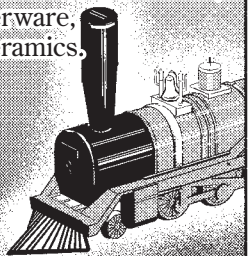
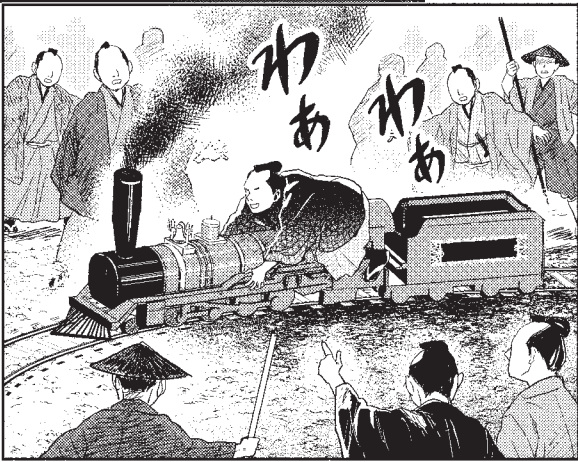


1853  
Perry  
arrives in  
Japan

Closed off for  
over 200 years,  
Japan was far  
behind the rest  
of the world.

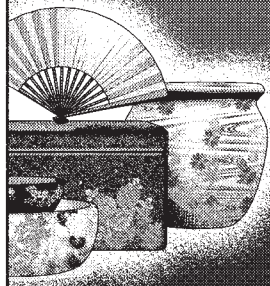
Matthew Perry,  
Commander of the East India Squadron

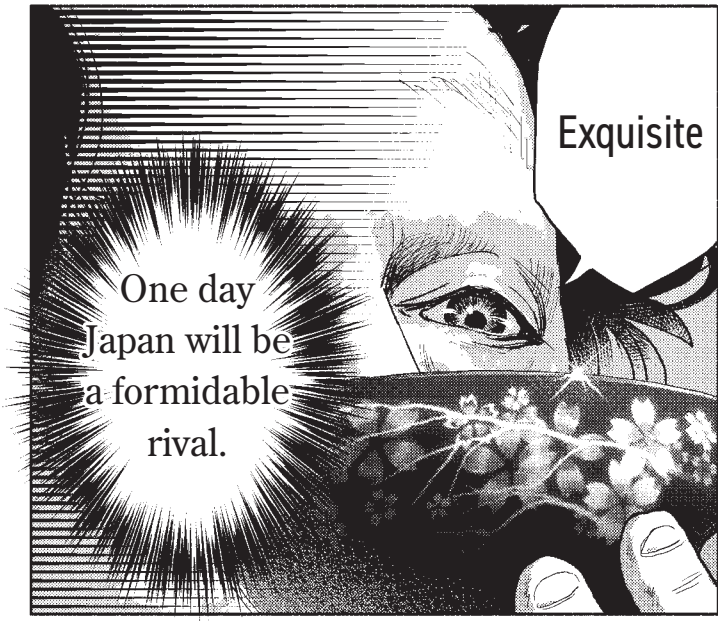
Perry presented the  
shogun with a miniature  
steam engine.  
Japan offered traditional  
crafts such as silk textiles,  
lacquerware,  
and ceramics.



Hmph.  
It's a far  
cry from  
civilized  
America.

Japan's a  
country of  
savages  
all right.





One day  
Japan will be  
a formidable  
rival.

