Christians and European missionaries, often crucifying them.

Tokugawa Ieyasu took over the control of Japan after Hideyoshi died. After the battle of Sekigahara in 1600, Tokugawa’s reign of Japan was solidified and lasted till 1868 for more than two and a half centuries. Ieyasu also persecuted Japanese Christians and European missionaries. In a series of decrees Ieyasu’s grandson, Iemitsu, banned any Japanese from making overseas trips, and in 1636 the Sakoku Rei (a series of decrees sealing Japan from foreign contacts, decrees of total national isolation) was enforced. Trading with the West was made only through Nagasaki where the Dutch and Chinese were allowed to conduct a very restricted form of trade.

Enforcement of Sakoku Rei was complete. Those Japanese who tried to go abroad were caught and punished by death. Many Japanese sailors and fishermen whose boats were wrecked by storms drifted in the sea and rescued by foreign ships. When these castaways were returned to Japan by the foreign ships that saved them, the castaways were either turned away or punished by death. Many of foreign sailors whose ships were wrecked and who drifted onto Japanese coasts were also punished often by death.

One incident stands out among the others: the case of a whaling ship Lagoda. Lagoda wandered onto the shores of Japan. The men were kept in captivity for months in cruel conditions and even sometimes tortured. When one of the prisoners had hung himself, the Japanese left the body in the cage for two days.

So dramatic were these stories that the contemporary writer Herman Melville wrote in his book Moby Dick:

\[\text{Over the period of more than 250 years of Sakoku Rei, gradually the treatment of Japanese castaways became less severe, and towards the end of the Tokugawa period many of them were allowed to stay alive after long internment. They were, however, never allowed to go out to the sea again.}\]
“while all between float milky-ways of coral isles, and low-lying, endless, unknown Archipelagoes, and impenetrable Japan.”

By the 1840’s the Northern Pacific were full of whaling ships and also cargo ships that went to China. Many of these ships were wrecked by typhoons and drifted to Japanese islands and coasts. Also these ships needed places to replenish supplies of provision, water, and coal. The ships were from such western powers as Britain, France, Russia, and the United States. All of these western nations wanted to have an access to Japan, since the Japanese archipelagoes possessed plenty of provision, water, wood, and coal.

In 1852 Commodore Matthew Calbraith Perry was commissioned on the mission to embark for Japan and establish more friendly terms. In a letter to John P. Kennedy, Secretary of the Navy, C.M. Conrad, acting Secretary of State, indicates the purpose of this mission:

The objects sought by this government are:

1. To effect some permanent arrangement for the protection of American seamen and property wrecked on these islands or driven into their ports by stress of weather;

2. The permission of American vessels to enter one or more of their ports in order to obtain supplies of provisions, water, fuel, etc. or in case of disasters, to refit so as to enable them to prosecute their voyage.

   It is very desirable to have permission to establish a depot for coal, if not on one of the principle islands, at least on some small uninhabited one of which, it is said, there are several in their vicinity.

3. The permission to our vessels to enter one or more of their ports for the purposes of disposing of their cargoes by sale or barter.

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3Christopher Benfey “Herman Melville and John Manjiro; Toward a wave theory of the Pacific,” Common-Place, 5,2, January 2005. Melville called Japan “that double-bolted land.”
In July 1853 Commodore Matthew C. Perry sailed into Uraga Bay (near Yokohama) with a fleet of four black warships. (Japanese call them Kuro-fune, the black ships.) He issued the Japanese with an ultimatum. With this “battleship diplomacy” the Japanese were given one year to consider whether they wanted to have their country opened by peaceful means or by force. Japan gave in to Perry when the ships appeared the following year, and within a few years Hakodate and Yokohama were opened to foreigners.⁴

⁴An interesting Broadway musical about Commodore M.C. Perry’s visit to Japan is Stephen Sondheim’s Pacific Overtures. A Japanese production (director Amon Miyamoto, the New National Theater of Tokyo) that was presented at the Lincoln Center Summer Festival in July 2002 had a rave review. See the review, “Genuinely Ugly Americans, as Viewed by the Japanese.”, the New York Times, July 11 2002.
Nakahama Manjiro, a National Hero

Manjiro was only a boy of 14 when he accompanied four others on a fishing trip off the southern shores of Tosa (in the island of Shikoku), shortly after the New Year of 1841. Heavy waves broke the boat’s oarlock and the boat drifted aimlessly for a couple of weeks before reaching a small barren island where it was smashed by the surf. The five fishermen managed to reach land, and here they eked out a precarious living for five months. Finally, on June 27, they were rescued by the crew of a whale ship John Howland. The crew were looking for turtles on the island.

