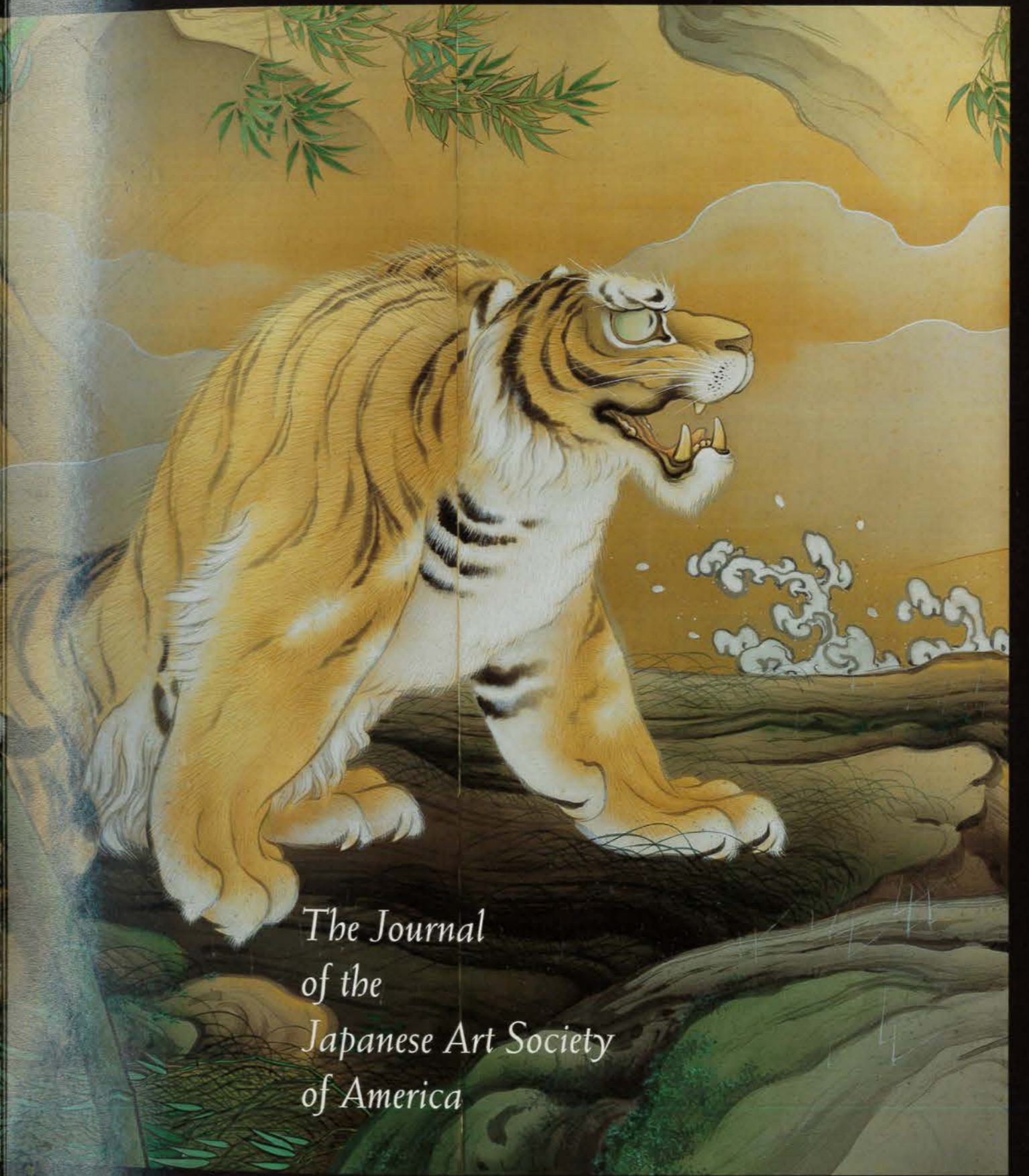


IMPRESSIONS



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Photos are courtesy of the Seikadō Bunko, unless otherwise noted.

Iwasaki family photos in figures 1, 5, 13–16a and 18a are courtesy of Kumiko Makihara.

Photo captions are courtesy of the staff of the Seikadō Bunko and Impressions.

< FIG. 1. Iwasaki Yatarō. Late 1870s

< FIG. 2. Iwasaki Yatarō. Calligraphy with One Line from a Poem by Yu Zizhi 俞紫之 (Northern Song dynasty [960–1127]; life dates unknown). Japan. Meiji period, 19th century. Hanging scroll; ink on paper. 126.5 x 29.5 cm. Seikadō Bunko Art Museum, Tokyo

This is the last line of a four-line poem, with seven characters in each line.

SNAPSHOTS FROM THE IWASAKI FAMILY ALBUM: THE FOUNDERS OF MITSUBISHI

KUMIKO MAKIHARA

A wild tiger howls; the moon shines high above the mountains.

—Yu Zizhi

THE LAST LINE OF AN ANCIENT CHINESE poem is inscribed in ink on a hanging scroll by Japan's industrial giant Iwasaki Yatarō (1835–1885) (figs. 1 and 2). Perhaps he identified with the solitude of the moonlit mountains and strength of the tiger imparted by the simple scene. Maybe as he swept the bold strokes, he enjoyed a moment of tranquility in an otherwise turbulent life.

Iwasaki Yatarō is my great-great-grandfather and the founder of the Mitsubishi consortium. I knew very little about him until I began researching my ancestors for a book project. My brother and I were raised overseas for much of our youth, and my parents wanted us to fit in during our few years of living in Tokyo. That is, to blend into the conformist culture and uphold its values of modesty. Certainly not to boast about famous forebears. My mother, a direct descendant whose maiden name was Iwasaki, rarely spoke about her family background. I grew up in what I thought was a typical middle-class family with a hard-working father who took us to the United States and the United Kingdom on his corporate overseas postings. In fact, I thought my father, Makihara Minoru, was our most high-achieving family member after he became the president of the largest of the Mitsubishi firms.

But I have learned that generations earlier, my lineage included some distinctive and enlightened characters who helped shape modern Japan (fig. 3).

The most spirited and fearless among them was Iwasaki Yatarō. Born into a poor family in Tosa province (now Kōchi Prefecture) on the island of Shikoku in southwestern Japan, Yatarō built up the Mitsubishi empire—today one of the world's largest business groups—during his lifetime. He is among Japan's best-known historical figures. Along with his younger brother and their eldest sons, they buoyed their country out of isolation to global commercial success, built downtown Tokyo and amassed a staggering family fortune.

