

## Intangible Food Heritage : Dynamics of Whale Meat Foodways in an Age of Whale Meat Rarity

著者(英)	Jun Akamine
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## **Intangible Food Heritage: Dynamics of Whale Meat Foodways in an Age of Whale Meat Rarity**

**Jun Akamine**

*Nagoya City University, Japan*

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### **Abstract**

Whaling has been a high political issue for the last several decades. One of the main points in dispute is how "traditional" is whale meat consumption custom in Japan. This question is often discussed both in terms of history and the quantity consumed. However, this paper will investigate the manner of consumption from the perspective of whale meat foodways in relation to changes in lifestyles in Japan, especially after the 1960s, in what we call the "rapid economic growth period". Two examples that support whale meat foodways as an intangible cultural heritage in Japan are examined. One is "fish sausage," a Japanese invention, which once was made of tuna and whale and became "people's food" in the 1960s, when Japanese commercial whaling was at its peak. We favored it not because we appreciate intangible whale meat, but because we used it as a substitute for "real" sausage. Another example is the inheritance of attitudes toward whale meat foodways in the Edo Period: that is making good use of whale meat. This can be seen clearly in the recent appreciation of whale tongue recipes. Whale tongue was not

considered suitable for food in the Edo Period because of its oily taste and hard texture. When many other species were regulated and only meat from minke whale was available in the marketplace in the late-1980s, whale specialists developed the whale tongue dish. This was possible because of their knowledge of whales and whale meat, as well as from their wise use attitude, which is the inheritance from whale meat foodways prevalent in the Edo Period.

## 1. Introduction

This paper aims to outline current whale meat foodways in Japan in an age in which whale meat is a rare resource, from a social historical perspective of Japanese foodways. While some see whale meat as a traditional food culture in Japan, others see it as a modern fabrication. Although these two opinions are opposite, it is essentially a discussion regarding the historical perception of how the modern nation-state was built after the Meiji Era. In other words, the question comes down to whether or not the custom of whaling could have existed without the State's involvement. In this paper, I investigate (1) the origin of institutionalized whaling in Japan during the Edo Period (1603–1868), (2) the process of whale meat becoming a “people's food” during the post-war economic growth period, and (3) whale meat as a rare resource after commercial whaling was temporarily suspended in the late-1980s.

The second section of this paper summarizes whaling and whale meat consumption in Japan, and the third section addresses whale meat foodways during the Edo Period, the zenith of the Japanese whaling industry. The fourth section discusses the process by which whale meat became a “people's food” during the post-war economic growth in Japan. One of the staple post-war school lunches was *kujira no tatsuta-age* (deep-fried whale meat). However, school lunches must be considered within the larger framework of the “nutrition improvement program,” which was influenced significantly by American values. This program was characterized by an increase of fat and meat consumption. However, such a change did not happen overnight, rather this process occurred through the medium of “fish sausage” which had whale meat as its main ingredient.

When the world's whaling industry began to diminish in the 1970s, whale meat became a rare and high-end dish. When this happened, parts that were not traditionally consumed were processed in new ways so they could be served as food. It was the efforts of those involved and their deep understanding of the whale that enabled this flexibility. Therefore, the final section will address such trends toward a better understanding of whale product foodways as an intangible heritage.

## 2. A Brief History of Whaling in Japan

According to the Institute of Cetacean Research, 8 families and 40 species of cetaceans occur in the waters around Japan (Institute of Cetacean Research 2007), approximately half of the entire 85 species that exist globally. As is evident from the Mawaki ruins in the Noto Peninsula (Ishikawa Prefecture), the Japanese have been using cetaceans for at

least the last 6,000 years. Various whales were utilized and a whaling culture developed in many regions of Japan because of the favorable ecological conditions. Since this paper attempts to demonstrate that whaling represents an intangible heritage, including whalers' traditional knowledge of whales as well as butchering and food preparation techniques, attention is paid first to these ecological conditions.