Exquisite

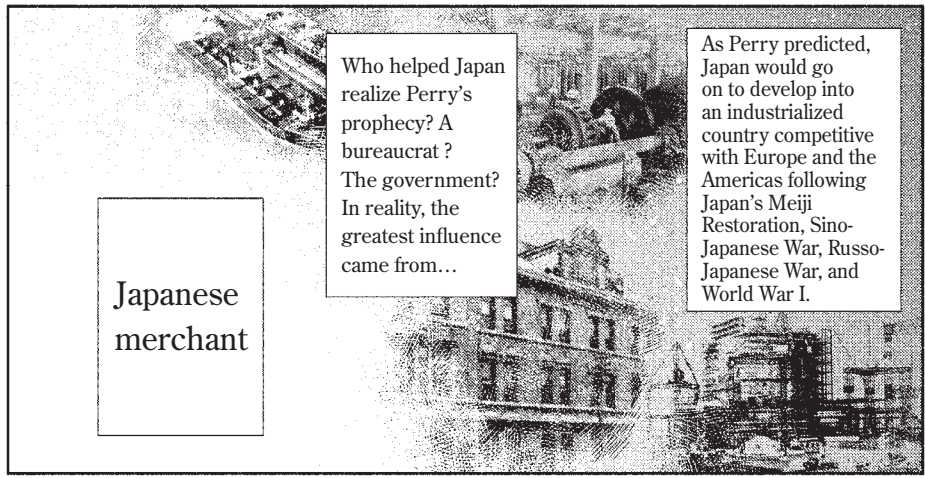
No doubt,  
Japan was  
far from a  
developed  
nation,  
however...



These  
fine  
crafts  
are  
....

“Japan surely will not remain behind the most industrialized nations. The Japanese are remarkable for their curiosity, adaptability, and agility... the country will rise to rank amongst the top nations. With the skills of the civilized world, the Japanese will be a strong competitor in the machinery industry.”

– Perry’s personal journal –

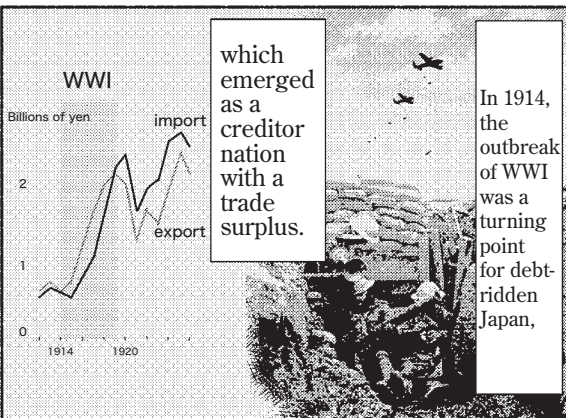


Japanese  
merchant

Who helped Japan  
realize Perry’s  
prophecy? A  
bureaucrat ?  
The government?  
In reality, the  
greatest influence  
came from...

As Perry predicted,  
Japan would go  
on to develop into  
an industrialized  
country competitive  
with Europe and the  
Americas following  
Japan’s Meiji  
Restoration, Sino-  
Japanese War, Russo-  
Japanese War, and  
World War I.

After opening its borders, it was Japan's moment to shine. Sojitz originates from the three companies that led this transformation.



In 1914, the outbreak of WWI was a turning point for debt-ridden Japan,

Japan Cotton Trading Co., Ltd.

A trading firm that procured cotton from around the world to be used as raw material for spinning—the largest industrial sector of its day. The firm acquired vast amounts of foreign currency through exports of cotton thread and cloth.



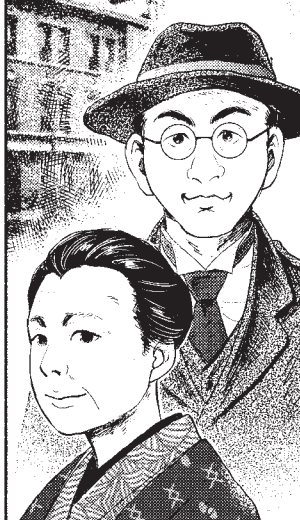
Iwai & Co., Ltd.

A strong promoter of the domestic production of imported goods, Iwai set up a group of manufacturing companies that would later form the “Saisho-kai” association.



Suzuki & Co., Ltd.

Japan's top general trading company, which established over 80 operating companies primarily in the manufacturing industry.





Sojitz carries on this enterprising DNA.

Sojitz's predecessors were bursting with innovative ideas and entrepreneurial spirit, developing a range of businesses in anticipation of the next generation...