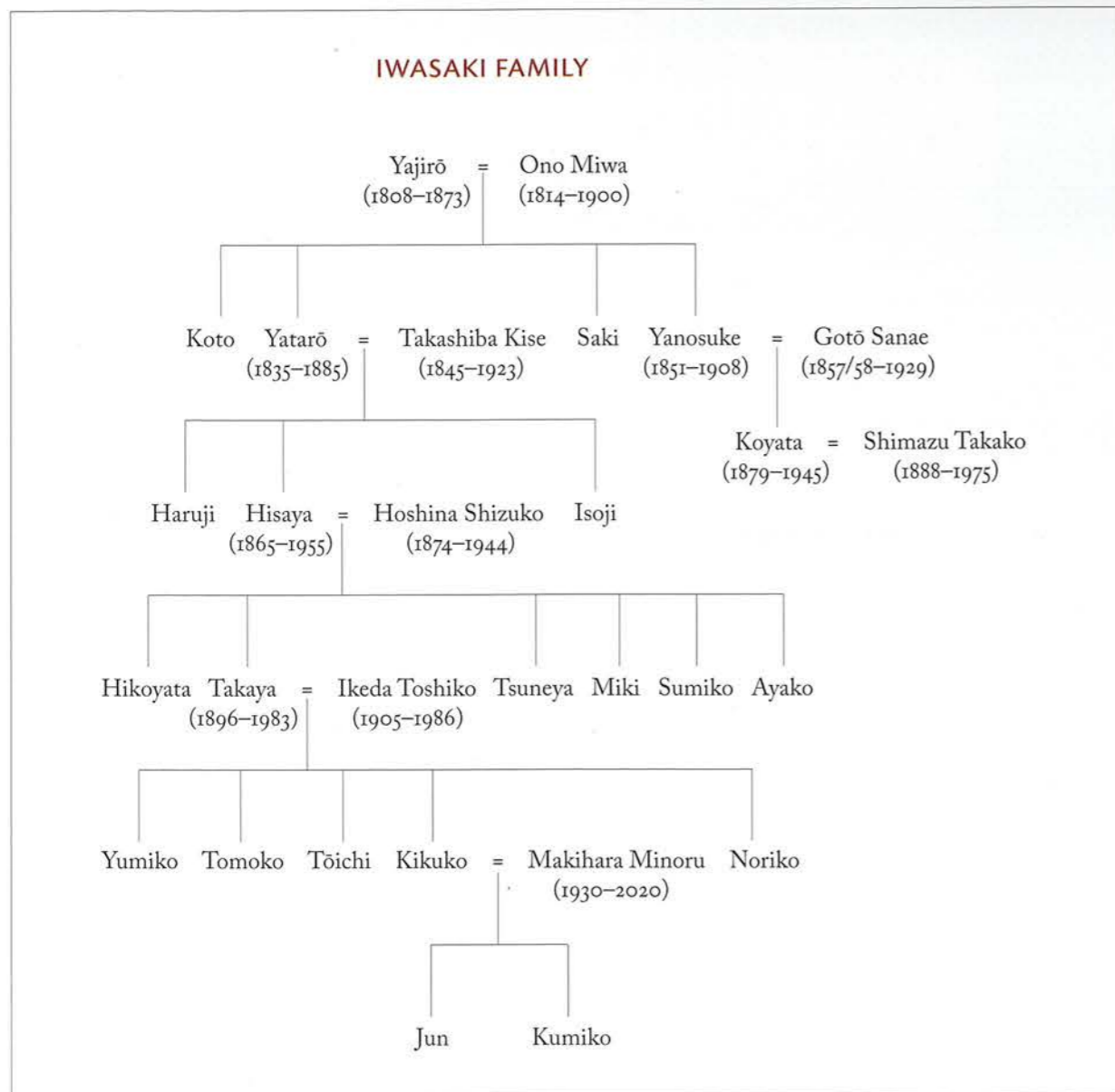


FIG. 3. Selected Iwasaki Family Tree

Less known is the Iwasaki family's philanthropic return of some of that wealth to society: a significant Japanese art collection; one of the world's largest research libraries for Asian studies; and several resplendent, traditional Japanese gardens. The Seikadō Bunko Art Museum, in Tokyo's Setagaya Ward, holds some sixty-five-hundred works of art and two-hundred-thousand rare books, including Yatarō's scroll (fig. 4). The name Seikadō refers to a phrase in Chinese literature, which means "making a splendid display of offerings before the spirits of one's ancestors."¹ Appropriately, the museum presents a wide range of Asian antiquities, from Japanese swords, paintings and lacquerware to Chinese scrolls, ceramics and books. The Iwasaki family purchased not only items that they liked, but pieces they regarded as important to preserve. The collection "maps out the path of the history of art in Japan," says the museum's director, Kōno Motoaki.

I needed to find out how all of this came about.



FIG. 4. Seikadō Bunko Art Museum, 1992 (left) and Library, 1924 (right), in Okamoto, Setagaya Ward, Tokyo

The brick building on the right is the library Seikadō Bunko that was constructed by Iwasaki Koyata in 1924 to honor the 17th anniversary of the death of his father, Iwasaki Yanosuke, the second president of the Mitsubishi group. It was the year following the 1923 earthquake and fire that destroyed so much of Tokyo. The word "Seikadō," which Iwasaki Yanosuke used as his literary name, derives from the Japanese transliteration *hento seika*, from a poem in the Chinese classic *Book of Songs (Shihjing)*. Koyata chose the site for the library because it was near the family mausoleum, designed by Josiah Conder in 1910.

To the left of that building, although difficult to see, is the library's storage facility for approximately 200,000 volumes.

In 1992, a new museum, on the far left, was opened to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the founding of the collections. The museum and library own 7 National Treasures; 84 Important Cultural Properties; approximately 200,000 volumes of classical texts; and about 6,500 Asian works of art. In October 2022, a new exhibition gallery opened on the first floor of the Meiji Seimeiikan, in the Marunouchi district of Tokyo.

The museum and library in Okamoto will continue in use.

Iwasaki Miwa

The foundation of this illustrious family can be traced back to one strong woman: Iwasaki Miwa, Yatarō's mother.

Miwa was born in 1814 in the then rural region of Tosa. She was sent to work in a local wealthy household as a homemaking apprentice, a common job for teenaged girls of poor families. At sixteen, she married a low-ranking samurai, Iwasaki Yajirō. Japan at that time had a four-class system led by the samurai, followed by farmers, artisans and merchants. Among the samurai there were still further rankings, within which the Iwasaki clan sat at the very bottom. While technically of samurai class, Yajirō lived as a poor farmer toiling daily in the fields. To ameliorate his bitter feelings, he drank.² Miwa maintained stability in the home. They had five children, one of whom died as a child. Their two sons, Yatarō and Yanosuke, would go on to lead the Mitsubishi companies.

At around age sixty, Miwa started writing down recollections of her life. In that memoir, she listed seven rules she had made for her household:

1. Don't stray from the straight and narrow.
2. Don't cause your children hardship.
3. Don't heed the slander of others.
4. Cherish and protect the family.

