

# IWASAKI YATARŌ

IWASAKI YATARŌ (1834/1835-1885) WAS THE SON OF IMPOVERISHED SAMURAI PARENTS. HE TOOK ADVANTAGE OF THE UPHEAVALS OF INDUSTRIALIZING JAPAN TO CREATE ONE OF THE WORLD'S LARGEST AND LONGEST-ENDURING CORPORATIONS, MITSUBISHI.

SINCE THE 20TH CENTURY, MITSUBISHI CORPORATION HAS BEEN A SYMBOL OF JAPANESE INDUSTRIAL MIGHT AND TECHNOLOGY, BUT IT BEGAN IN POVERTY.

ITS FOUNDER, IWASAKI YATARŌ, GREW UP POOR IN A SOCIETY QUESTIONING ITS PLACE IN THE WORLD. DESPITE THE RELATIVE ISOLATION OF THE TOKUGAWA SHOGUNS, IWASAKI WAS EXPOSED BOTH TO CLASSICAL CHINESE EDUCATION AND DEBATES ABOUT THE GROWING POWER OF EUROPEANS, WHO DEFEATED NEIGHBORING CHINA IN THE OPIUM WARS IN HIS YOUTH.

Iwasaki Yatarō

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AFTER AMERICAN COMMODORE PERRY'S EXPEDITION, MANY JAPANESE LEADERS BEGAN TO DEBATE INDUSTRIALIZING TO DEFEND THEIR SOCIETY. IWASAKI FOLLOWED HIS BENEFACTOR, YOSHIDA TŌYŌ, IN FAVOR OF INDUSTRIALIZATION. AFTER YOSHIDA WAS ASSASSINATED, HOWEVER, IWASAKI FAILED TO AVENGE HIM AND FLED TO THE CAPITAL, EDO.

THE MEIJI RESTORATION OF 1863 PROVIDED A NEW OPPORTUNITY.

IWASAKI BOUGHT A NUMBER OF SHIPS, AND RELENTLESSLY PURSUED PROFIT, OUTCOMPETING AMERICAN AND BRITISH COMPETITORS.

HE ACQUIRED A REPUTATION FOR RUTHLESSNESS, EVEN SELLING SHIPS JUST BEFORE THEIR MOTORS BURNED OUT. HE WAS LABELLED A "SEA MONSTER" AND ANGRY CROWDS BURNED HIM IN EFFIGIES.

"There are many qualifications required of a capitalist, but nothing is more important than a cruel and cold heart. Yatarō in this regard, was amply qualified"  
- biography of Iwasaki

DESPITE, OR PERHAPS BECAUSE OF, HIS PURSUIT OF MONEY, HE PLAYED A SUCCESSFUL AND IMPORTANT ROLE IN THE INDUSTRIALIZATION OF JAPAN.