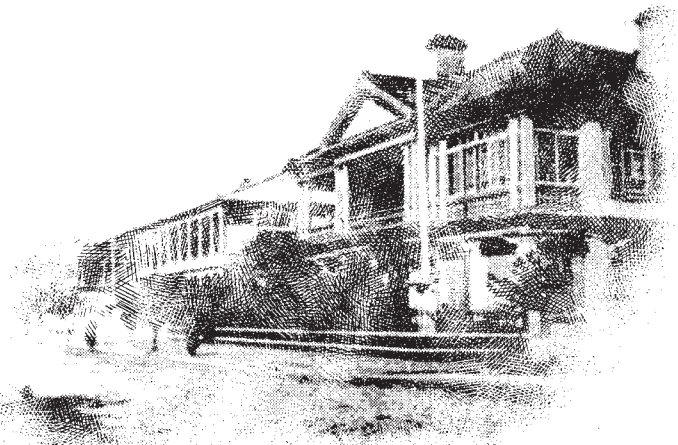
This story explores the history that defines Sojitz.

**sojitz**

**Hassojitz**

発想 × **sojitz**

## Inequitable trade at Kobe's foreign settlement



## ***Hassojitz***

*Sojitz - A General Trading Company  
The Pioneers who Paved the Future  
of Japan*



Katsujiro Iwai, Yone Suzuki, and Naokichi Kaneko  
—The young pioneers



Iwajiro Suzuki was married to Yone Suzuki.

Suzuki & Co., Ltd. was founded in 1874 by Iwajiro Suzuki as a trading house for Western sugar.

1868 Opening of Kobe Port

Kaneko was born in Tosa (currently Kochi Prefecture).

He worked at a pawn shop, where he devoured the shop's books and developed an admiration for the famous Ryoma Sakamoto who was also from Tosa and shaped Japan during the Meiji revolution.



A 20-year-old Naokichi Kaneko traveled from Tosa District to serve as an apprentice.

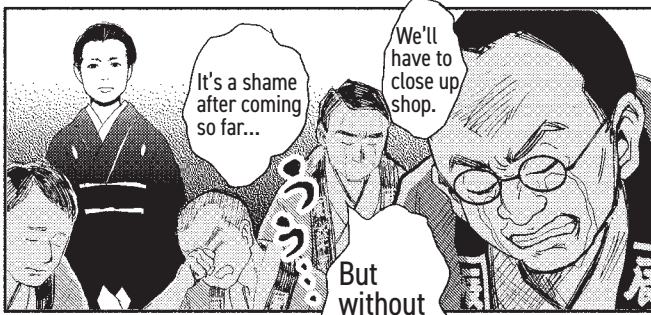
Nice to meet you. I'm Naokichi Kaneko.



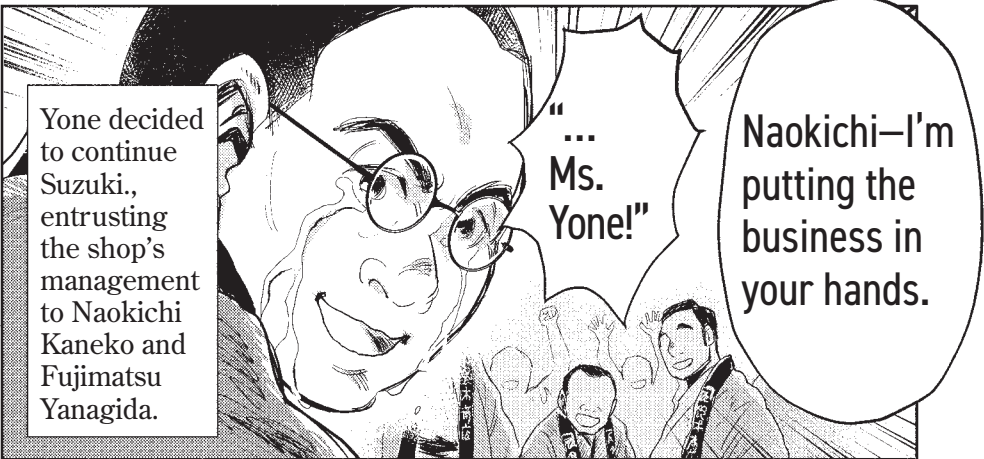
After joining Suzuki, Kaneko helped raise Suzuki to become one of the most powerful trading houses in Kobe.

This pawn shop's my university. Someday I'll change Japan like Ryoma...!

