

## Whaling

Whaling is a specialized form of going after marine life. Along with sealing, which is generally not done in the water by many cultures but on the land, whalers plied their trade in the open ocean. The whales being extremely large animals the work is dangerous and whales have been known to sink rather large ships.

Whaling has occurred in many parts of the world. Nordic cultures in Europe, the United States, Native populations in the Americas (NW Coast and Inuit for example) Bequia in the Caribbean, Pacific Islanders, Japan are some of the cultures involved.

<https://www.amnh.org/exhibitions/whales-giants-of-the-deep>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TS2u0ivo9Zc>

In virtually all cultures involved in whaling the whales have not only supplied a great deal of food (a single whale can feed seven villages), but are often involved in artistic representation.

Painting, sculpture, performance and other arts often have depictions of whales

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mz9OkG\\_BIRM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mz9OkG_BIRM)

In Norse poetry with its "kennings" A **kenning** is a metaphorical phrase or compound word used to name a person, place or thing indirectly. The ocean is known as "the whale road".

Whales were hunted by many countries for food, but largely in the US for oil rendered from blubber. Natives hunted whales pre and post contact. Early European whalers started on Long Island – whaling museum still there. Not unusual for more than half the whalers to be Natives. Later Nantucket and New Bedford in New England become significant with Basque whalers becoming involved. Later San Francisco becoming significant.

There are a number of groups that have developed which are involved with various aquatic problems. Some are highly specific—looking to protect oysters, watching out for horseshoe crabs save the whales. There are 2 main divisions – environmentalists and animal rights groups. They are often both

involved in similar issues, but sometimes from different perspectives. In some cases "animals rights activists" objected that animals have the right to stay alive. Environmentalists often argue that removal of a species from a system is ecologically damaging

Whales have been seen as the "totemic" animal for the animal rights movement. They are probably more discussed than any other animal which is endangered, so they need to be discussed here. While activists groups are in two main groups, the International Whaling Commission has defined three kinds of whaling – aboriginal, scientific and commercial.

Aboriginal whaling deals with the taking of whales by indigenous populations. Scientific whaling deals with taking of whales for the purpose of scientific work. Commercial whaling is everything else.

These categories while apparently clearly defined, clearly are not. Who, for example constitutes an aborigine? Since almost everyone is agreed that humans evolved initially in Africa, people constitute an alien or invasive species everywhere else in the world.

## SCIENTIFIC WHALING

The next question has to do with scientific whaling. What does the scientist do with the whales they have taken scientifically?

Since the meat is edible it can in fact be sold as food. So how does anyone evaluate the importance of the scientific work? Many argue that the Japanese are pretending to do scientific whaling, they are just getting around the ban on commercial whaling.

Similar comments have been made by some American politicians about the amount of money given out in grants to American researchers for "idiotic" research projects – despite the fact that in both countries there is a review process on grant applications. So Japanese scientific whaling has been attacked by "Save the whale" and other groups on the grounds that they don't think their scientific research is scientific research. Recently, Bill Gates has been giving awards and terminating them mid stream when things weren't to his liking. Similar problems are arising with the junior senator from Rhode Island

In post modern theory, there are "narratives". Narratives constitute what a person believes or thinks happened. That is, it is their story of an event. In post modernism there are no facts, just narratives and the important questions has to do with whose narrative is believed. The

underlying idea is that people who are seen as "powerless" are not believed, whereas post modernism claims to "empower" the powerless - that is to say, everyone's narrative is equally "valid". This can lead to having to believe both "a" and not "a" at the same time. Aristotle said "Don't talk to people like that".

## ABORIGINAL WHALING

One of the first things to be aware of is that the image of aboriginal whaling is that aborigines do not hunt the same way they used to. The romanticized image of the Inuit going out in kayaks using hand held harpoons. Even in the famous film *Nanook of the North* (1922), where Robert Flaherty tried to show "aboriginal seal hunting" as done by the Inuit in "traditional" style. Aboriginal whaling is involved with "natives" who took whales as part of their survival in harsh climates like the Arctic where Inuit whales.

