

A DESCENDANT OF MOBY DICK, OR A WHITE SPERM WHALE

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“Moby Dick, or the white whale” which was written by a great novelist Herman Melville in 19th century, is commended as the highest ocean literature in the world, and a crazy devotion of the tiny man who stands opposite to the vast and mystically apprehended force, is depicted with the dignified and grandeur style in the novel.

Although, of course, Moby Dick was not a real animal but a symbol of the evil principle of the universe, it was a white sperm whale. The sperm whale is a grotesquely formed animal, but if Moby Dick were merely a huge sperm whale and not covered with the snow-white skin, it would not be so terrible. Melville explained the whiteness of the whale spending one chapter, and he emphasized the mystery of the white animal. Various nations have in some way recognized a certain royal pre-eminence in this hue, for instance, the white elephant in Siam and the white horse in Japanese shrines are the mere examples of it.

Well, does the white sperm whale really exist in the world? Sperm whales are usually black or of iron slate, although they are more or less white ventrally, or have some light streaks or mottling (Plate I. figure 1). Matthews (1938), Omura (1942) and Ohno & Fujino (1952) reported on the body colour of southern sperm whales from the Antarctic, and Omura (1950), Fujino & Others (1955) and Kimura (1957) reported on that of the sperm whales from the North Pacific. On the whales from the Atlantic, Clarke (1956) described in detail. In these five scientific reports, there is no record on the sperm whale as white as Moby Dick. Tomilin (1957) says that it is well known that Moby Dick is perhaps an albino of the sperm whale, but he does not show the specimen. A well-defined head whorl was regarded as a sign of comparative age in the sperm whale by the old time whalers (Beale, 1839). Although Matthews (1938) doubts this assumption, according to my experiences, the body colour of sperm whales gradually becomes lighter as they grow older, especially in the head. It is supposed that the whiteness of Moby Dick is due to its old age, but Melville wrote that the whale was clearly an albino.

They say that one of the materials to create the Monster Moby Dick is the Reynolds's report (1839) on the white whale in the Pacific named Mocha Dick. I am sorry I have never read the report, so I wonder whether it is scientifically true or not. At any rate, Moby Dick has been

a traditional and imaginary existence.

In the time of American whaling, Captain Ahab searched for Moby Dick throughout all the oceans in the world, frantically burning with the revengeful thought, and after he found the whale at last and a terrible scene was enacted, wound with the rope he himself threw, he was driven into the water by the whale and drowned to death.

However, in the modern whaling, a descendant of Moby Dick appeared really, and was very easily caught by a Japanese catcher boat ultimately. Captain Ahab would pay old scores hearing this news.

It was caught by the Seki-maru No. 3 in April 19th, 1957. Mr. Hiroshi Ume was the gunner in this operation. The position caught was the adjacent water to Japan, Lat. $42^{\circ}24.5'N$, Long. $148^{\circ}52.5'E$. This whale was flensed at once at Akkeshi land-station of Taiyo Fishery Co. Ltd. I regret that I did not see the whale there. But fortunately, thanks to Mr. Hironosuke Soh, a member of the company, some fine photographs were taken on the whale. I have an honour of showing the whale with the photographs.

As shown in figures from 2 to 6, the descendant of Moby Dick was completely white. Unfortunately a pink iris and a red pupil which are the second characters of the albino were not observed, but it may be appropriate that the whale should be determined as an albino.

The whale is male and 35 feet long. Therefore it is not so gigantic or grotesque like Moby Dick. If it had not been killed in young generation, it would have reigned over the sea in future like the ancestor Moby Dick.

In connection with this white whale, once a gray sperm whale was caught by a Japanese whaling fleet in the Antarctic in December 1950. Mr. Fujino took its photographs shown in figures 7 and 8. This whale is male, and is over 50 feet long. The whale is supposed to be fairly old. Head, jaw and ventral portion is very white, but dorsal side is gray and the penis is black, so this whale is not so white as the above-shown white whale. Nevertheless, this gray coloured sperm whale is a very rare one.

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EXPLANATION OF PLATES

PLATE I

- Fig. 1. A normal sperm whale from the northern Pacific in 1954.
- Fig. 2. One white and two normal sperm whales caught in adjacent waters to Japan. (Soh photo.)
- Fig. 3. The white sperm whale. Dorsal view. Anterior portion of the body is worn thinly. (Soh photo.).

PLATE II

- Fig. 4. The white sperm whale. Posterior view. (Soh photo.).
- Fig. 5. The white sperm whale. Head and lower jaw. The gray portion is abrasion. (Soh photo.).
- Fig. 6. The white sperm whale. Ventral view. (Soh photo.).

PLATE III

- Fig. 7. A gray sperm whale caught in the Antarctic. Posterior view. Ventral portion is lighter, but penis is black. Blackness of the right upper jaw is blood. (Fujino photo.).
- Fig. 8. The gray sperm whale. Anterior view. Head is very white. (Fujino photo.).





