the shift from the Old to the New Japan and show what role they now play in the architecture of the business system. I also wonder how the “choose and focus” strategic paradigm measures up in the post-global financial crisis world.

In conclusion, the book is informative and thought provoking. It is a must-read for serious scholars of Japanese business and economics and business people interested in Japan.

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**JAPAN’S WHALING: The Politics of Culture in Historical Perspective.**

The book, which is based on the author’s PhD thesis in historical sociology, has two main objectives: first, to question the existence of a “Japanese whaling culture,” often cited in support of whaling. His argument can easily be taken for an anti-whaling position had it not been for his second objective: to argue for a plural human–whale relationship where a modest coastal catch of whales can be tolerated.

In the prologue he makes it clear that his main concern is to dismantle the “whaling culture” myth favoured by some anthropologists, among whom this reviewer might be one. In particular he takes issue with what he perceives as a tendency to construct historical continuities where there are none. A major thrust of the book is therefore to emphasize historical discontinuities. In chapter 1 he sketches the history of Japanese whaling from the Tokugawa period (1600-1868) to 1945, focusing on changes in the composition of the labour force, with local participation giving way to ethnic stratified crews. In chapter 4 he goes on to argue that there was no national whale cuisine; whales were eaten only in certain regions until aggressive marketing and militaristic expansion promoted whale-eating throughout the country in the twentieth century.

A central thesis is that the introduction of “Norwegian-style” whaling in 1897 reduced a plural human–whale relationship to a single one. Whales became nothing but a resource to be exploited. His prime example is an old view among fishers that whales drove fish to shore, a view he claims is the origin for the belief that whales incarnate Ebisu, a deity of riches. This was challenged by the whaling industry and the authorities, leading to violent clashes between a whaling enterprise and the host village in 1911. The whaling company prevailed and whales were, as the argument goes, reduced to a resource (chapter 2). The old plurality of the relationship is further stressed in chapter 3, where he juxtaposes a fishery benefiting from the behaviour of
finless porpoises with the ruthless hunt of grey whales in Korean waters.

Another thesis, which seems to be somewhat peripheral to his main argument, is that sustainable use of wildlife is incompatible with a market economy (chapter 5). He calls it “the logic of overfishing.” To justify this claim he refers to the deplorable history of the International Whaling Commission (IWC) and quotes from the rhetoric of whaling entrepreneurs. Although the quotations are interesting, this is the least satisfying chapter for several reasons. He fails to link his narrative to international discourses on the ecology of whales; he stops his narrative in 1972, just when the IWC entered a more conservative period; and, not least, he fails to give his claim a theoretical foundation. He could easily have used authors such as G. Hardin (“The Tragedy of the Commons,” *Science* 162: 1243-48, 1968) and C.W. Clark (“The Economics of Overexploitation,” *Science* 181: 630-34, 1973).

What I appreciate most with this book is the material Watanabe brings forward about the 1911 riot and his attempt to trace the spread of whale meat consumption up to 1941 (although, as he admits, facing methodological problems). There is also an interesting section on the rational for wildlife protection in pre-war Japan, and those without much knowledge about Japanese whaling and the IWC will probably find something of interest. However, there are several problems with the book, some of which have already been touched upon. I do not consider his critique of the concept “culture” among these. The merit of this concept has been hotly debated even among anthropologists. My concern is how Watanabe lives up to the task he has set upon himself. Take his focus on historical discontinuities. First, he fails to note that the pelagic fleets to the end recruited many workers from the old whaling centres in the southwest and that many people from these areas moved with the whaling activities northeast. Second, conflicts between whaling enterprises and host villages are not new. Most whaling enterprises were already in the Tokugawa period highly mobile (and not localized, as claimed by Watanabe) and engaged locals only for tasks that required least skill. Moreover, the inconveniences to the fisheries were considerable and caused conflicts.

In discussing the need for plural human–whale relations Watanabe fails to note that those he criticizes point out that Japanese whalers do not only see whales as a resource but as persons in need of Buddhist ceremonies, as Ebisu, and much more. It is this plurality that sets Japanese whalers off from their Norwegian colleagues (who mostly see whales as a resource) and their Australian adversaries (who see them as solely persons). Watanabe himself is an example of this pragmatism; although believing that sustainable wildlife extraction is incompatible with markets, he endorses small-scale minke whaling for the sake of plurality.

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