In the sixteenth century organized whale hunting methods were developed, followed by the creation of whaling specialist teams, known as *kujira-gumi* (or whaling parties). Famous *kujira-gumi* include the Ukitsu-gumi of Muroto (current Kochi Prefecture), Wada-gumi of Taiji (current Wakayama Prefecture) and Masutomi-gumi of Hirado (current Nagasaki Prefecture). Many others could be found across the country. At the same time a domestic distribution system of commodities was developed across the nation, and the whale meat trade increased in volume and value. Morita Katsuaki, a historian specializing in whaling, calls this the "whaling revolution" (Morita 1994).

Whaling has been regulated by the International Whaling Commission (IWC) since 1948, when it was established as the governing body to administer the 1946 International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling (ICRW). However, the ICRW regulates only the 13 largest whale species, and excludes small whales and dolphins. In Japan, small-species whaling is practiced and regulated by governments and municipalities. Also, scientific whaling is conducted under special permit, as specified by article 8 of the ICRW.

"Small-type coastal whaling" is conducted on vessels up to 48 t, equipped with 50 mm bore whaling guns. This method is currently used in five regions: Abashiri (Hokkaido Prefecture), Hakodate (Hokkaido Prefecture), Ayukawa (Miyagi Prefecture), Wada (Chiba Prefecture), and Taiji (Wakayama Prefecture). As of 2010, the maximum number of whales permitted to be taken each year is 66 Baird's beaked whales (*Berardius bairdii*), 72 short-finned pilot whales (*Globicephala macrorhynchus*: 36 from northern stocks and 36 from southern stocks), and 20 false killer whales (*Pseudorca crassidens*). Dolphins are also harvested by drive hunting and harpoon hunting. Whaling requires permission from the Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, with the period and number of days regulated by the central government.

Scientific whaling is officially allowed by the IWC under special permit. Two Japanese programs are currently conducted: the Whale Research Program under Special Permit in the Antarctic Ocean (JARPA), since 1987, and the Whale Research Program under Special Permit in the Northwest Pacific Ocean (JARPEN), since 1994. JARPA's first term targeted minke whales (*Balaenoptera acutorostrata*)<sup>1</sup> and continued until 2004. It was expected to target 300 whales ( $\pm 10\%$ ) from 1988 to 1994, and 400 whales ( $\pm 10\%$ ) from 1995 to 2004. JARPA II was launched in 2005, with a limit of 850 minke whales ( $\pm 10\%$ ), 50 fin whales (*Balaenoptera physalus*), and 50 humpback whales (*Megaptera novaeangliae*).<sup>2</sup> JARPEN, launched in 1994 to clarify the stock structure of whales in the Northwest Pacific Ocean, completed its first term in 1999 and has been in its second term (JARPEN II) since 2000 (preparation period 2000–2001). JARPEN targeted only minke whales, and was limited to 100 captures. JARPEN II allowed the capture of 100 minke whales as well as 50 Bryde's whales (*Balaenoptera edeni*), and 10 sperm whales

**Table 1** Target species, planned number, and actual number in whale research program under special permit (2005–2010)

		the Antarctic Ocean			the Northwest Pacific Ocean			
		MK	FN	HP	MK	SP	SE	BR
planned number		850±10%	50*	50	220	10	100	50
actual number	2005	853	10	-	220	5	100	50
	2006	505	3	-	195	6	100	50
	2007	551	0	0**	207	3	100	50
	2008	679	1	0**	169	2	100	50
	2009	506	1	0**	162	1	100	50
	2010	170	2	0**	119	3	100	50

Source: Press releases from Japanese Fisheries Agency and Institute of Cetacean Research.

Legend: BR: Bryde's whale; FN: fin whale; HP: humpback whale; MK: minke whale; SP: sperm whale; SE: Sei whale.

\* Ten in 2005 and 2006.

\*\* Research postponed.

(*Physeter macrocephalus*). At the official 2002 start, an additional 50 sei whales (*Balaenoptera borealis*) were allowed (increased to 100 from 2005). During the official JARPN II period, coastal scientific whaling was conducted on 50 minke whales, with cooperation from small-type coastal whaling vessels in Kushiro and Ayukawa. Since 2005 this was conducted twice a year in both locations, and the planned number of minke whales was increased to 120. The planned whaling counts for the current scientific whaling period and the actual number after 2005 are summarized in Table 1.

The amount of whale meat supplied from scientific whaling is 5,000 t, and together with the 100 t from small-type coastal whaling and 1,000 t from dolphin hunting, Japan's overall general whale meat supply is an estimated 6,000 t (Sekiguchi 2010: 177).