But even in some of the shots *Nanook* (not his real name) is shown with a harpoon but on the ground his rifle is evident. This is involved in a kind of "romanticism" of native peoples. Inuits have been involved in a kind of hunting which is involved with a money economy for nearly a century. They need money to buy bullets, gas for motors and so on. So the question of aboriginal whaling or sealing is much more complex, Things which are significant in the culture may have had some changes but the role of the institution in the culture may be significant. In effect this is akin to the UN claiming that forcing prisoners to do something against their religion is "torture".

### The MAKAH Whaling Case

The Makah, a Wakashan speaking group of Indians who live in Washington State were allowed by a treaty in 1855 to be allowed to hunt animals they regularly hunted. This included whales which were taken in the Atlantic. At one point, when the California Gray Whale had dropped to unprecedented low numbers, the Makah voluntarily gave up whaling.

By 1999 the whales had made a remarkable come back and were removed from the endangered species list, the Makah decided to take one whale a year. This was vehemently objected to by animal rights groups (but not in environmental groups).

There are restraints on the hunt. The International Whaling Commission permits four cartridges in whaling: .458 Winchester Magnum, .460 Weatherby Magnum, .50 BMG, and the .577 Tyrannosaur, which the Makah fired in the 1999 hunt.

Like the Inuit case, this is not a matter of needing the whale for food, but for something more complex in terms of cultural maintenance. People (especially aboriginals) maintain this desire to control their cultures is an example of "cultural imperialism"

The Makah reservation had a number of problems from animal rights groups which included warnings made by firing shotguns at the signs indicating the reservation boundaries. This was unnerving since Sea Shepherd had been involved with terrorist acts in various parts of the world already. In addition, there was some difficulty over the appearance of a Canadian ship arriving in the area where the Makah were going to take the whale. There was no response from the American government toward the "invasion" In Sept. of 2007: Five members of the Makah Tribe went and hunted and killed a gray whale in the Strait of Juan de Fuca in a hunt that was not authorized by the tribe nor NOAA. There are a number of provisions and restrictions defined in the tribe's application which were violated and hence the hunt was unauthorized. Both the tribe and NOAA made statements condemning the unlawful hunt.

BEQUIA - St. Vincent and the Grenadines

This is one of the few places that allows whaling. Whaling was an industry in Bequia for more than 140 years Now they are allowed four whales during the four-month season from February to May. Whales are scarce and they are not always able to take even four. The whales are used for food (which tastes like very lean beef) and for some homemade remedies (homeopathic). Humpback whales were taken here.

JAPAN

Japan also poses a problem for "aboriginal" whaling. While there are Ainu and Ryukyuan peoples who seem to be in Japan longer than the "Japanese" some date the arrival of the Japanese themselves as far back as 30,000 years ago – making them in Japan longer than the Inuit have been in the arctic or the Makah have been in Washington State. So are the Japanese entitled to aboriginal status as well?

Traditional whaling in Japan was developed by a samurai and the entire hunt was organized like a military venture. There were interesting rules some of which were ecological – Japanese were not allowed to hunt female whales with calves which would result in the death of the calf as well and thereby potentially damage the stock. Basically it was done in a few villages Wada Ura in Chiba and Taiji in Wakayama prefecture. Later Ayukawa in the north was involved.

The Japanese say a whale can feed seven villages and whales that were killed had memorial plaques made for them and were mentioned in Buddhist funeral ceremonies for the dead.

The traditional whale hunt involved having a look out who sighted the whale and then relayed the sighting to the town. Everyone involved with the whale hunt got a percentage of the meat so some of the boats involved contained elderly and very young people

The Japanese came finally to have basically 2 kinds of whaling – that which took place in coastal waters and that which took place in the Antarctic

The Japanese had stopped whaling during WWII when whaling vessels were converted into war ships. After the war there were serious food problems in Japan which resulted in the US advocating that the Japanese return to whaling as a source of food. Dieticians have argued the meat is healthier than other meats in that it is very low in cholesterol

Once the whaling bans were being discussed, the Japanese argued (among other things) there were going to be major layoffs and the US suggested that the Japanese use the whale ships to deal with red meat from the US. Recall that there are also Eta or untouchables in Japan whose status had been legally removed. As compensation, the Eta have been given the jobs that deal with meat which others cannot do. There are not enough “ETA” to handle that much work so that failed as well.

