

# Canada and Japan in the Twentieth Century

Reviewed by Floyd Cowan

**BOOK REVIEWED:** John Schultz and Kimitada Miwa (eds.), Oxford University Press, *Canada and Japan in the Twentieth Century* (Toronto: Oxford University Press Canada, 1991), xii+262pp. (The Japanese version: ジョン・シュルツ/三輪公忠編, 『カナダと日本—21世紀への架橋—』 (東京: 彩流社, 1991), 409 pp.)

The editors of this compilation have brought together fifteen articles concerning Canada - Japan relations in the twentieth century. They have chosen eight topics which are important to the understanding of the interaction between these two very dissimilar countries, then selected works that are extremely well researched and well written by authors who are completely conversant with their subjects. For example, the book is enhanced by the work of Charles J. McMillan who tackled the complex trading situation which exists between Canada, Japan and the United States. Mr. McMillan served from 1983-1987 as Senior Policy Advisor to Brian Mulroney, currently Canada's Prime Minister. He was a member of the Canadian delegation at Economic Summits in Bonn, Tokyo and Venice and is the author of more than sixty articles and six books. His experience is evident in the adroit way he handles what could be a very cumbersome subject.

Another factor which makes this book important to those studying the relationship between the two countries is that for all of the subjects, save one, contributions on each topic have been made by both a Canadian and Japanese writer. This has its advantages in that it provides a balanced view but the disadvantage, which is really quite striking in this relatively short work of 223 pages, is that often the same

## BOOK REVIEWS

material is covered two and three times. In some instances this cannot be avoided and is beneficial in that the reader understands that a similar perspective is enjoyed both by Japanese and Canadians.

For the average Canadian, *Canada and Japan* may prove to be an eye-opener in that it provides insight into the role of Canada, and its citizens, in world events where other nations have been the major players but Canada has contributed significantly and received little, if any, recognition.

From the opening line of the Preface the editors acknowledge the vast differences that exist between the two countries and the impossibility of 'comparing and contrasting' the nations and their people. "Unlike much of the contact between West and East," the Preface begins, "relations between Canada and Japan have been marked from the outset by a remarkable degree of mutuality." This one word, "mutuality" acknowledges the dissonance as well as the resonance in the relationship. "Certainly," the Preface states, "the first thing that emerges as one considers the relationship between Canada and Japan is the overwhelmingly obvious differences between the two countries." The manner in which Japanese immigrants were received when they arrived in Canada is strikingly different from the reception Canadians enjoyed on arrival in Japan, as the first section makes evident.

In the first section, "Strangers in a Strange Land", Patricia E. Roy's *Not All Were Welcome: Canada and the Dilemma of Immigration* explores the reception which Japanese immigrants received when they arrived in British Columbia and began working in the fishing industry.

The industrious and hard working Japanese were met by hostile and suspicious Canadians who felt that "steps must be taken to prevent the population from being overrun by Japanese."

Indeed, steps were taken by the concerned governments to limit immigration. A "Gentleman's Agreement" was eventually reached in which Japan voluntarily agreed to limit the number of emigrants from their country. Yuko Ohara in a later chapter also touches on the "Gentleman's Agreement", but though she provides more details she does not give the reader a clue as to why the Japanese agreed to such an arrangement. It is not until the thirteenth chapter, John T Saywell's *Continuity, Discontinuity and Asymmetry in Canada-Japan Relations*

that the reader is, almost inadvertently, informed that, “Nor did Japan have any desire to encourage emigration, its energy being directed towards the settlement of Hokkaido, and was prepared to ‘voluntarily’ limit emigration...”.

Aside from this Roy does a thorough job of exploring the problems encountered by Japanese immigrants to British Columbia and the treatment they received. Discrimination did not end with the immigrant but was a continual problem for their descendants, who were Canadian citizens.

This theme is picked up by Kazuko Tsurumi in her article *Japanese Canadians: The War Time Experience*. By focusing on Steveston, British Columbia, she is able to highlight the problems which occurred during World War II when feelings were running high and Canadian government policy was dictated more by the strong emotions being felt rather than a cool and objective appraisal of the situation.

As a Canadian reader, I found this chapter of particular interest in that it provides insight into how the Japanese Canadians felt about Canada and Japan, before and after, the war. Recent attention in Canada to the redress issue tended to focus more on the material loss of Japanese Canadians and the mistake the Canadian government made.

One very enlightening section is an interview with Urashima-san, born in Mio village, who lived in Steveston from 1906 until the Pacific War broke out. Urashima-san relates what happened when the Japanese Consul made a speech to the Japanese Canadians in the town.

