

Chapter 2 Post-war to the First Wave of Expansion : 1950s-1970s

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Chapter 2

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1950s - 1970s

Tsunami is the terminology chosen by Gavan McCormack to describe the remarkable rise which occurred nationwide in the number of Japanese learners in Australia in 1988 (McCormack 1988). Some scholars noted at the time, correctly, that the 1988 *Tsunami* was but the second wave, though a much larger one, and that the first wave of expansion in Japanese learning occurred between the 1960s and the early 1970s.

In order to understand the reasons behind this expansion, we have to look at the remarkable changes that occurred in Australia's perception of Japan in the postwar period, and at their impact on Australia-Japan relations. It was indeed the changing dynamism between the two countries which created the impetus behind Australia's growing demand for study of Japan and its language.

2.1 Enemy Turned Partners

In the 1950s, the perception of Japan by Australians in general remained apprehensive. Japan was the former enemy and the guilty party of the war. The atrocities committed by Japanese soldiers during the war, those on the Australian prisoners of war in particular, were still vivid in Australians' minds and hostilities lingered.

Two factors, however, were increasingly compelling Australia towards changing its perception of Japan. The first was the strategic considerations in the changing power politics in the post-war world. The emergence of the Cold War and the increasing threat of Soviet and Chinese communism made Australia aware of the importance of having Japan as an ally, rather than treating it as a potential security threat.