

Kohn, Edward P.

This Kindred People: Canadian-American Relations and the Anglo-Saxon Idea, 1895-1903

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The Anglo-Saxon idea that originated in the U.S. and spread across the North American continent implied that the nations sharing English language, civilisation and government, belonged to one race, or "family" (p.4). The idea became a critical factor in changing the relations between three governments – American, Canadian and British at the turn of the nineteenth and into the twentieth century. It attracted many scholars, intellectuals, economists, politicians, as well as clerics and missionaries. The Anglo-Saxon idea shaped the common ground for English-speaking nations, belonging to the same "species."

In *This Kindred People: Canadian-American Relations and the Anglo-Saxon Idea, 1895-1903*, Edward P. Kohn - an assistant professor of history at Bilkent University in Ankara, Turkey, analyses the political and economic factors significant to the North American political dynamic of that period and the influence of the Anglo-Saxon idea on them. The book primarily discusses the changing relations between the U.S., Canada and Great Britain making Anglo-Saxonism a core "ideological device" (p.12) to influence them.

The idea of Anglo-Saxon family developed in the last decade of the nineteenth century and was tested through the following events: the Venezuela boundary crisis, the Anglo-American Joint High Commission, the Spanish-American War, the annexation of the Philippines, the South African War, and the Alaska boundary dispute. All are discussed in five chapters, marked different stages of relations among those three actors. They began with American "anglophobia" (anti-British attitude) and Canadian dependence on the Mother Country (Great Britain), passed through Canada's insecurity with regard to her negotiating position on the continent and ended with Canada's new role of a "living link" and Canada's rising mediating position between the two great Atlantic powers (p.204).

The Kindred People is an excellent study of Canadian-American relations. It discusses in great detail the Canadian perspective of developments of the North American continent. One of its great strengths is in showing the growth in Canadian national maturity as feelings of patriotism, self-interest and nationalism emerged. Furthermore, Kohn's book teaches a great deal, not only of Canadian-British relations, but also Anglo-American relations. The transformation of perception on the British Empire among American public—this significant shift from "anglophobia" to "kindred relations" that took place in a relatively short period in the U.S. seems to be neglected in the scholarly literature.

However, Kohn's book wins a bit of criticism, as well. The title of the book seems to be narrower than its thematic scope and the problems discussed. The British role, not present in the title of the book, is broadly discussed in its content making Britain the third angle in

the triangle of Anglo-American-Canadian politics, very decisive and influential in the analysed period. Moreover, the elements of “race” and “kinship,” which are at the core of the Anglo-Saxon ideology, call for a more comprehensive study. The author states clearly that the Anglo-Saxon idea referred only to and attracted “white, upper-class, Protestant Americans and English Canadians” (p.7). However, it would be interesting to see how the idea was received by those who did not fulfil such defined criteria - especially in the U.S., which was home to immigrants of diverse ethnic backgrounds and more importantly, which was at the time still seeking to heal the wounds of the Civil War that had deeply divided the American nation.

The book’s great advantage is its sources. The author makes a significant number of quotes from prominent and influential people who helped shape the discourse of Anglo-Saxon ideology, both in the U.S. and in Canada. Moreover, he recalls the voices of anti-imperialists as they equally shaped the debate on imperialism and “righteous” expansionism. The voice of anti-imperialists should not be neglected since it significantly influenced the discourse on the future American global role. Finally the source materials used in this study are extensive and well selected. The inclusion of cartoons that first appeared in daily newspapers and periodicals are also welcome, as they both reflected and helped shape the public mind on key issues.

Kohn’s publication makes a strong contribution to our knowledge of Anglo-American - Canadian relations. This unique connection, often taken for granted, went through rough moments until it reached the point of mutual respect and appreciation. Its legacy can be found in Canadian-American goodwill throughout the entire twentieth century. Even though Anglo-Saxonism faded away in the first decade of the twentieth century, it left a framework for cooperation based on common ideals and a new point of reference for the new century.