5. Don't be complacent when you're in good health.
6. Don't forget what it's like to be poor.
7. Always have a patient heart.

Miwa remained particularly loyal to rule number 6: "Don't forget what it's like to be poor." The Iwasaki children, even after the family became wealthy, all were raised in austere environments. In the last home where Miwa lived with her grandson, she continued to keep a weaving loom on which she and Yatarō's wife made quilts for themselves and their employees. In 2010, further evidence of her prudence was revealed when an office worker living near the ancestral home in Tosa found a wooden box containing an urn with almost two hundred old coins. They are believed to have belonged to Miwa, and it is thought that she gave them to the office worker's ancestors when she moved from Tosa. She likely stashed the money away as a provision against poverty. Miwa lived to be eighty-five.

Iwasaki Yatarō

Yajirō and Miwa's first son, Yatarō, was born in 1835. From a young age, Yatarō was ambitious, self-confident, bold and remarkably intelligent. Disparaged as a slow learner, he cycled through several schools in his youth. While he wasn't earning high marks, he had an attitude. When a classmate teased Yatarō's messy penmanship, he is said to have replied, "I don't care, because I will be a great man and have servants with good writing."³

Yatarō's desire for greatness is immortalized in the home where he was born, which today is preserved as a museum. There is a series of large rocks in the garden which, as a young man, he had laid out to resemble a map of Japan. The design was an expression of his plan to conquer the entire country. The only way up for a person at that time was to be educated in Tokyo. In 1854, at age nineteen, Yatarō seized such an opportunity when a Chinese classics scholar was looking for an attendant to travel with him from Tosa to Edo. Yatarō leapt at the chance of a ticket to the big city.

It was a time of momentous change in Japan. The country had been under the rule of one family—the Tokugawa family—since the early 1600s—for nearly two hundred fifty years. The dynasty had created a rigid feudal system and allowed very little contact with the outside world for fear that external influences, including Christianity, might destabilize the country. But that structure and isolationist policy was beginning to fray. In 1853, the year before Yatarō set out for Tokyo, Commodore Matthew Perry of the United States Navy arrived at a port not far from Tokyo with a fleet of ships to try to force Japan out of seclusion. The mid-nineteenth century was thus a period full of instability, but also opportunity.

In Tokyo, Yatarō enrolled in an elite academy and immersed himself in studies of Chinese classics. But his happy student days came to an abrupt halt less than a year later when his mother asked him to return home after his father was jailed following a brawl with local officials. With no money,

Yatarō wrapped all of his clothes in a piece of cloth and tied the sack to his back, selling pieces of his clothing along the way. It is said that he ran the distance of nearly five hundred miles in just sixteen days.⁴ Then, Yatarō himself was arrested after he wrote graffiti on the town hall's pillars protesting his father's persecution. He served seven months in jail.

Yatarō secured his next ticket out of Tosa four years later, in 1859, after meeting two influential samurai: Gotō Shōjirō and his uncle Yoshida Tōyō. Yoshida arranged for Yatarō to work for the Tosa government's office in the southern port city of Nagasaki, which had a small artificial island, Dejima, where a limited amount of foreign trade was permitted. During that first posting in a major urban center, Yatarō immediately faced two challenges. First, Nagasaki had an active red-light district. In his diary of January 17, 1860, Yatarō wrote, "When I was leaving home, mother told me not to fall to temptation. I could hear her voice. I thought, 'But I am not a tree or stone.'"⁵ His second challenge was the language barrier; having never studied any European tongues, he couldn't communicate directly with most of the foreign traders. After just five months, Yatarō gave up on his mission, writing in his resignation letter that he could not fulfill his tasks

because, "The writing of Westerners is horizontal, and their spoken language sounds to me only like bird jabbering."⁶ This early setback later would become a crucial motivating factor for the Iwasakis to send their children overseas to study.

Yatarō returned to his village and spent a few years farming and repaying family debts incurred while he was in jail. He also married Kise, seventeen at the time to Yatarō's twenty-nine (fig. 5). They had three children, a son and two daughters. During his life he also had a number of mistresses, a practice not uncommon at the time, and Kise raised some of those children alongside her own. The tombstone of one such daughter stands today in the Iwasaki family cemetery in Tokyo.

In 1867, the Tosa government appointed Yatarō, now thirty-two, to return to Nagasaki and head its trade office. This time—matured and married—he was no longer lured by the red-light district and began to muscle his way into commercial success. Yatarō oversaw trade with the British and French, purchasing ships, guns, cotton and wool fabrics and in turn exporting camphor, fish flakes, Japanese *washi* paper and whale oil. In 1868, the one-family dynasty rule of

FIG. 5. Iwasaki Kise, the wife of Iwasaki Yatarō. Early 1900s



the Tokugawas finally ended, and centralized power was returned from the samurai to the emperor.

The new government in Tokyo began shifting control over the economy to the private sector. The Tosa authorities gave Yatarō three ships and asked him to run their office as a private enterprise. Yatarō grew the business by taking on risky missions for the government, such as ferrying soldiers to battles, and in return received more ships. He lowered shipping charges to outprice competitors. Eventually, Yatarō owned more than 70 percent of Japan's steamships. From shipping, he expanded to warehousing, banking, coal mining, insurance and railways. In 1873, he formally named the company Mitsubishi, which means "three diamonds," after the Iwasaki family crest, which has three overlapping lozenges.

In 1874, Yatarō moved the headquarters to Tokyo, where he also bought vast plots of land for homes and business entertainment quarters. On one of them he built a sprawling Japanese-style house, where he lived for the rest of his life. Yatarō loved Japanese gardens, and transplanted tens of thousands of trees and large stones to be landscaped into the grounds. Those properties are all public parks now.

A large part of Yatarō's success stemmed from his shrewd ability to read the needs of the times and squeeze out competitors, no matter what the cost. His business acumen is widely respected, but his calculating bottom line-obsessed character has not endeared him as a person to the Japanese. A recent popular TV drama portrays Yatarō as a greedy and conniving man who mocks a rival's view that businesses also must strive to improve the lives of the public.⁷ He was much like the American robber barons of the nineteenth century. Yet, it was Yatarō's business empire and the wealth it reaped that allowed his descendants to become great philanthropists.

Yatarō died in 1885 from stomach cancer at age fifty. On his deathbed he lamented that he had only achieved up to 20 percent of what he had hoped to accomplish.⁸ He asked his younger brother, Yanosuke, to take the helm until his son Hisaya, nineteen at the time, was older. Yatarō's funeral reflected the stature of the business titan. Chronicled in newspapers of the time, some thirty thousand people joined a several hours-long procession from his home to the cemetery. And the family offered a total of sixty thousand meals to those who came to show respect.