### 3. Whale Meat Consumption in Japan's Food History: Chinese Medicine and *Geiniku Chomikata*

After the “whaling revolution” whales and whaling began to be documented and recorded in various forms (Morita 1994: 210). This is illustrated not in secret recipe books distributed only among the nobility, but in Japan's very first publicly issued cookbook, *Ryori Monogatari* (*Cooking Story*) (Anonymous 1643).

*Ryori Monogatari* consists of two parts. The first describes cooking methods categorized by materials, and the second introduces the making of condiments like fish stock and *iri-sake* (a kind of dried bonito extracted and boiled down with *sake*) and recipes in order of importance. It is noteworthy that sea bream is the very first entry, an illustration of food values at that time, and showing that sea bream was considered the most delicious dish. The development of the fishing industry coincided with the development of the domestic distribution system in the late 16th century, and this gave

marine fish a main role in the Japanese banquet. Considering that freshwater carp was the supreme delicacy until the Middle Ages, it can be seen that this shift from freshwater to saltwater represented the beginning of modern cooking (Hirano 1988; Harada 1989). Whale meat is the eighth entry under saltwater *fish*. The book introduces recipes using whale intestines, including those for soups, *sashimi*, and mixed dishes (Hirano 1988: 14).

These cooking techniques were not merely applied for the pursuit of delicious tastes with a luxurious gourmet approach. This period was influenced by Chinese medicine, which developed during the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644), and there existed a scholarly approach to recognizing the scientific structures of various food ingredients. Not only did a following of Chinese medicinal science appear, but there was also an attempt to shed its influence. One pioneering work was the 12-volume *Honcho Shokkan* (*Our country's food encyclopedia*) published by Hitomi Hitsudai in 1695. This is not a translation of Chinese medicine, but a collection of scientific reflections on individual Japanese food ingredients. This publication can be considered the first step toward the development of medicines in Japan (Morita 1994).

This was very significant regarding the handling of whale, which was not consumed in China. Whales are introduced in the ninth volume of the *Honcho Shokkan*. It begins with a description, followed by a summary including migration habits and forms of North Pacific right whales (*Eubalaena japonica*) (Shimada 1980). *Honcho Shokkan* discusses how to use not only whale meat, fat, intestines, bones, and tails, but also the penis and teeth, which demonstrates that already at this time every part of the whale was used.

Knowledge about whale meat was accumulated in this way and eventually concentrated in the *Geiniku Chomikata*, a whale cookbook written in 1832. The book is always mentioned in literature concerning the Japanese whaling history, but it was not a separate publication. Rather it was published as an appendix to *Isanatori Ekotoba* (*Whalers' illustrated story*), which illustrates the whaling methods of the Masutomi-gumi, based in Hirado. This book describes whaling boats, hunting methods, processing and includes a whale part vocabulary, among other topics, with alternate text and illustrations (Harada 1989; Nakazono and Yasunaga 2009).

*Geiniku Chomikata* is a “whale meat encyclopedia” that divides whales into 70 parts and introduces recipes for each. The parts are introduced with descriptions of the appropriate thickness and size, and also whether a part should be eaten raw or salted. Other cooking methods appropriate for the various parts include raw, fried, boiled, soups, deep fried, mixed, stir-fried, pickled with vinegar, pickled with sake lees or *miso*, with *kudzu* starch sauce, and with scrambled eggs. Some parts include different recipes for both raw and salted preparations. For example, one relatively easy general recipe is to mix raw or salted whale meat with soy sauce, *iri-sake* or *sanbaizu* (a sauce of *sake*, soy sauce and vinegar). However, for tail skin, for example, the book describes a complicated cooking method: “chop into small pieces, cook in water for half a day while often changing the water, and it will become very soft. Wash well with water, cook well in *sake*, and eat with sugar or *kudzu* starch sauce; it is not too oily, and is extremely delicious”. The desalinating methods are described in detail for each part: hot water, lukewarm water, or splash with hot water and rinse with cold water. In addition, each

part must be stored in a different way. For example, black skin “keeps well when fried in oil, but tends to go bad soon when only boiled.”