“Should a war break out, he said, ... those who had acquired Canadian citizenship would surely have an evil intention to fight against Japan. ‘I do not,’ he continued, ‘wish to speak to those “black-haired white men.” If it were in Japan their heads would be cut off. I, for myself, however, am a Japanese. I, therefore, feel sorry for the “black-haired white men”. So I advise you to sign your application to the Immigration Office for departure.’ In order to acquire a fishing licence, one had to get Canadian citizenship. So all of us fishermen had Canadian citizenship. We were all stunned and silenced by the consul, who to us then was just as suprême as the Emperor.”

It was a difficult time for Japanese Canadians and Tsurumi effectively

shows the strain these people were under, a point of view not adequately explored in Canadian writing. This chapter is a fine contribution to the understanding of a very trying period which most Canadians still do not have a full understanding of — as the debate over redress made evident.

The focus of the book then shifts across the Pacific to what Canadians were doing in Japan previous to World War II. The *Missionary Connection* contains two enlightening articles on the Churches, the missionaries and their impact on Japan. A. Hamish Ion picks up the subject and explores it from the arrival at Yokohama of the first missionaries, George Cochran and Davidson McDonald, through seventy years of work of considerable achievement — despite the failure to convert very many Japanese. Canadians can take pride in much of the valuable work done by these people and the legacy which, in some instances, is still evident today.

Kimitada Miwa then goes from the general to the specific in his contribution, *E.H. Norman Revisited*. E.H. Norman was born in Karuizawa, Nagano Prefecture, the son of a Canadian Methodist missionary. In 1939 Norman entered the Canadian Department of External Affairs and after the war returned to Tokyo as head of the Canadian Liaison Mission to the Allied Occupation of Japan. During the 1950s Norman was accused by McCarthyites of being a Communist which embroiled him in controversy and led to his suicide in 1957.

Mr. Miwa provides a sympathetic view of Norman and one that is possibly slightly divergent from Canadian perceptions of the controversial figure. In his closing paragraph the contributor notes, “Norman’s concern for the ordinary Japanese... his instinctive grasp of the essence of his land of birth, and his ability to translate these insights for other Westerners made him a special figure for the Japanese. Subsequent events, particularly the circumstances of his death, may have tarnished his achievement and gained him an unhappy infamy in Canada. In Japan, by contrast, he remains famous as a respected link between the two cultures...” Perhaps Mr. Norman is a figure more Canadians should “revisit”.

“Moving Towards Closer Ties” examines the decades leading to the Pacific War and takes a close look at Canada’s role in Britain’s decision to terminate the Anglo-Japanese Alliance. By focusing on J.W. Dafoe,

the influential Canadian journalist, Yuko Ohara in her article *J.W. Dafoe and Japanese-Canadian Relations During the 1920s* is able to impart the mood of the times and the controversy which raged around this issue.

Eber H. Rice once again brings us back across the Pacific in his article, *Sir Herbert Marler and the Canadian Legation in Tokyo* which is an interesting insight into the developing diplomatic and trade relations between the two countries.

In the fifth section, "The Pacific War", Hong Kong takes centre stage where Canada and Japan had their most significant battle. *No Reason Why: The Hong Kong Tragedy*, by Carl Vincent is an extensive in-depth probe into the reasons why Canadian soldiers were sent into a hopeless situation. Vincent gives a clear picture of the events that led to this disaster but at times the reader might forget he is reading a book about Canada - Japan relations as the Hong Kong situation is extensively analysed.

*The Canadian Expeditionary Force and the Fall of Hong Kong*, by Hisashi Takahashi, goes into more detail about the battle and the futility of sending the two Canadian battalions into a hopeless situation. He sums up the chapter by saying, "The Canadian role in the Pacific War was relatively small... But, granted that the presence of the... Canadian(s)... sent in at the eleventh hour did not have any significant influence on the course of events... their outstanding combat record speaks for itself. In spite of insufficient training and poor equipment, the Canadians fought extremely well in the face of the seasoned Japanese who outnumbered them and had superior artillery and air power. Considering the smallness of the Canadian forces, their sacrifice at Hong Kong is a source of pride and sadness in the national history of the Dominion of Canada and has rightfully earned the respect of their wartime enemy. As Winston Churchill later wrote about the defenders of Hong Kong, "They had won indeed the "lasting honour" which was their due."

"Canada was like a small man sitting in a big poker game," Gregory A. Johnson writes in his article *Canada and the Far East During the 1930s* which explores the problems that Canada faced in trying to forge an independent course with Japan while being caught between the

interests of the larger powers of Britain and the United States.

The dilemma Canada faced is succinctly summed up with the questions politicians were struggling with at the time: "Would Canada get dragged into an Anglo-Japanese war with American abstention? Or an American-Japanese war with British abstention? Could Canada remain neutral if the United States or Britain went to war against Japan?" Canada never adequately answered these questions until events dictated the course it would take. This was just one problem facing the Canadian government, as Johnson explains in this detailed chapter which sets the scene before the war.