While the anti-whaling crew insists that the Japanese Scientific whaling is a front to get whale meat for the rich, there is no real evidence for that at all.

As more and more non-whaling countries were motivated to join the IWC by Greenpeace (who pays their membership fees) the IWC’s regulations have moved more and more against whaling. The US and what are known as “the like minded nations” have linked with these.

Finally Japan, in frustration, withdrew from the IWC and has terminated its own Antarctic whaling and has resumed coastal whaling.

#### Icelandic whaling

Iceland had also taken whales. In their last whale hunt, one Icelander had all the meat frozen and it is sold to one restaurant in Iceland so the Icelanders would always be able to eat whale meat.

Archaeology is that discipline which studies cultures from the past through their material culture. Archaeology is largely a set of techniques that involve looking at materials that people from the past have been left behind.

Archaeologists are often historians, (often specializing in areas like the classicists who deal with ancient Greek and Roman times or Egyptologists who are interested in ancient Egyptian cultures. They are also found in anthropology and are involved in studying cultures from prehistoric times to the recent past. Archaeologist can excavate sites where there have been pre humans and even battlefields of recent wars. Archaeologists do not ignore written materials if they are there, but they are generally associated with "digs". The development in the field has largely been in terms of techniques.

In all archaeology though, the basic tenets are the same. Sites need to be excavated carefully. Usually a grid is constructed and careful records are kept and every object found has to be documented not only as to what it is (if known) but also where it was found and any other information about it.

Sites also have to be protected against vandalism and theft. Many artifacts (anything made or unmade by people) may have monetary value and so there are people who take artifacts and sell them. The problem is that the thieves of the stolen goods do not document where they were found not only in latitude and longitude, but also in depth and in association with other materials. This is in a sense a different problem on an underwater site than one on the land.

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There is a great deal of "interpretation" about the material. In some cases interpretations have been completely wrong and have been reinterpreted later on. There were stones with holes in them, which were called "banner stones". They were thought to be stones which were group markers. Later it was determined they were "shaft straighteners". Comparative work led to

the finding similar items in other cultures. If no such item can be found, the problems become greater. Proving the symbolic part of culture is often close to impossible. Typically archaeologists have used the term "religious" for objects which seem to have no "practical" or "utilitarian" value. But in more recent times, there has been a tendency to avoid such designations unless there is strong evidence. There is a field of archaeology that deals with "maritime archaeology". Some of maritime archaeology deals with "underwater archaeology" which is the "sexier" part of the field in that the archaeologists here deal with sites underwater, such as sunken ships. The archaeologists here have to be trained as divers as well as archaeologists. Not all "maritime archaeology" deals with underwater digs. Many archaeological sites are on the land and deal with areas around maritime centers.

Sometimes maritime material becomes available in "digs" which may give clues to trade routes. Archaeologists digging in the Ohio Valley for example in cultures from the Adena (circa 1000 BC to 200 BC) and Hopewell (circa 200 BC – 500 AD) periods. These are mound builders and built such cities as Cahokia (from 800 to 1400)



At some sites in the Ohio Valley have abalone shells in them. This implies there was some contact with cultures are the west coast which have access to abalone.