Iwasaki Yanosuke

Yatarō's younger brother, Yanosuke, the second president of Mitsubishi, was born in the family's Tosa village home in 1851 (fig. 6a). Yatarō was already

sixteen at the time, just a few years shy of his imprisonment. Yanosuke's early years, with a disgraced father and jailed brother, were lived in near poverty. In one biography, Yanosuke describes the following memory: "My mother carried me on her back to and from the fields we ploughed by the river. She staggered—maybe she was suddenly dizzy—and then sat on the ground for a while."⁹

Once Yatarō overcame his youthful turbulence, he made his younger brother's education a priority. He didn't want Yanosuke to experience the limitations he had felt from not being able to speak directly to foreign trading partners. Yatarō consulted an American business colleague who connected him to Edward Hall, the head of a boarding school in Connecticut. In 1872, Yanosuke, age twenty-one, boarded a steamship from the port of Yokohama to cross the Pacific, took a train from San Francisco to New York City, and from there traveled in a horse-drawn carriage about one hundred fifty miles northeast to the town of Ellington, Connecticut. This was the start of the Iwasaki family tradition of sending their sons overseas to study (fig. 6b).

At the Edward Hall Family School for Boys, Yanosuke immersed himself in the Puritan culture of New England, starting each day with prayer and bible study. Most of the teachers were young graduates of Yale University who taught English, Latin, chemistry, math and the U.S. Constitution. On Friday evenings, the boys enjoyed tea and cookies baked by Hall's wife. On Sundays, there was church and invitations to local homes for meals. The Puritan teachings of charity planted the seeds for Yanosuke's embrace

FIG. 6a. Iwasaki Yanosuke. Early 1900s

FIG. 6b. Iwasaki Yanosuke and Edward Hall at Edward Hall Family School for Boys, in Ellington, Connecticut. Courtesy of Hall Memorial Library, History Collection. Photo © Hall Memorial Library

Little is known about Yanosuke's seventeen-month stay with eleven other boarding students at the Hall School besides his quick adoption of English. According to the *New York Tribune* newspaper of December 6, 1903, Yanosuke sent a large donation to the Hall Memorial Library that he intended to fund a Japanese exhibit and the purchase of Japanese books. Instead, the executors of Hall's estate chose to commission stained-glass windows of the Hall family for the library (cited by Fred G. Notehelfer, *Japan through American Eyes: The Journal of Francis Hall, Kanagawa and Yokohama, 1859–1866* [Princeton University Press, 1992]).



of philanthropy, a practice not customary in Japan. Yanosuke would later commission the Japanese translation of Andrew Carnegie's "The Gospel of Wealth." He wrote in the foreword, "If one reads this book and perceives the true intent of the author, emboldening one's character, hopefully it will guide as needed in current times to avoid wrong ways."¹⁰

Yanosuke's happy days in Ellington were cut short when he received a letter from his brother asking him to come home, as their father had died. In 1873, after just a year-and-a-half in Connecticut, Yanosuke returned to Japan, where he began working at the family company. (After he retired, Yanosuke made a trip back to Ellington and gave a donation to the local Hall Memorial Library, which used the money for a set of stained-glass windows that still decorate the building today.)

The following year, Yatarō appointed his brother vice president. Among Yanosuke's notable achievements were the purchases of a large coal mine and a shipyard, both of which were near bankruptcy. Yanosuke studied the risks and potential, and even went against the reluctance of his brother, who remained skeptical. Both investments eventually turned around.

Yatarō also arranged the marriage of his younger brother to Gotō Sanae, the daughter of one of the samurai who had helped Yatarō leave the Tosa village and start his career (fig. 6c). The couple would have three sons and a daughter.

Upon Yatarō's death in 1885, Yanosuke, then thirty-four, took over as president of Mitsubishi. Yanosuke's most foresighted achievement was his

FIG. 6c. Iwasaki Yanosuke and his wife, Sanae. Courtesy of Hall Memorial Library, History Collection. Photo © Hall Memorial Library



bold purchase of the vast tract of neglected land to the east of the Imperial Palace in Tokyo. The government's asking price had been up to three times its estimated worth, but with the urging of colleagues who were in London at the time, Yanosuke made the investment, based on his ambition to model the area after the City of London. This was the start of the creation of downtown Tokyo. Today, Mitsubishi Estate, Japan's largest real estate company, still owns about one third of the buildings in Tokyo's Marunouchi business district.

In 1893, at the age of forty-two, Yanosuke handed over the presidency to Hisaya, Yatarō's son, then twenty-eight, thus faithfully fulfilling his brother's deathbed wish. Yanosuke had turned out to be far more than a placeholder. He was a brilliant corporate leader in a style very different from his brash brother. Yanosuke was quieter and more cautious, but after studying a situation carefully, he made bold decisions and further diversified the family business from its original focus on shipping.

After his retirement, Yanosuke turned his attention to personal interests of art and architecture. This was the start of the Iwasaki family's patronage of the arts, and a milestone in Japan's fledgling history of philanthropy. "They went beyond the framework of their personal passion to spend money while considering public contribution," says Okazaki Rena, the chief curator of the Tōyō Bunko library in Tokyo's Bunkyo Ward, a million-volume institution founded by the family.

On the properties that his brother Yatarō had purchased, Yanosuke ordered the construction of both Japanese and Western mansions. In the Fukagawa neighborhood of Tokyo, he commissioned the British architect Josiah Conder (1852–1920) to build a red-brick mansion to be used for entertaining business clients (figs. 7a–d). Conder had come to Japan in 1877 at the invitation of the government to teach architecture. He designed many of Tokyo's early Western-style buildings, including the Bank of Japan, Tokyo Station and several of the Iwasaki family homes. The Fukagawa mansion included an annex, where Conder told Yanosuke it was a practice among upper-class Europeans to display their art collections. There, Yanosuke showcased a set of antique Chinese and Japanese porcelains he had purchased from Frank Brinkley (1841–1912), a British military officer who became the editor/owner of *The Japan Weekly Mail* and authored numerous books on Japan and its people.

Yanosuke also had Conder build a Western house next to his Japanese-style home atop a hill, with a view of the Pacific Ocean. Yanosuke did not live to see the completion of that stately gray-brick residence, however, which today serves as a guest house for the Mitsubishi companies (figs. 8a, b).

FIG. 7a. Josiah Conder. Iwasaki Yanosuke mansion for business entertainment in the Fukagawa district of Tokyo, 1889. Destroyed in the Great Kantō Earthquake of 1923

Taishō period, 1920. Color woodblock print. 16.4 x 43.3 cm. Courtesy of Veronica Miller, Egenolf Gallery

Today, the former Fukagawa estate is known as Kiyosumi Garden. Iwasaki Yatarō bought the land and started designing a garden. Yanosuke expanded the garden and commissioned a Western-style house (see figure 7a) and a Japanese house, seen in the Hasui prints.