Manjiro recovered quickly from the ordeal and was then sent to the mast-top to act as look-out for whales. He so impressed William Whitfield with his enthusiasm and willingness to learn that the captain sent him to live his aunt and friends in Fairhaven, Massachusetts. Here Manjiro received proper schooling and thus became the first Japanese student in America. He excelled at college, where he also studied navigation, before being employed on the whaling ship Franklin, becoming her first mate in 1848. But Manjiro longed to go home to his family in Tosa, and toward the end of January 1851—under cover of night—he and two of his original companions from Tosa slipped ashore on Okinawa. After imprisonment and long interrogations in Naha, Kagoshima, Nagasaki, and Tosa, he finally came home early in October 1852.

Manjiro had been thoroughly questioned about American whaling and shipping, and before long he was called on to teach at the clan school of Tosa. Among his students were Iwasaki Yataro (the founder of Mitsubishi), as well as Sakamoto Ryoma and Gogo Shojiro (two leading figures in the Meiji Restoration). In 1854 he was called to service by the Shogunate and worked as an interpreter when Commodore Perry came to Japan that year. He translated a number of foreign books on navigation, astronomy and ship maintenance, and also assisted the authorities in drawing up plans for modern sailing ships and in training sailors for the navy.
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Genuinely Ugly Americans, as Viewed by the Japanese
by Ben Brantley
Theater Review of Pacific Overtures, the New York Times July 12 2002

The barbarians are indeed at the gate, and they are awful to behold. Their feral, matted hair is as wild as a Gorgon’s, their faces distorted by the kinds of growths found on exotic baboons. Their leader, who stands at least seven feet tall, towers like doom incarnate. Tremble and recoil, citizens of the land: the Americans have arrived.

This herd of invaders, clomping into view on the 60-foot runway that slices through the audience at Avery Fisher Hall, belongs to the inspired reconsideration of the 1976 musical “Pacific Overtures,” which has been directed with bountiful verve and imagination by Amon Miyamoto for the New National Theater of Tokyo and is part of the Lincoln Center Festival 2002.

The coming of Commodore Perry and his troops to the shores of Japan has always been a showstopper in Stephen Sondheim and John Weidman’s fable of gunboat diplomacy and cultural transformation. Those who saw the original Broadway production still marvel at the immense paper dragon of a ship created by the fabled designer Bori Aronson.

But Mr. Miyamoto and company have devised their own highly original coup de théâtre for the occasion, and it, too, is sure to linger in the memory. The ships are seen only as fleeting, ambiguous shadows. But the Americans, whose grotesquely stylized appearances here were inspired by 19th-century Japanese poster art, are canopied by a vast American flag that shoots across the theater’s ceiling amid a flash of eye-searing light.

When ”Pacific Overtures” first opened at the Winter Garden Theater, in an opulent Kabuki-style production directed by Harold Prince, many reviewers were left cold by the show’s heroic artistic daring. For some, the essential problem lay in the idea of Americans trying to represent a Japanese point of view.

In The New York Times, Walter Kerr described it as a work without ”specific emotional or cultural bearings” in which the audience is ”drawn neither East nor West.” He went on to ask of the ersatz Japanese approach,
“Why tell their story their way, when they’d do it better?” Mr. Miyamoto has risen to the implicit challenge in Kerr’s question and has retranslated “Pacific Overtures” in ways that go far beyond language. (The show, which turns through Saturday, is performed in Japanese with English supertitles that present Mr. Sondheim’s original lyrics largely verbatim.) The form and theme of the musical remain basically the same. It’s the scale and style that have changed, and therein lies a world of difference.

The eye-filling splendor of Mr. Prince’s production (which influenced even the smaller York Theater revival in 1984) has been abandoned for a simpler approach that emphasizes performers over spectacle. The theatrical tradition that informs the evening is not the picturesqueness of Kabuki but the relative austerity of Noh.

Enacted within Rumi Matsui’s templelike frame, where shifting screens define the space, the show puts human responses at center stage instead of the epochal events that elicit those responses. The attitude goes some distance toward bringing warmth to an essentially abstract show, a work that Mr. Sondheim has said “is entirely about ideas.”

Mind you, Mr. Weidman’s book still doesn’t give the impression that it’s reaching for complex character portraits. The two principal figures—Manjiro (Masaki Kosuzu) and Kayama (Shuji Honda), men of different classes who are differently transformed by Western influence—remain symbolic figures, moving through the evening as schematically as chess pieces.

Yet there is a beguiling spirit of intimacy abroad that lets you freshly appreciate the ingenuity and emotional variety of Mr. Sondheim’s songs. As performed by seven musicians, in often minimalist arrangements, the score registers the calculated tensions between Eastern and Western sensibilities all the more piquantly.