The bitter memories of the war afflicted relations between the two countries as "The Post-War Years" section notes, but also the goodwill which was established before the war helped during these troubled times. Herbert Norman resurfaces in Japan during the occupation and has the ear of General MacArthur, as Nobuya Bamba, adapted by Tadayuki Okuma, writes. Norman, having been born in Japan, had an understanding and sympathy with the Japanese people that might not have been felt by other members of the occupation force. Canada moved relatively quickly to normalize relations with Japan, eventually bringing them to their present phase.

Japan became Canada's "third option" under the Trudeau government and trade between the two nations flourished and was further fostered under the Conservative government of Brian Mulroney.

In *Bridge Across the Pacific: Trade and Investment*, Charles J. McMillan outlines how the vanquished rose from the ashes of its defeat to become one of the economic powers of the world and of Canada's failure to keep pace. "Canadians have yet to come to grips with the New Japan — the world's banker, source of technology, generator of new management techniques and, perhaps by the end of the century, a scientific base to rival the United States." In a most revealing essay, McMillan points to the specific failures of the Canadian economy to keep pace with that of Japan's but then outlines the opportunities that are present for even greater trade. McMillan examines the many economic factors since the war which have given rise to Japan as a power and points to specifics, from politics, to market factors and business activities, which have all contributed to the present situation.

McMillan's discerning analysis does not stop with present conditions but also examines the possibility of trilateral free trade between the two North American nations and Japan. McMillan believes that "Japan knows that without changes to the trading framework, with which it has succeeded in the past three decades, there are limits to its future export success," and similarly for Canada, "Japan offers a new opportunity... As a result Canadians must think carefully about the place of Japan in its future."

*Economic Relations: A Japanese Perspective* by Hideo Sato continues the exploration of trade relations between the two countries and provides more detail on some areas already dealt with in earlier chapters. He also discusses Canada's propensity for riding on the coattails of the Americans, asserting the nation is "not powerful enough to exert much influence over Japan."

Sato sums up the present situation by saying that Canada has missed great opportunities for closer ties to Japan and believes that "it would certainly be worthwhile for Canada to pursue a very active and persistent economic diplomacy toward Japan, both at governmental and at private levels. The opportunity should not be missed again."

John T Saywell's *Continuity, Discontinuity, and Asymmetry in Canada-Japan Relations* also examines trade, investment and the politics of it all. The relationship is examined from its formative days, when Canada viewed Japan with complacency, to the present, with Saywell believing Canada's position to be a difficult one. "Indeed, it may be that we have to run very hard to stand still in the fields of trade and investment."

Saywell highlights the tremendous changes which have taken place in the relationship between the two nations, from when Canada enjoyed the trade advantage to now when it is the Japanese who are the economic power. Saywell is justifiably critical of the Canadian government for a "continuation of our traditional policy of trading away our comparative advantage."

The section "Recent Scholarship" with chapters by John F. Howes and Kensei Yoshida outlines the areas where research and study is being done in the home country about the other. Although some areas may seem purely academic, the authors point out the importance of

## BOOK REVIEWS

knowing the other's legal systems — so vital in a time of intense international intercourse and the absolute necessity of linguistic studies. Of course there is the intrinsic value of understanding the other's culture, literature and history but they take on a working importance as ties through trade and travel play such a strong role in today's world. Howes feels there isn't enough being done and improvements must be made in the way Canada studies Japan. "It is clear that efforts to train oncoming students in the language and culture of Japan must increase," he writes.

Similarly, study in Japan about Canada has progressed little beyond the embryonic state. As Yoshida asserts, "...the number of original books about Canada by Japanese is relatively small, although it has been growing in recent years." The writer notes the wide variety of quality in works about Canada stating, "Some... books and papers exhibit an especially high level of scholarship and insight..." but others have "...fallen short of the standards that would qualify for publication in Canada" while others "out of affection for Canada, have even painted overly biased and romantic pictures of the country."

*Canada and Japan in the Twentieth Century* does not fall short in that it provides a valuable compilation of significant works on Canada-Japan relations. By bringing together the work of fifteen authors the editors present a variety of viewpoints on what is a very complex subject. They have clearly succeeded in their attempt to "offer insights into the various dimensions of the relationship... and its contemporary implications for the two countries."

(Floyd Cowan is a Canadian freelance writer who is presently visiting Japan. He has worked in Cyprus and Portugal where he has covered world events for Canadian Press, Canada's national news agency. He has also written for *the Wall Street Journal* — European edition, Britain's Mail on Sunday, and newspapers and magazines in Canada, the United States, Portugal, Spain, Gibraltar, Japan and Cyprus. )