FIG. 7b. Kawase Hasui (1883–1957). *Panoramic View of Daisensui Pond*, from the series *Pictures of the Mitsubishi Fukagawa Villa*. Japan.

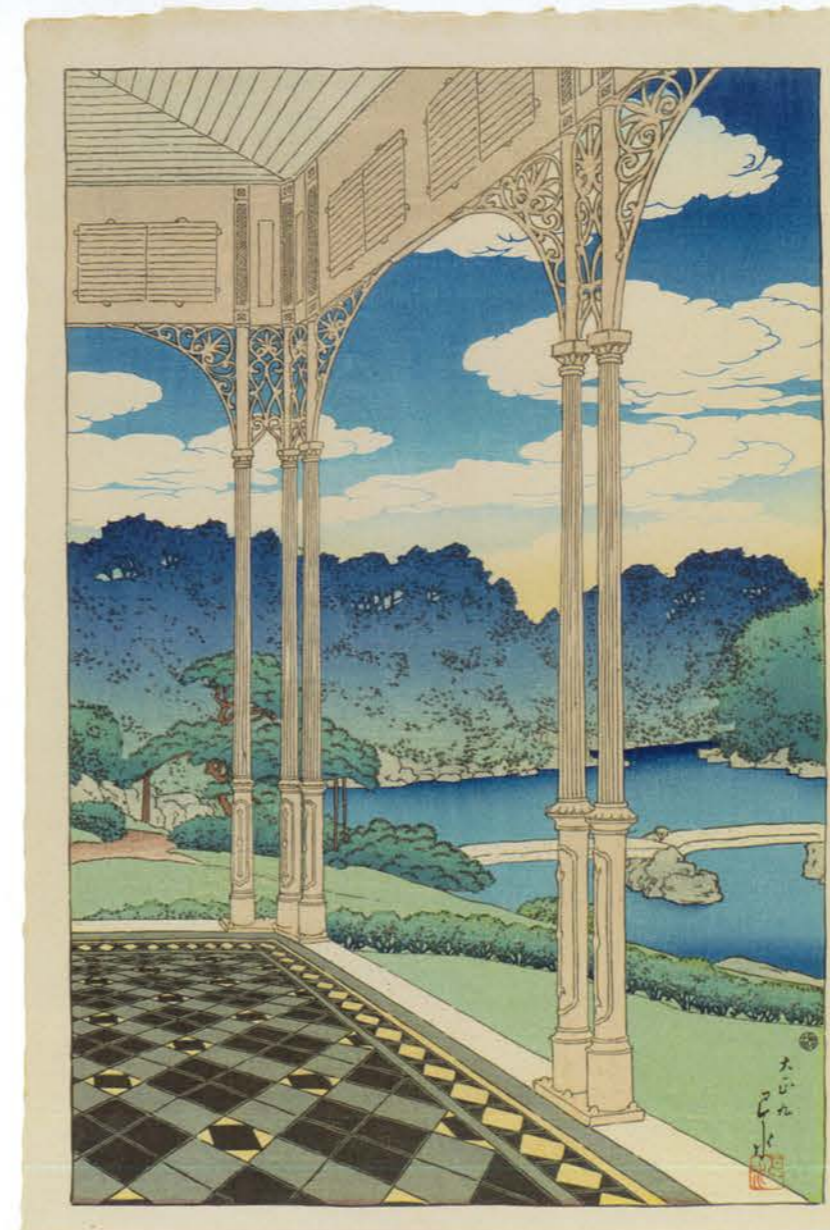


FIG. 7c. Kawase Hasui. *Garden Viewed from a Western-style Building*, from the series *Pictures of the Mitsubishi Fukagawa Villa*. Japan. Taishō period, 1920. Color woodblock print. 26.7 x 39.4 cm. Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC.; Robert O. Muller Collection, S2003.8.597

FIG. 7d. Kawase Hasui. *Pond-side Rest House with Pines*, from the series *Pictures of the Mitsubishi Fukagawa Villa*. Japan. Taishō period, 1920. Color woodblock print. 47.8 x 18.8 cm. Courtesy of Scholten Japanese Art, New York

According to Kendall Brown, the author of *Water and Shadow: Kawase Hasui and Japanese Landscape Prints* (Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, 2014), in 1920, the Mitsubishi Company commissioned Hasui to produce eight prints of the family's Fukagawa villa, in different seasons, to distribute to clients throughout the world as a means to improve the images of Mitsubishi, Tokyo and Japan. In 1935, the artist produced another print series for Mitsubishi, showing their villa in Moto-Hakone.



FIG. 8a. Iwasaki Yanosuke's Takanawa mansion in Shinagawa Ward, built by Conder in 1908. In 1938, the house was given to the Mitsubishi Company for entertaining clients and has been known since as Kaitōkaku.
 FIG. 8b. Interior of Kaitōkaku billiards room. The oil painting on the back wall, *Female Nude (Ratai fujinzō)* by Kuroda Seiki (1866–1924), caused a sensation at the 6th White Horse Society exhibition in Tokyo in 1901. The

police ordered the lower half of the painting to be covered by a cloth. Tamamushi Satoko, a professor at Musashino Art University, Tokyo, and a former curator at the Seikadō Bunko Art Museum, has pointed out that traditionally the billiards room was a space exclusively reserved for men, thus the existence of a risqué painting was even appropriate and suitable for such a gendered space.

While he developed a passion for preserving the arts, Yanosuke had the goal of keeping Asian arts within Asia. Japan looked to the West during this period of rapid modernization, and he worried that Japanese artifacts would be undervalued in his country and sold off around the world. The risk of such a chaotic dispersal was spurred by former samurai families unloading their possessions as they struggled financially in the new social order. Temples also were trying to stay afloat amid a sometimes violent, anti-Buddhism movement at that time. It was in such an environment that Yanosuke came upon a pair of seventeenth-century screens with scenes from *The Tale of Genji*, by Tawaraya Sōtatsu (c. 1570–c. 1640) (fig. 9). The Daigo-ji temple in Kyoto gave the screens to Yanosuke after he had donated money for the temple's restoration. (The screens were shown at

FIG. 9. Tawaraya Sōtatsu. Scenes from the Chapters "Channel Markers" and "The Barrier Gate," in *The Tale of Genji*. Japan. Edo period, 1631. Pair of six-panel screens; ink, color and gold leaf on paper. 152.6 x 355.6 cm each. Seikadō Bunko Art Museum, Tokyo. National Treasure





FIG. 10. Hashimoto Gahō. *Dragons and Tigers*. Japan. Meiji period, 1880s. Pair of six-panel screens; ink, color and gold pigment on paper. 160.5 x 369.5 cm each. Seikadō Bunko Art Museum, Tokyo. Important Cultural Property

OPPOSITE
FIG. 11. Ko-Bizen Takatsuna. Sword (*tachi*) signed "Takatsuna." Accompanied by a sword mounting of *uchigatana* type, with red-lacquered scabbard. Japan. Kamakura period, 12th–13th century. Seikadō Bunko Art Museum, Tokyo

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, in the 2019 exhibition "The Tale of Genji: A Japanese Classic Illuminated.")

