

Chapter 2

Post-war to the First Wave of Expansion:

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.

The second factor was the growing trade between the two countries. Prior to World War Two, Australia and Japan already had a long established trade relationship, which had gone back over half a century. The pre-war trade activities between the two countries had grown to such extent that Japan had become Australia's second largest export market after Great Britain.

The World War Two interrupted trade activities. They were, however, quickly resumed after the war, firstly by private initiatives. As early as 1947, when Japan was still under occupation, the first Australian trade mission composed of private businessmen went to Japan. Most of the companies represented in the mission were those which were active in pre-war trade with Japan. The trade mission's visit marked the beginning of post-war trade with Japan.

The Second World War affected the British economy to such an extent that there was no possibility that Great Britain would ever regain its pre-war prosperity. Britain itself, recognising its declining status on the world stage, reduced its presence in the Pacific. The implication for Australia was the contraction of its principal export market. Between 1950 to 1957 Great Britain's share in Australian exports was reduced from thirty seven percent (37%) to approximately thirty percent (30%) (Embassy of Japan 1979). Furthermore, a strong possibility emerged that Britain would turn totally to Europe and join the Common Market. This would certainly weaken further the British trade link with Australia. These changes forced Australia to see the inevitability of seeking an alternative market for its export products. Japan was a logical choice.

As Japan's recovery progressed during the 1950s, Australia's exports to Japan grew at a remarkable pace. By 1956-1957, exports to Japan occupied fourteen percent (14%) of Australia's total exports. Japan had become Australia's largest market for wool, wheat, coal and copper concentrates (Embassy of Japan 1979). The Australian business community, as well as the Australian Government, became keenly aware of the enormous economic benefits that expansion of trade with Japan would bring to the country.

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

Australia, which had hitherto been reluctant to respond to Japan's request, due to lingering public sentiment, finally moved in 1957 to sign the Agreement on Commerce with Japan and accorded Japan most-favoured-nation treatment. Australia's Prime Minister Robert Menzies visited Japan in 1957, the first visit by an Australian political leader after the war. Japan's Prime Minister Kishi reciprocated the visit in the same year. The Commerce Agreement of 1957 was further amended in 1963 to give Japan full non-discriminatory treatment in trade.

The 1960s was the period of Japan's spectacular economic growth, unprecedented by any country in the world. As Japan's industrialisation advanced, so did Australia's mining and mineral resources exports to Japan. As the income of Japanese people grew higher, so did their demand for meat and other agricultural products, which Australia could supply in abundance. The export of wool, which had been a major export commodity to Japan in pre-war trade, also grew rapidly.

Broinowski describes how economic factors contributed to turn Australia's consensus from Europe to Japan during the 1960s and 1970s. By the early 1970s, Japan accounted for one third of Australia's total exports. This made Japan's proportion in Australia's exports higher than that of the United States and EEC countries, including Britain, combined. (Broinowski 1983).

The consensus rapidly grew in Australia that Japan - an efficient, unified and essentially alien power - had replaced Europe and America as the most important trade partner and that Australia had a high stake in a stable and prosperous Japan. (ibid.:195)

During the 1970s, Australia went through dramatic changes both internally and in its international outlook. The 'White Australia Policy', which had dictated the country's major policy decisions in the previous seventy years, was finally abolished. In its place, Australia adopted multiculturalism internally, and Asia-focused policy internationally. With these policies, Australia assumed a new identity. The first architect of this

new Australia was Gough Whitlam (Prime Minister 1972-1975).

Long before he took office as Prime Minister, Whitlam had been an advocate of a closer relationship with Japan. Though he fought in the Second World War as a Royal Australian Air Force officer, Whitlam had a different starting point from previous political leaders, in his relations with Japan. In his own words, Whitlam writes:

I had come to realise that, whatever may have been the failures of politicians and the intrusions of the military in pre-war Japan, the Anglo-American world, including Australia, was largely responsible for goading Japan into war by restricting its access to markets and resources. (Whitlam 1985:61)

After taking office as Prime Minister, Whitlam wasted no time to set the relations between Australia and Japan on new ground. Whitlam writes:

One of the very earliest decisions I made after taking office in December 1972 was to reverse the attitude of previous Liberal-Country Party Governments which had consistently rebuffed the Japanese wish to conclude with Australia, as Japan had concluded with so many other countries, a treaty of friendship, commerce and navigation. (Whitlam 1985:61)

Discussion on a treaty started between Whitlam and Prime Minister Kakuei Tanaka in October 1973. It was concluded by Australia's next Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser, when the Basic Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation (known as the NARA Treaty) was signed in 1976. The Treaty extended non-discriminatory treatment to Japan, not only in the area of commerce, which had been already included in the 1957 Commerce Agreement, but in such areas as the entry and residence of Japanese nationals, property rights, investment and professional activities.

Politically and economically, Australia began to see its future intertwined with that of Japan. In a world dominated by the Cold War, Australia and Japan each strengthened its strategic ties with the United States, which in

reality placed the two countries in direct alliance. Japan's post-war economic growth helped Australia to develop its mining and mineral resources. Exports to Japan brought Australia enormous economic benefits. All this helped Australia to transform its perception of Japan from a former enemy to a valuable partner in Asia. The recognition of the importance of Japan, both strategically and economically, gradually started to sink into the minds of Australian leaders, in government as well as in business.

2.2 The First Wave of Expansion in the Study of Japan

As the awareness of Japan's importance for the future of Australia grew, so did the recognition of enormous cultural and historical differences between the two nations, and, with it, the apprehension of their interference in the future growth of the relationship. If Australia were to sustain and further cultivate a good relationship with Japan, the country would have to make an effort towards understanding Japan, its culture and its people. Australia needed people with knowledge and language of Japan. The country had to cultivate Japan skills and literacy amongst its younger generations.

Japanese experts in academia and the business community had advocated the recognition of this need since the 1950s. General recognition of the need, however, was slow in spreading amongst Australian leaders, both at government and community level. When recognition came, however, it was with force. Starting in the early 1960s, Japanese programs began to emerge one after the other in Australian universities.

The first (Tsunami) began in the 1960s or early 1970s, after Japan had become Australia's first trading partner, and a need to understand Japan was widely felt. ... Many of the now most firmly established tertiary courses on Japan were worked out in that period and placed on a firm footing in the 1970s.
(Stockwin 1989:14)

The following is the summary of activities which collectively formed the first wave of expansion in Japanese studies in Australian universities. It has