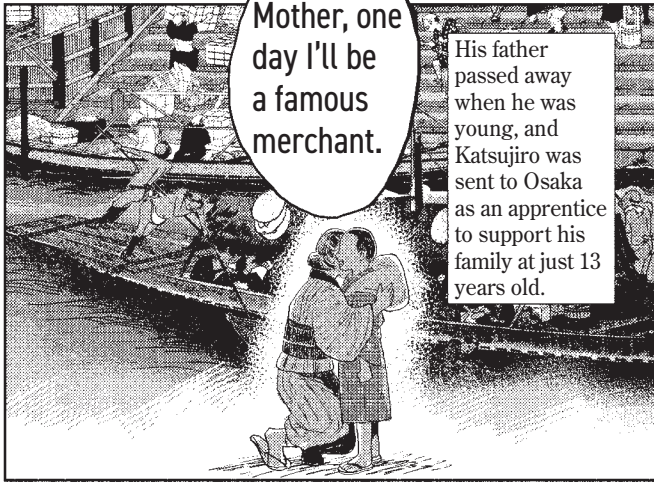
However,



just as Suzuki was beginning to rise to prominence, the owner Iwajiro Suzuki died suddenly.

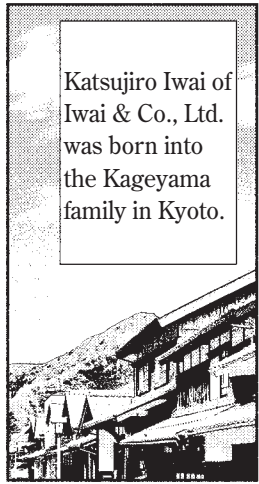






Mother, one day I'll be a famous merchant.

His father passed away when he was young, and Katsujiro was sent to Osaka as an apprentice to support his family at just 13 years old.



Katsujiro Iwai of Iwai & Co., Ltd. was born into the Kageyama family in Kyoto.



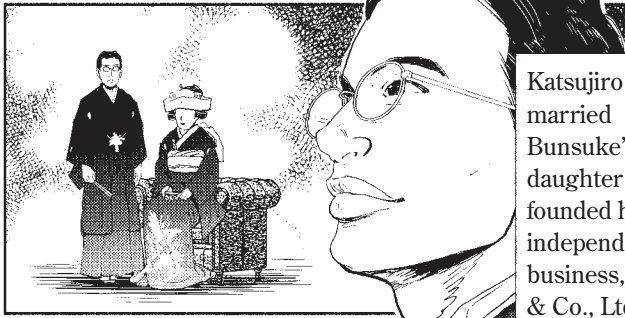
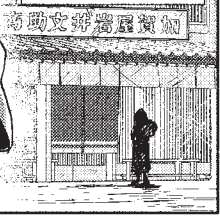
Yes, sir!

We're a trading house that handles foreign goods coming into Nagasaki. Work hard.



I look forward to working with everyone!

Katsujiro's apprenticeship was at Kagaya Iwai Bunsuke Shoten, which was founded by his cousin in 1862.



Katsujiro married Bunsuke's daughter and founded his own independent business, Iwai & Co., Ltd. in 1896.

Iwai Bunsuke Shoten grew to become an illustrious trading house in Osaka.

At the foreign settlement, both men subject to inequitable treatment as a result of Japan's low status.

Naokichi Kaneko and Katsujiro Iwai  
Both men would end up frequenting the same foreign settlement in Kobe.



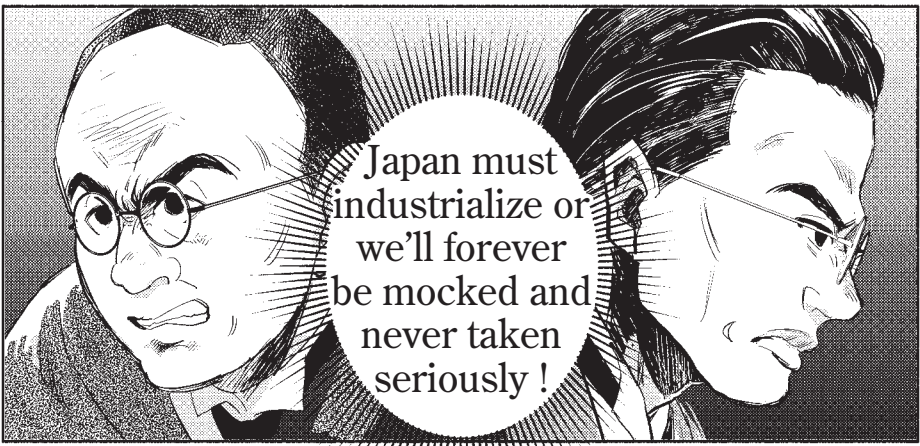
We must pay whatever they ask, they're immune to our laws, and Japan can't tax'em.