Yanosuke also supported artists and scholars of his generation. The Seikadō was originally a small library in Yanosuke's residence housing his collection of classical Japanese and Chinese texts. He hired one of his former teachers to manage the library, in part to finance the scholar's research. Among contemporary artists, Yanosuke commissioned the oil painter Yamamoto Hōsui (1850–1906) to create a series of Western-style depictions of the Chinese zodiac signs. He also commissioned Hashimoto Gahō (1835–1908) to paint the six-panel folding screen *Dragons and Tigers* (fig. 10).

At the core of Yanosuke's collecting, however, was his personal passion toward the items he purchased. His initial acquisitions included swords from the twelfth to nineteenth centuries, some with lacquer sheaths and silk thread-wrapped hilts. Growing up in the poor Iwasaki clan, which due to its low-ranking samurai status was not allowed to bear a sword, Yanosuke is said to have yearned to carry one with the then popular, red-lacquered sheath (fig. 11).¹¹ The Seikadō today owns about one hundred twenty rare swords, including a National Treasure. Other early acquisitions were two thirteenth to fourteenth-century tea caddies shaped like eggplants (fig. 12).

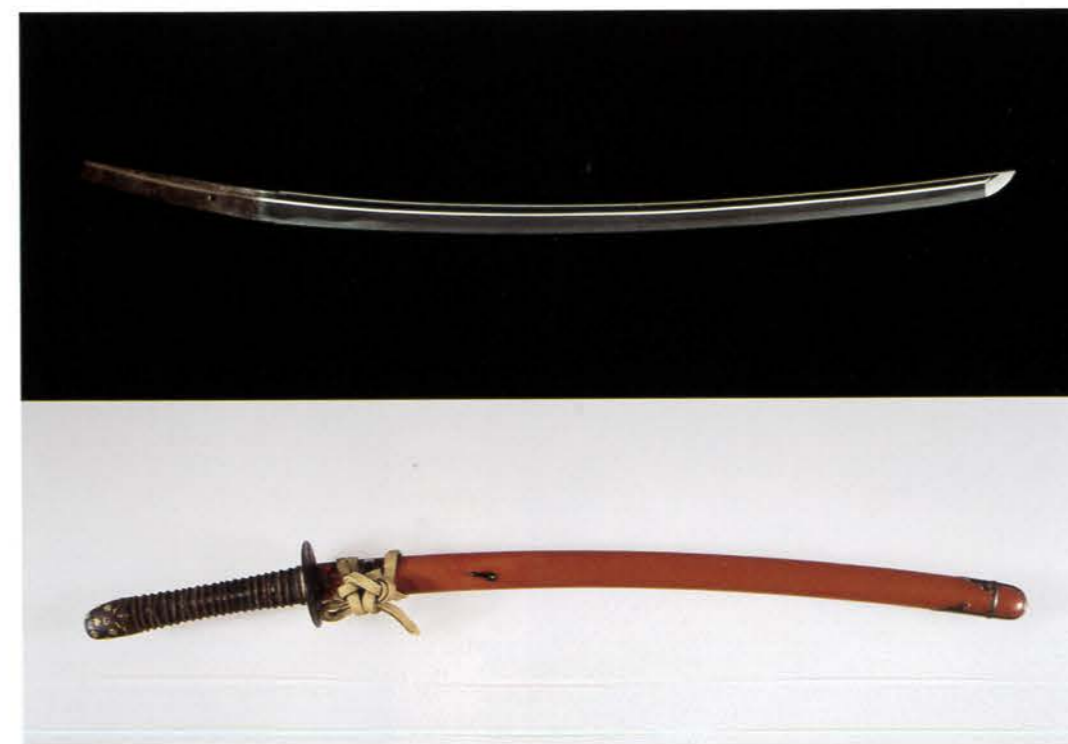


FIG. 12. Tea Caddies in Eggplant (*nasu*) Shape, known as "Matsumoto-nasu" (left) and "Tsukumo-nasu" (right). China. Southern Song or Yuan dynasty, 13th–14th century. Stoneware with iron glaze. Left: H. 6.4 x Diam. 6.9 cm; right: H. 7.1 cm x Diam. 7.4 cm. Seikadō Bunko Art Museum, Tokyo

According to the museum's website, "Tsukumo-nasu" was once owned by the warlord Matsunaga Hisahide, who purportedly exchanged it with the daimyo Oda Nobunaga (1534–1582) for Yamato province. The name comes from the term *tsukumogami* (deities inhabiting old objects) or from a poem in *The Tales of Ise* about an old woman with white hair (*tsukumo-gami*). Various records of tea events praise Tsukumo-nasu



by name. The tea caddy was damaged once when Nobunaga owned it and damaged a second time during the attack on Osaka in 1615, when the Tokugawa forces emerged as victors of the civil war. Tokugawa Ieyasu dispatched the lacquer artist Fujishige Tōgen and his son Tōgon to recover Tsukumo-nasu from the ruins of Osaka castle and restore it to its present state. So pleased was Ieyasu with their work that he gave the caddy to the Fujishige family along with Matsumoto-nasu. With an advance on his 1885 year-end salary from the family firm, Iwasaki Yanosuke purchased Matsumoto-nasu, the first tea ware to enter the Seikadō collection.

FIG. 13. Iwasaki Hisaya, the third president of Mitsubishi

Yanosuke had to take an advance on his salary to purchase the items, and his brother Yatarō held them for a while as collateral.

Yanosuke died of cancer in 1908 at the age of fifty-seven.

IWASAKI HISAYA

Yatarō and Kise's first son, Hisaya, was born in 1865 (fig. 13). He became the third president of Mitsubishi and enjoyed a fine record of business and cultural accomplishments, but he is not well known, due to his reticent personality.