Blood vessels found in the stomach are the only part deemed unusable for either fertilizer or food, and the liver “seems to be used as fertilizer, but the details are uncertain.” Of the rest of the 68 edible parts, six, including the duodenum, are classified for “low-rank people.” Sixteen whale parts, including the tail skin, are considered better in young whales, and the spleen is the only part that is better in old whales. Another interesting point is that seven parts—meat around the otolith, tongue, lower jaw (of Pacific Northern right whales and gray whales), tooth gum base, esophagus and stomach—were thought to be “heavy” and not valued highly. As mentioned later, today whale tongue is considered a delicacy, but at the time oily parts were considered heavy and not popular.

One can only show surprise at the extensive knowledge of the whale as demonstrated in this volume. Nevertheless, we would get the point if we look into the mature knowledge environment in the early 19th century and consider that *Geiniku Chomikata* was not meant to be a whale meat cookbook, but the appendix to *Isanatori Ekotoba*. For example, *Tofu Hyakuchin* (*Tofu encyclopedia*) published in 1782 is an interesting document because of its attempt to enjoy *tofu* cooking intellectually. Cookbooks until then discussed seasonal materials and menu combinations, and introduced recipes accordingly. *Tofu Hyakuchin* was innovative in its focus on one dish—*tofu*—and demonstrated 100 types of recipes categorized by grade. It also attempted to satisfy intellectual tastes, by providing abundant information on *tofu*, including writings, Chinese poetry, Japanese *waka* and *haiku* poetry, and even Chinese literature (Harada 2005a).

After *Tofu Hyakuchin*, encyclopedic cookbooks that focused on a comprehensive description of one ingredient, generally called “hyakuchin-mono” (one hundred novelties), became popular. There were books issued on the sea bream (1785), sweet potato (1789), pike eel (1795), and *konjac* (1846). In other words, when *Geiniku Chomikata* is seen within the context of the “hyakuchin-mono” culture, which endeavored to satisfy intellectual curiosity as well as people’s desire for delicious tastes, instead of merely as a specialized book describing whale meat and its various recipes, it can also be understood that it played a part in the development of foodways in that period.

#### 4. Whale Meat as a “People’s Food”: School Lunches and Fish Sausages

It is true that even with the *kujira-gumi* during the Edo Period, the main players in the “whaling revolution” in the late 16th century, the economic pillar was whale oil and not whale meat. At that time only whale parts with less oil and considered tasty were used for food, and the oily parts were used to extract oil. Yamashita Shoto, the whaling historian, states that “it was after the 1960s, when Japan faced a post-war food shortage followed by a reduction in whaling limits, that whale meat became one of the main products of whaling in the Southern Ocean” (Yamashita 2004: 217).

Indeed, whale meat, which was dependent on the chaotic post-war domestic market,

could not compete with whale oil, an internationally-traded product that was expected to help acquire foreign currency. However, let us look at whale meat as a “food,” and not as a product dependent on economics. For example, in the period from 1934, when Japanese whaling ships first sailed to the Southern Ocean, to when whaling in the Southern Ocean was suspended because of World War II, the supply of whale meat, including that from coastal whaling, increased from 30,000 to 60,000 t per year, and is estimated to have been averaged 50,000 t a year (Moronuki and Morishita 2010: 56). As mentioned in the first section, Japan’s whale meat supply today is 6,000 t at most (Sekiguchi 2010: 177), meaning there was ten times as much whale meat supplied before the war. In addition, the population of Japan was a little over half of that today (approximately 70 million, compared with today’s approximately 126 million), further increasing the estimated consumption of whale meat per person.

This shows the claim that “whale meat was not importantly consumed before the World War II” misses the mark (Sakuma and Ishii 2011). Nevertheless, this figure does not indicate that whale meat was consumed uniformly throughout Japan. For example, according to the “Research by product: distributed amount by prefecture”, conducted in 2008 by Kyodo Senpaku that provide ships for scientific whaling, the top two prefectures for individual whale meat consumption per year are Nagasaki (197 grams) and Saga (168 grams), indicating that even today whale meat is consumed mostly in Western Japan (Kyodo Senpaku Inc. 2008). However, I will defer until the future identification of whale meat cultures by region.