Why are customers like us forced to use the back entrance?!



Japan must industrialize or we'll forever be mocked and never taken seriously!



**No!**

I can't continue trading with you when you take advantage of us by selling at inflated prices.

We're working on behalf of the Japanese people.

Mr. Iwai, stop trading directly with overseas sellers. We'll give you the same price that you'd get from them.

Katsujiro Iwai began trading directly with overseas trading houses without going through the foreign settlement as an intermediary.



Korekiyo Takahashi,  
Yokohama Specie Bank

Mr. Takahashi!

Why must the Japanese make advance payment in nickel silver to receive imported cargo when foreigners can use trust receipts?

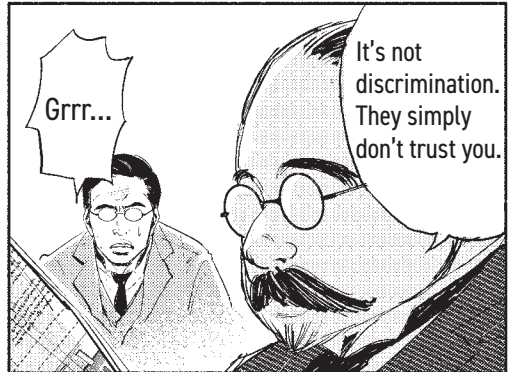


Something must be done.

Grrr...

It's not discrimination. They simply don't trust you.

Finally!



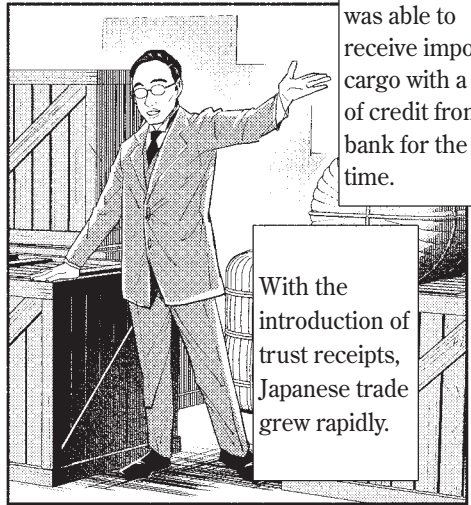
... Nevertheless





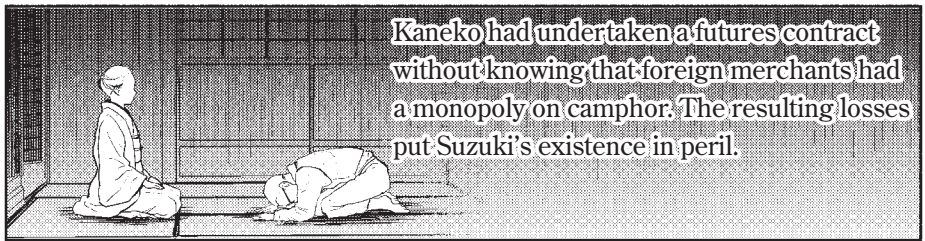
Ms. Yone... Forgive me.

However, everything did not go smoothly for Kaneko Naokichi of Suzuki & Co.



By providing collateral, Iwai was able to receive imported cargo with a letter of credit from the bank for the first time.

With the introduction of trust receipts, Japanese trade grew rapidly.