Hisaya spent his early childhood in the ancestral home in Tosa. He was known as a good boy who helped his grandmother Miwa draw water from their rice paddies when he was only four—and who refused to take short cuts through other people's fields. At age nine, he moved with his mother, his siblings and grandmother to Tokyo to join his father, Yatarō, who had transferred the Mitsubishi headquarters there. Much of the journey was on foot, and Miwa later wrote that Hisaya's steady walking at his young age signaled to her that "this grandson has potential."¹²

The year after Yatarō's death, Hisaya's uncle Yanosuke arranged for Hisaya to study at the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania, an eminent business school in Philadelphia. Observing the Iwasaki family's values of a spartan upbringing, Hisaya rented a room in a cheap boarding house. His grades were described as "not too spectacular," but he gained exposure to ideas that would influence his business outlook.¹³ For example, many of his professors were advocates of protectionism, emphasizing the need of government intervention to build modern industry. Some of his professors were Protestant ministers who stressed the value of trust in people's consciences. And finally, Hisaya learned about the culture of young men from the upper classes of Philadelphia. One such friend was Lloyd Griscom (1872–1959), who went on to serve as an ambassador to Japan between 1903 and 1905.



Following their graduation, Hisaya and Griscom traveled through Europe, Hisaya in third class and Griscom in first. Griscom recalled that they stopped at a fur store in St. Petersburg, where he bought a sealskin cap—and how shocked he was when his unassuming Japanese friend then asked the clerks to bring out everything they had and said he would take it all, and to charge it to the Japanese Embassy. "Remembering the wretched boarding house where Iwasaki had lived for four years . . . the cheap little cabin he had chosen on the ship, and his frugal habits, I could hardly believe my ears," Griscom wrote in his memoir. "It turned out that Iwasaki was the sole heir of the great business house of the Mitsubishi and some day would become one of the richest men in the world, occupying in Japan a position like that of Carnegie and Rockefeller combined."¹⁴

When Hisaya returned to Japan in 1891, it was a transformed country unified under an emperor, as opposed to a samurai, and in the process of building a modern army, drafting a constitution and undergoing rapid industrialization. Yanosuke appointed Hisaya vice president of the firm, and two years later, handed over the reins. Hisaya, then twenty-eight, continued Mitsubishi's diversification, with a brewery, paper mill and a trading division. He purchased numerous coal and metal mines from the government, which was continuing to privatize its state enterprises. He also made a dramatic change in the family business, which had long been run top down, introducing a modern management system that delegated autonomy to some of the sectors, providing them with their own directors and accounting systems.

In 1894, at age twenty-eight, Hisaya married Hoshina Shizuko, a famed beauty and the daughter of a feudal lord (figs. 14 and 15). The story goes that

FIG. 14. Iwasaki Shizuko. Early 1900s

Shizuko was the eldest daughter of Viscount Hoshina Masaari, of the Iino domain in Kazusa province, now Chiba Prefecture. (Iwasaki Hisaya was Baron Iwasaki.) After graduating top in her class at the premier school for girls, she pursued her interests in English and classical Japanese literature, especially *waka* poetry. She shared a love of books and history with her husband and painted in the *Nihonga* style in her free time.

FIG. 15. Iwasaki Shizuko and Hisaya. Early 1900s





FIG. 16a. Seated left to right: Iwasaki Shizuko, Kise and Hisaya. Standing, left to right: the six children of Hisaya and Shizuko: Ayako, Hikoyata, Miki, Tsuneya, Takaya and Sumiko. Early 1900s
Takaya is the maternal grandfather of Kumiko Makihara.

Hisaya was such a serious young man that some business leaders offered a reward to any geisha who could turn his head—to no avail.¹⁵ But when he first laid eyes on Shizuko at the theater, he dropped the boxed lunch he had been eating. Many years later, his children would put on skits before their parents, reenacting that scene. The couple had three sons and three daughters. They built a grand Western-style guest house with two verandas and a striking two-story colonnade designed by Josiah Conder in Yushima, Taitō Ward (figs. 16a, b). Their larger Japanese-style house, where they lived, featured paintings by Hashimoto Gahō (fig. 16c).

In 1916, at age fifty, characteristic of his unwavering style, Hisaya abruptly handed over the firm to his cousin Koyata, without discussing it with other executives. Koyata is the son of the second president, Yanosuke, the younger brother of founder Yatarō.

Hisaya devoted his retirement years to philanthropy and farming. In 1924, he launched the Tōyō Bunko library (The Oriental Library), which today



FIG. 16b. Josiah Conder. Guest House of the home designed for Iwasaki Hisaya in Yushima, Taitō Ward, near Shinobazu Pond, in Ueno, Tokyo. 1896. Photo: Allison Tolman

Conder designed the guest house in European style for annual gatherings of the Iwasaki family (see figure 16a) and for entertaining foreign guests. The second-story colonnade is in the style of a grand house on the Main Line, in suburban Philadelphia, in a nod to Hisaya's recent graduation from the University of Pennsylvania. Many of the windows are stained glass. Inside, the house features a spiral staircase, wood parquet flooring and fifteen fireplaces, each with a different mantelpiece. What remains of the estate are this guest house, a billiards house in the style of a Swiss chalet, a vastly reduced garden and the Japanese-style residence with wall paintings by Hashimoto Gahō (see figure 16c),

which were saved from further demolition by the postwar designation of Important Cultural Property status. Hisaya and his family lived in the Japanese-style residence behind the guest house. The Tokyo metropolitan government has supervised the existing complex since 2001.

FIG. 16c. Hashimoto Gahō. *Mount Fuji and Waves*, on the wall in the Japanese residence of the former Iwasaki home and garden, Yushima, Taitō Ward, Tokyo, 1896. Wall painting; ink on paper. Photo: Allison Tolman

The paintings on the walls of the large tatami room for greeting guests, near the entrance to the Japanese residence, are said to have been commissioned by Iwasaki Hisaya. His uncle, Iwasaki Yanosuke, the second-generation president of Mitsubishi, acquired the screens *Dragons and Tigers* (see figure 10 and covers of this issue).

FIG. 17. Morrison Collection of books, acquired by Iwasaki Hisaya in 1917, in the Tōyō Bunko Library, Tokyo

Tōyō Bunko is Japan's largest Asian studies library. Iwasaki Hisaya traveled to London to negotiate the sale of the Morrison collection with Morrison's widow. Agreeing to her high price, he had the books shipped to a warehouse on one of his estates, in Kiyosumi. After a severe rainstorm, many books in the "Morrison Library," as they then called it, were damaged. During the long process of restoration, Iwasaki visited the conservation storage

so often that visitors to his office would be told, "He's in the library stacks."