In the following section I discuss the qualitative matter of post-war whale meat consumption, i.e., how the 226,000 t of whale meat, the highest level recorded, was consumed in 1962. For this, I examine on school lunches during the post-war recovery (1945–1954) and on fish sausages in the following economic growth era (1955–1973).

#### **4.1 School Lunches and Whale Meat**

LARA (Licensed Agencies for Relief in Asia), GARIOA (Government Appropriation for Relief in Occupied Areas) and UNICEF contributed greatly to the development of school lunch programs. From April 1952, all Japanese elementary schools began offering school lunches that consisted of bread, powdered milk, and side dishes. A typical school lunch menu of that year was a bread roll, powdered milk, deep-fried whale meat, chopped cabbage and jam. This was simply because whaling was advocated by the occupational GHQ (General Headquarters). However, it should be noted that deep-fried whale meat was not the only popular dish, since there was also curry rice and deep-fried bread coated with sugar.

The new menus were designed to supply fat and adequate calories, and this was what helped strengthen Japanese physique and change tastes after the war. Ishikawa Naoko, a foodways scholar, states the school lunch system, based on bread and milk, was what promoted the Westernization of food at home in Japan (Ehara *et al.* 2009: 314). The Westernization of food was part of not only school lunches but also the lifestyle improvement program during the post-war recovery. This state-guided program included a shift from the pre-war carbohydrate-centered meals to meals that supplied more protein

and fat. Some good examples are the “kitchen car,” a large bus converted to provide cooking lessons and that circulated in various regions, and the “frying pan movement,” which promoted the use of fat and oil. The kitchen car was a campaign for improving nutrition, a joint project between Japan and the USA. The frying pan movement was proposed by the Ministry of Health and Welfare to “cook an oily dish with a frying pan once a day.” These programs not only aimed to increase the intake of fat and protein, which had hitherto been lacking in the Japanese diet, but also to promote a shift from a rice-centered to a flour-centered foodway (Suzuki 2003; Ehara *et al.* 2009).

The amount of rice consumption fell from a yearly 160 kg per capita before World War II to 71 kg per capita in 1986. This was the result of an increase in side dish consumption, a shift from fish to meat, and high-calorie foods taking the center stage on the dinner table (Harada 2005a). Ishige Naomichi, a cultural anthropologist of food, (1989) calls this shift from a rice-centered meal view to a side dish meal a “transition from abstinence-type meals to pleasure-type meals” (Ishige 1989: 25). Concurrent with the increasing ratio of side dishes on the dinner table, new ingredients and new recipes were introduced, and Japanese eating habits diversified. The role of whale meat in this 30-year transition process was in no way small.

#### 4.2 Fish Sausages and Whale Meat

Meat eaten during the Meiji Period (1868–1912) was mostly beef and chicken, which was already traditionally eaten, was excluded. It was only from the Taisho Period (1912–1926) that the demand for pork grew. This was because hotels, restaurants and ships on overseas routes began to demand ham and bacon. Furthermore, in 1918 it was decided to add ham to navy meals. During this time a ham sausage-like product that used fish was developed.

However, it was not until after 1952 that a truly original Japanese fish sausage was developed. Harada Nobuo, the top specialist on Japanese food history, states that “the US’s hydrogen bomb experiment in the Bikini Atoll in March 1954 caused the price of tuna to fall drastically, and there was a problem of how to get rid of the remaining tuna. When this was processed into a fish sausage, the product became tremendously popular; this was the beginning of the astounding growth of the fish sausage” (Harada 2005a: 206). This is substantiated by the production of fish sausage increasing from a mere 229 t in the previous year to 1,995 t (a nine-fold increase) in 1954, the year of the experiment in the Bikini Atoll, and by another five times in the following year. The growth from the 1960s is particularly significant, peaking at 180,000 t in 1965, 821 times the production of 1953 (Harada 2005b: 139).

Because the fish sausage tended to be accepted by those that were not familiar with meat, Harada assesses it by stating “the fish sausage was consumed not as fish but as meat to these people, and supported the shift from fish to meat at a subconscious level” (Harada 2005a: 206). It is certainly interesting that the fish sausage helped bridge the transition from fish to meat and included tuna as its main ingredient. However, the price drop due to the hydrogen bomb test surely cannot be the sole reason.