The simple charms of “Poems,” in which Manjiro and Kayama forge a friendship by exchanging verse on a journey, have never been more evident. The same is true of the barbed comic appeal of “Chrysanthemum Tea,” in which a decadent shogun is poisoned by his mother, and “Welcome to Kanagawa,” in which a madam and her prostitutes anticipate the arrival of lusty American sailors.

With wryly ritualized choreography by Rino Masaki, these numbers have a cozy, satiric spirit that brings to mind the droll homespun pageantry of
John Littlewood’s “Oh! What a Lovely War.” The proceedings are appropriately annotated with an almost vaudevillian panache by Takeharu Kunimoto as the Reciter.

Because Mr. Sondheim’s lyrics are calculatedly less intricate than usual in “Pacific Overtures,” seldom do you feel you’re missing something by not learning them sung in English. Only with the elaborate patter number, “Please Hello,” in which admirals of many nations descend in an ambassadorial babel, does something seem to be lost, as it were, in translation.

A couple of songs are shortchanged by lackluster stagings, including the wonderful “Bowler Hat,” in which Kayama metamorphoses into a Western businessman. But the climatic “Next,” which portrays Japan’s rush through the 20th century, has been dazzlingly expanded and reimagined.

Both Japan’s military aggression in World War II and the bombing of Hiroshima are chillingly represented here (as they were not in the original). And when the performers, who have fallen to the floor after an atomic eruption of light, rise to their feet to dance robotically into the computer age, the blessings of technological progress seem unsettlingly dubious.

In reinterpreting an American musical about their own country, Mr. Miyamoto and company have bestowed a great gift upon New York: a chance to see muscle-flexing Americans as aliens at a moment when it is especially crucial for the United States to understand how it is perceived internationally.

“Pacific Overtures,” of course, offers only one perspective, which is admittedly limited and distorted. This is acknowledged in an exquisitely performed version of “Someone in a Tree,” a ravishingly contemplative song that presents different points of view on the first meeting of Japanese and American delegates.

The witness who give their testimony here – a boy in a tree, a warrior guarding the hut where the meeting took place – can offer only splinters of this historic moment. “It’s the fragment, not the day,” they sing. “It’s the ripple, not the sea.”

Vision is always only partial, the song suggests; memory is always imperfect. Still, fragments add up. Those assembled in this fascinating production add a welcome new dimension to a cross-cultural mosaic.
PACIFIC OVERTURES

Tokyo, Aug. 9—To understand why Japan expanded its whale hunting activities last month, despite international opposition, come to dinner at Taruichi, a festive whale-meat restaurant in Tokyo’s trendy Shinjuku district.

On a recent evening, not a seat or sake glass was empty in Taruichi as dozens of jovial patrons, ranging from business executives to domestic workers, feasted on the house specialties. There are 36 choices in all, including fried whale, raw whale, whale bacon, whale heart, whale testicle, whale kidney, and even ice cream made from the whale’s fat.

Many of the foreign governments and environmental groups opposed to Japan’s stepped-up whaling efforts might have found the cuisine a bit, well, hard to swallow. But it was an evening of culinary bliss for Japanese diners, many of whom grew up eating whale and strongly defend it as part of their national culture and identity.

“After the war, there was nothing to eat in Japan, and we would have starved if it were not for the whale bacon and steaks that the government provided us in school lunches,” said Hiromi Kanomuri, a 47-year-old copywriter, who munched on pieces of whale skin.

“We may eat the whale, but we also revere it,” Mr. Kanomuri said. “How can a total stranger tell us not to hunt whales without knowing how much this meat means to us?”

The stranger to which Mr. Kanomuri so pointedly referred was the United States, which has threatened to impose sanctions on Japan for extending its whale hunts to include sperm and Bryde’s whales, which are both protected under American endangered species laws. The Japanese already hunt minke whales, which are considered abundant enough to allow limited harvesting.

Japan is a member of the International Whaling Commission, which adopted a ban on commercial whaling that took effect in 1986, but the
convention allows signers to engage in limited hunts of whales for scientific purposes.

Six Japanese whaling ships are now headed for the northwestern Pacific to hunt 160 minke as well as 50 Bryde’s and 10 sperm whales in what has been billed as scientific research. It will be the first time since 1987 that Japan has hunted Bryde’s and sperm whales, but few people outside Japan believe that the expedition is solely for research.

Although Japan maintains that sperm and Bryde’s whales are now populous enough to be hunted commercially, the international consensus is that not enough is known about these once depleted species to justify even scientific whaling.

