



# **The Writing on the Wall: Chinese and Japanese Immigration to BC, 1920 (Social History of Canada)**

*Hilda Glynn-Ward*

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With tales of a gruesome murder, a typhoid epidemic, corrupt politicians, and a Japanese invasion, *The Writing on the Wall* was intended to shock its readers when it was published in 1921. Thinly disguised as a novel, it is a propaganda tract exhorting white British Columbians to greater vigilance to prevent greedy politicians from selling out to the Chinese and Japanese. It was also designed to convince eastern Canada of British Columbia's need for protections against an onslaught of the 'yellow peril.'

This novel is not exceptional in its extreme racism; it reiterates almost every anti-oriental cliché circulating in British Columbia at the time of its publication. While modern readers will find the story horrifying and unbelievable, it is in fact based on real incidents. Many of the views expressed were only exaggerated versions of ideas held throughout the country about non-Anglo-Saxon immigrants. *The Writing on the Wall* is a vivid illustration of the fear and prejudice with which immigrants were regarded in the early twentieth century.

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