Kishimoto (2006: 15) who studies whaling history in and around Kitakyushu and

Shimonoseki, introduces an interview with an employee of a major fisheries company who said, “in the late 1950s the fish sausage was pushed by the rising price of tuna (after damage caused by rumors calmed down), so the ingredients gradually shifted towards a meat mix, with 50% pork, 10% meat fat, 20% whale and 20% tuna.” And, Nasu, a whale scientist (1996: 52) recalls that “the difference in processed whale meat products before and after the war was Westernization. The processed sausage was created with 50% whale meat and 50% tuna.” These remarks must, of course, be verified. The present paper infers that as Nasu declares, whale meat addition to “fish” sausage would have made it taste closer to meat.

### **4.3 Food during the Economic Growth Period**

Fish sausages were produced at a significant rate in the mid-1950s, and subsequently fell after their peak in the mid-1960s. This seems to be a representative food of the years of rapid economic growth in Japan. During this period, Japan broke out of poverty and promoted modernization and convenience in food. For example, the instant-ramen introduced in 1958 initiated the trend in instant foods. The spread of electric rice cookers, propane gas, town gas, refrigerators, and freezers further promoted modernization and convenience in cooking and storing behavior. When considering such lifestyle changes, it cannot be ignored that fish sausage was a convenient preserved food that could be stored at room temperature. That is, Japan’s home refrigeration systems were developed during the 1960s, and in 1965 only 50% of households owned a refrigerator.

Whale meat served in school lunches during the post-war food shortage era was tangible. However, whale meat included in the fish sausage during the financial growth period was intangible. I was born in 1967 and grew up in the mountains, far from whaling regions; I remember only a few times when deep-fried whale meat was served at school, but the sausages I ate as a child were always fish sausages. It was in this way that whale meat became a “people’s food” during the economic growth period.

## **5. Whale Meat Foodways in an Age of Whale Meat Rarity: Diversification of Food and Information**

Through TV and magazines people are able to see meals at high-end restaurants, which they would not actually afford to visit themselves. This indicates the development of information on food separate from the actual food. Contemporary Japanese society, often referred to as a “100 million population total gourmet,” is in a period of the “informationalization” of food (Ishige 1989: 36).

The “informationalization” of food happened to coincide with a decrease in whale meat supply owing to the temporary suspension of commercial whaling. The information that “whale meat will no longer be available” was a serious issue for whalers who supported the whaling culture, as well as those involved in its distribution and cooking. Yamashita has a bird’s-eye view of global whaling history, and has pointed out relentlessly that “whaling and people’s meals grew further apart, and a large portion of whale meat was used as ingredients in the food industry, so now only a few of the

70-plus recipes introduced in *Geiniku Chomikata* remain. We not only depleted the whale stocks; in the process of shifting towards modern whaling we also drained the past whaling culture” (Yamashita 2004: 284).

Yamashita’s opinion is only partly true. However, the *Geiniku Chomikata* was, although essentially a whale meat encyclopedia, a representation of local food culture in current Nagasaki Prefecture during a feudal era when nation and state were not yet unified. Moreover, Japanese foodways changed dramatically overall, and it is unrealistic to hope to completely retain only the whale meat foodways from 200 years ago. Furthermore, food heritage is not always presented in tangible form. There does exist an intangible heritage. In the following section we will look at how whale tongue is appreciated today.

### 5.1 Emergence of “*Saezuri*”

Whale tongue is included in the *Geiniku Chomikata*, noted as “*saya*.” It is given a low evaluation; “the color is gray, and the taste is heavy. It is good grilled, in a soup with vegetables, or put through hot water and eaten with *sanbaizu*. If it is salted, it should be thinly sliced and steeped in water to desalinate, and eaten as described above (Nakazono and Yasunaga 2009: 274).

As seen above, in the third section, *Geiniku Chomikata* described parts rich with fat as “heavy.” According to Hino Koji, involved in the whale meat business in Nagasaki City, “whale tongue fat is extremely clean, and in the Southern Ocean whaling ships, was often used for oil”. However, the decision to suspend temporarily commercial whaling changed the Southern Ocean whaling scene, and made ships bring back as much whale meat as they could for food. In this situation, they brought back “heart, stomach, tongue, everything” (Hino 2005: 33).