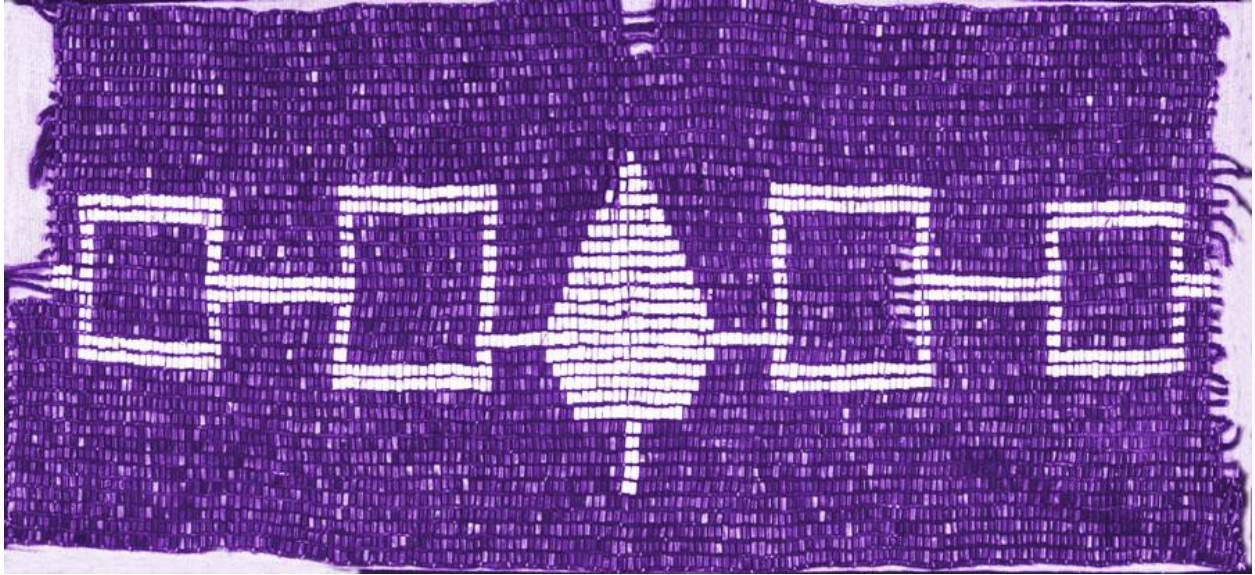


Abalone shell

Shells have many uses in addition to eating the creatures in them

NE Woodlands Indians made a kind of bead known as "wampum" from shells.





The purple from the quahog



Quahog: *Mercenaria Mercenaria*

White beads were made from the North Atlantic channeled whelk shell:  
*Busycon carica*.

This gastropod is used as food and can also be used as a musical instrument



The conch shell can be used same way in the Pacific and other parts of the world where the shell is found. The Inca used them and in the picture below the shell is used to announce the arrival of the queen



On occasion, the shell is used as a musical instrument in symphony orchestras. (La Noche de los Mayas by Revueltas)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YuQoYY5Cv8o>

at 1:09

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tilj0iNz1\\_g](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tilj0iNz1_g)

at about 20:10

Rattles are also possible, made by either arranging shells so they hit one upon the other as happens with these from the NW Coast





Turtle shell rattles are made by using the "shell" of turtles (although not sea turtles). These are typical of the Iroquois). This one is mounted on a deer hoof.



Shells are also used for decoration on clothing sometimes for decoration and sometime for the sound they make.

This calabash rattle is decorated with cowrie shells



These are dentalium shells on a dress from the North Plains



Dentalium is a large genus of tooth shells or tusk shells, marine scaphopod molluscs in the family Dentaliidae. Like wampum, which served as a kind of money, dentalium shells were used as a kind of money among the Chumash on the NW Coast. The shells were used in Europe as a source of alkali. Shells, aside from the animal within them, have many uses as money, decoration and musical instruments.

#### POLLUTION PROBLEMS

There are many forms of pollution to be considered:  
Plastic

PCBs  
Micro beads  
Heavy metals  
Radiation  
Oil

These are just some.

Things “break down” or “degrade” as a result of many things. Biodegradable means that living organisms like bacteria. Some things are photodegradable – break down by light. In all cases though, the degrading progress requires the degrading force be there. For example in some areas where biodegradable materials have been placed, the bacteria are not present and so things like lettuce leafs which should break down rapidly do not.

Oil which can be broken down by some bacteria last because the bacteria exist in sufficiently small quantities that they cannot possibly consume all the oil

One has to remember that the “degradability” of anything is contingent on the appearance in sufficient quantities to degrade it. (see the pamphlet on the “notes” page or go directly to

<http://userhome.brooklyn.cuny.edu/anthro/jbeatty/CORESEA/images/trash.pdf>

Much of the material moved into the ocean by people or natural forces, winds up in the gyres in the middle of the oceans. It has been thought that it will take decades to clean it, and it will have an astronomical cost. However a young man in Europe has come up with a possible solution.