After meeting in Tokyo with Foreign Minister Yohei Kono last week, Secretary of State Madeleine K. Albright said that the United States was deeply troubled by Japan’s decision to expand it hunt, which she said was “contrary to whaling agreements.” She said the United States would not hesitate to impose penalties. Under United States law, Washington can embargo imports from any nation that violates a marine conservation treaty.

Britain also denounced Japan’s whale hunt, as did several conservation groups, including the World Wildlife Fund and Greenpeace.

But the Japanese maintain that no one has the right to tell them what they should not eat.

“Americans are a bunch of culinary imperialists,” said Takashi Sato, Taruichi’s owner. “Telling the Japanese not to hunt whales is like telling the British to stop having their afternoon tea or denying French people their pâté?. This is how you start a war.”

A jolly man of ample girth, Mr. Sato is fond of pounding his broad chest and proclaiming that he is made of “100 percent whale meat,” which he said he has eaten every day since he was old enough to chew.

Indeed, the Japanese have been hunting whales for more than 1,000 years, and dozens of shrines, regional festivals and religious ceremonies are centered on the whale. To be sure, the popularity of whale meat, which was a vital source of protein after World War II, has declined substantially in
Japan in the years following the 1986 international moratorium on commercial whale hunts.

But for many elderly and middle-aged Japanese, the whale is embedded in their taste buds, if not their psyches, and they are willing to pay a premium to eat it.

Whale bacon costs about $150 a bound in gourmet food stores compared with $100 a pound for top-quality beef. Many Japanese are willing to shell out $50 or $80 a person to dine on whale meat delicacies in restaurants. A sliver of whale bacon about the size of a business card costs $5.

“Eating whale is as symbolic and important to the Japanese as saving the whale is to us.” said an American biologist who opposes Japanese whaling but acknowledges cultural differences in the way the two countries view the whale.

“Our only hope is that younger generations of Japanese will see things differently,” said the biologist, who is a member of the International Whaling Commission and spoke on condition of anonymity.

Japanese Fisheries Ministry officials dispute United States charges that Japan is violating international whaling treaties. The officials maintain that their whale hunts are permitted by the International Whaling Commission, which, when it banned commercial whaling, allowed whales to be killed for scientific purposes.

Japan caught about 400 minke whales under the scientific research exemption last year. After the scientific data was collected, the whale meat was sold to fish markets and restaurants like Taruichi. Oil and other byproducts from the whales were used to make cosmetics and perfumes. The proceeds are used to help finance the research.

Scientists from the Institute of Cetacean Research in Tokyo oversee the whaling expeditions. While the institute makes about $35 million a year from the sale of whale meat from its scientific catches, the research costs about $40 million a year. The institute receives a government subsidy of $5 million a year to offset its shortfall.
Minoru Morimoto, Japan’s whaling commissioner, said that Japan had resumed hunting sperm and Bryde’s whales because research data suggested that their populations had sufficiently recovered to allow the scientific catches.

Japan is particularly interested in understanding the eating habits of larger whales like these, which many Japanese scientists, Mr. Morimoto said, believe are diminishing Japan’s seafood supply.

While conservationists concede that Japan’s scientific expeditions can be justified under whaling commission rules, they maintain that Japan is using research whaling as a cover for commercial whaling because the meat ends up in the marketplace. They also say that the same research could be conducted without killing so many whales.

“It’s all one big facade,” said Sanae Sida, a spokeswoman for the Greenpeace environmental group in Tokyo. “With today’s high technology and advances in science, the Japanese government expects us to believe that the only way to obtain this research is by killing the animals.”

Several members of the International Whaling Commission’s science committee said in interviews that they believed Japan could conduct its whaling research using nonlethal techniques like biopsy darts. The projectiles are used to retrieve a small amount of whale tissue, which is used for DNA testing.

“DNA samples can tell us virtually everything we need to know about whale populations,” said Michael F. Donoghue, a biologist for New Zealand’s Conservation Department. “You simply don’t have to kill these animals anymore for science.”

But Seiji Oshumi, director of the Cetacean Research Institute, said his researchers performed more than 100 different scientific tests on the whales, including determining toxicity levels of internal organs and stomach contents, which he said required the whales to be killed.

While the legitimacy of Japan’s scientific whale hunts is likely to be debated for some time, their immediate beneficiaries are ordinary Japanese like Naoshi Goto, a 66-year-old dentist, who recently enjoyed a bowl of whale soup at Taruichi.
“As a child, we ate miso soup with whale meat every New Year’s Eve,” Mr. Goto said. “It was a centuries-old tradition in my village. You can’t imagine how precious this soup is to me right now.”