Hino discusses how whale tongue came to be distributed nationally, which it had never been before. Ohnishi Mutsuko, the manager of a whale meat specialist restaurant “Tokuya” in Osaka, was featured on TV and introduced one particular part, “This is called *saezuri*. It’s whale tongue.” This and the nice ring of the word *saezuri* helped to make it a national sensation (Hino 2005: 32). According to Ohnishi, this TV introduction was made around the time of the 45th IWC annual meeting, held in Kyoto in 1993.

It is true that this TV introduction advertised the name *saezuri*, but this name was already commonly used in Osaka. *Saezuri* is known for its elasticity and softness, but also somewhat grotesque to look at (remember its introduction as “gray” in the *Geiniku Chomikata*). It is considered a chef’s skill that can refine it to a delicious-looking dish. This is why the whale meat specialist shop in Osaka particularly wanted this part. However, in her interview, Ohnishi said she was dumbfounded when she went to purchase the whale meat as by-products of the scientific whaling conducted by the Japanese government (JARPA) for the first time, after the temporary suspension of commercial whaling in the Southern Ocean. She recalls there was almost no whale tongue. Ohnishi thinks this is because it was considered valueless in regions east of Osaka, including Tokyo. She then requested that from the following year whale tongue also be distributed as a by-product.

Today, the minke whale is the main target of scientific whaling. According to Ohnishi, minke whale tongues are naturally soft, but those of fin whales, the main target in traditional Southern Ocean commercial whaling, were hard and difficult to process. This episode shows that, contrary to Yamashita's criticism, the food culture flexibly adapted to changes in the external social environment. Today's popularity of *saezuri* is due to the transition from fin whales of the commercial whaling era to minke whales of the scientific whaling era. Paradoxically, we could say that the resource rarity during the scientific whaling period initiated the inherited mentality of using the resource "to its fullest extent." This is the manifestation of the attitude of (1) using all parts of the whale without waste and (2) cooking and consuming in the best and most delicious form, which is traced back to the *Geiniku Chomikata*.

## 6. Conclusion: Whale Meat Foodways as an Intangible Food Heritage

This paper first summarized the history of Japan's whale meat foodways, based on whale meat foodways during the Edo Period, the peak of Japan's whale meat culture, the Japanization of Chinese medicine, which looks at the medicinal properties of plants and animals, and the context of intellectual curiosity that sought "food information" as represented in the *Tofu Hyakuchin*. The last section addressed post-war whale meat consumption, proposing that fish sausage was more influential than deep-fried whale meat in school lunches in making whale meat a "people's food." This whale meat consumption is certainly part of our food culture, but it is different from that of *Geiniku Chomikata*. However, the case of *saezuri* indicates that today's whale meat foodways in Japan inherits the spirit of *Geiniku Chomikata*: making good use of whale meat.

The economic growth period gave the Japanese a diversity of food. It is true that this diversity embellishes our lifestyles. However, it is also true that this diversity depends on ingredients collected from around the world. Even within the fishing industry, imported tuna and shrimp are stars in the food service industry, but also frequently appear at home. In contrast, although whale meat (particularly lean meat) can be found at local supermarkets, it is definitely not a generally familiar ingredient. Its price range does not quite reach that of high-end brand beef, but is in line with ordinary domestic beef, and still much more expensive than US beef, which has a strong influence on the market. To begin with, it is not always found in stores, and it should be safe to say whale meat is not consumed in general households, excluding regions around traditional coastal whaling areas.

Today, when whale meat has become a rarity, the average yearly whale meat consumption per person is estimated to be less than 50 grams. One hamburger patty is typically 30 grams, so this equals less than two hamburgers. Apart from a limited few that prefer whale meat, perhaps whale meat consumption is similar to youngsters in shopping districts choosing an "ethnic restaurant." Finally, from a social and cultural perspective, I would like to state that it is not important whether people actually choose whale meat from a diverse selection of food, but that people are able to choose whale meat if they want.

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## Notes

- 1) Although the Antarctic minke whale (*Balaenoptera bonarensis*) now is considered a different species, for convenience this distinction will not be made here.
- 2) The first two years were set aside as a preparation period, with 10 fin whales and 0 humpback whales.

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