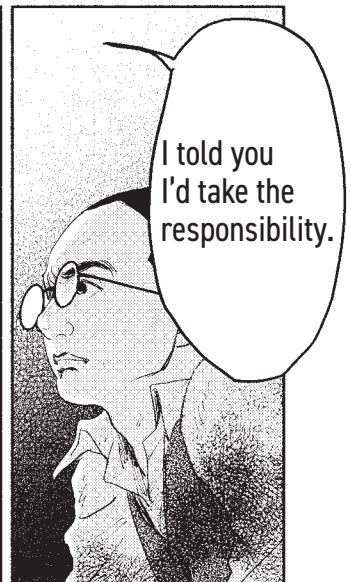


Kaneko had undertaken a futures contract without knowing that foreign merchants had a monopoly on camphor. The resulting losses put Suzuki's existence in peril.



Do what you're able to on your end.

Let me see what I can do.

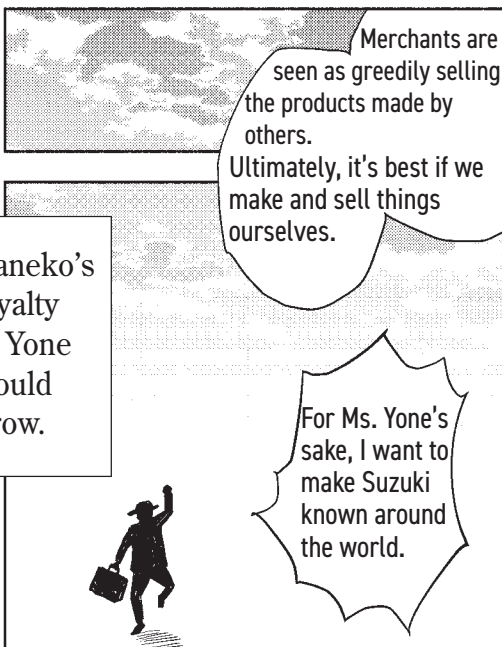


I told you I'd take the responsibility.



It's not much but we'd like to settle with this money.

If you refuse, I'll have to commit hara-kiri right here!



Merchants are seen as greedily selling the products made by others. Ultimately, it's best if we make and sell things ourselves.

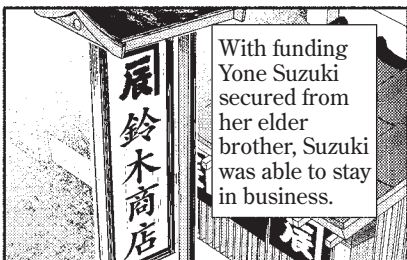
Wait...hold on a minute.

Oh...?! Hara-kiri!

Kaneko's loyalty to Yone would grow.



For Ms. Yone's sake, I want to make Suzuki known around the world.

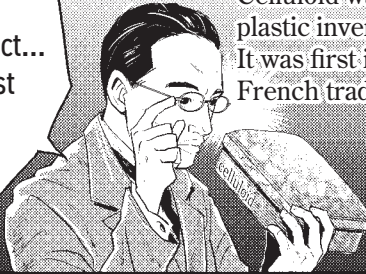


With funding Yone Suzuki secured from her elder brother, Suzuki was able to stay in business.

Kaneko Naokichi and Iwai Katsujiro.  
Despite suffering indignities, the two men  
were also introduced to sophisticated  
foreign products at the settlement.

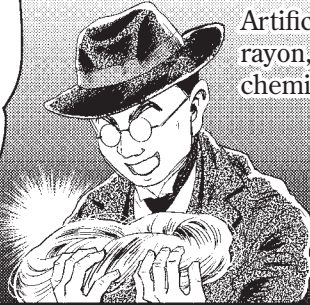


So this is a  
celluloid product...  
The world's first  
plastic...



Celluloid was the world's first synthetic  
plastic invented in America in 1868.  
It was first imported to Kobe in 1877 to the  
French trading house.

Ooh! So this the  
artificial silk being  
mass produced in the  
West. What shine...



Artificial silk, also known as  
rayon, was produced using  
chemistry instead of silkworms.

It was first produced in  
France in 1882, and the  
British trading house in  
Kobe began imports the  
following year.

Let's begin  
manufacturing  
these products  
in Japan! We  
can't rely on  
foreign countries  
forever!