Earlier, in 1901, Iwasaki had purchased a ten-thousand-volume collection of books from Friedrich Max Müller (1823–1900), a philologist, Vedic specialist and prolific translator at the University of Oxford. Iwasaki donated the collection to the library of Tokyo Imperial University, which was destroyed by fire in the Great Kantō Earthquake of 1923.



has one of the world's largest collections of Asian texts (fig. 17). The library originated from Hisaya's 1917 purchase of the twenty-four-thousand-piece compilation of European writings on China owned by George Ernest Morrison (1862–1920), an Australian who was the China correspondent for *The Times* of London and an adviser to the Chinese government. Like his uncle Yanosuke, Hisaya had a passion for collecting—in his case, books and documents. An avid reader himself, Hisaya directed the library to expand its holdings to include Japanese and Chinese writings, as well as rare and sacred documents from throughout Asia. Hisaya was interested in texts that were historically important, such as those that revealed how the Japanese language evolved over time or how Japanese scholars were deciphering Chinese classical documents. "They are irreplaceable resources in the history of Japanese language studies," according to the Tōyō Bunko curator Makino Motonori.¹⁶

My mother's image of her grandfather Hisaya is of a soft-spoken man, always sitting in his living room with a book, often in English, or reading

English-language newspapers. He was strict and principled. She vaguely recalls being scolded for leaving food on her plate as a child and knows that her older male cousins were all banished at least once to a detached storage house for such misdeeds. Hisaya loathed extravagance and donated two large family properties—the grounds of the Conder-designed mansion in Fukagawa that had been the Mitsubishi entertainment quarters (the house itself had burned down in the Great Kantō Earthquake in Tokyo 1923)—and the land where his father, Yatarō, had a second home. In the case of the latter, Hisaya himself called the Tokyo city office and told the parks administrator that he wanted to donate the property and asked how much he should contribute for maintenance fees. The official replied that the donation itself would be greatly appreciated and that there was no need for anything further. The government wanted to present a certificate of gratitude to Hisaya at the opening ceremony of the resulting Rikugien Park, but he declined, saying, "I only did what one would expect."¹⁷

Hisaya's other post-retirement interest was farming, about which he was quite serious. He spent his summers at the Koiwai Farm—Japan's largest privately owned farm, which was started by his uncle Yanosuke and some railway executives. Hisaya diversified the crops there, imported studs from England and bred racehorses. He also personally managed Suehiro, another much smaller poultry, pig and crop farm in the Narita area outside of Tokyo. In his eighties, he moved into a small house on that farm, where he spent the rest of his life until he passed away in 1955 at age ninety.

FIG. 18a. Iwasaki Koyata, 1939



Iwasaki Koyata

Yanosuke and Sanae's eldest son, Koyata, was the fourth and last Iwasaki president of the Mitsubishi companies (fig. 18a). He was born in Tokyo in 1879. The founder, Yatarō, was still president then, and Koyata's father was vice president.

Koyata was known as a quiet and obedient child. During his high school years, he grew into his characteristic robust figure. In his teens, he was already six feet two and weighed over two hundred pounds at a time when the average Japanese male stood at about five feet tall.

Following the Iwasaki tradition of sending their sons overseas to study, in 1900, at the age of twenty-one, Koyata entered Pembroke College at the University of Cambridge in the UK. A fellow Japanese student at the time described Koyata as extremely studious, often engrossed in a book, even when other students were chatting in his room.¹⁸ Koyata loved to debate current political issues and was interested in a career in government.



FIG. 18b. Iwasaki Takako and her husband, Koyata, on the occasion of Koyata's sixtieth birthday (*kanreki*), 1939

In 1905, five years later, Koyata returned to Tokyo. His father, Yanosuke, opposed his son's desire to go into politics, and they reached a compromise after Yanosuke told Koyata he could exert his political views in his approach to business. Koyata was then appointed vice president of Mitsubishi in 1906.

Next on the parental agenda, Yanosuke arranged his twenty-seven-year-old son's wedding to Shimazu Takako, age eighteen, a descendant of feudal lords in Kyushu (fig. 18b). In 1916, at age thirty-six, Koyata was appointed president of Mitsubishi by his cousin Hisaya. Koyata's tenure spanned turbulent years that included the two World Wars, the massive 1923 earthquake in Tokyo and the Great Depression. He revealed his thoughtful management style soon after taking office, when he lectured executives not to get caught up in the post-World War I speculative economy, but rather to always emphasize quality over quantity.

One of Koyata's flagship projects was the construction of Japan's first skyscraper in 1923—eight stories—which was unprecedented at the time. Today, the building is a thirty-seven-floor high-rise, with a replicated façade of the original building at its base.

While Koyata was at the frontlines of business expansion, he was suffering from insomnia, most likely due to depression. At age fifty, he took two years away from work. While recovering, he had a chance to pursue his interest in the arts, becoming a respected haiku writer, who published two collections of his poetry. He also practiced the tea ceremony and played the cello. And like his predecessors, Koyata became an active patron of the arts. On the grounds of a former Iwasaki residence in Setagaya Ward, he built a library and storage facility and moved the family's collection there. Those became the Seikadō Bunko Art Museum and depository. Koyata's personal interest was in ceramics and tea-ceremony utensils. His most famous purchase was a twelfth- to thirteenth-century black-glazed Chinese tea bowl with iridescent spots, famed for its radiant, shimmering coloring, and now registered a National Treasure (fig. 19). Koyata and his wife, Takako, were admirers of traditional Japanese dolls. Koyata commissioned fifteen dolls from the master craftsman Ōki Heizō V (1885–1941) as a gift to Takako (fig. 20). The dolls were acquired later by Kirimura Kiyomi, who donated them to the Seikaidō Bunko Art Museum in 2018.

FIG. 19. Tea Bowl, known as Inaba Tenmoku. China. Southern Song dynasty, 12th–13th century. Jian ware, Yōhen tenmoku type; stoneware with iron glaze. 7.2 x 12.2 cm. Seikadō Bunko Art Museum, Tokyo. National Treasure

Regarded as the most precious type among Tenmoku (black-glazed) tea bowls, Yōhen (iridescent spotted) Tenmoku are black-glazed tea bowls designed on the interior with irregular spots with blue iridescence. There are only three bowls of this ware known. The other two pieces, also designated National Treasures, are owned by Ryōkoin, a subtemple of Daitoku-ji in Kyoto, and the Fujita Museum of Art in Osaka. Of the three, this one boasts the strongest lustre and a finely chiseled foot. As indicated by its name, Inaba Tenmoku was handed down in the Inaba family, who ruled the Yodo fiefdom (part of Kyoto City) during the Edo period. Iwasaki Koyata, who was passionate about Chinese ceramics, was able to purchase it in 1934, but he never used it for a tea gathering, demurring, "The treasure of the country must not be used privately."

Koyata also helped to establish a private school, Japan's first private orchestra, the Tokyo Philharmonic, and contributed to a project that launched the East Asian Library at Columbia University.

Koyata's major corporate accomplishment was the shifting of the family company to become a more public entity. In 1937, he incorporated the Mitsubishi holding company into a joint stock corporation with nearly one half of the shares to be held by outside investors. He also created joint ventures and alliances with companies overseas. Mitsubishi continued to expand into new fields, including a start in automobiles. The company developed jet engines that diversified into creating home appliances. Mitsubishi's foray into the optical industry began with wartime needs for submarine periscopes, but diversified into a successful camera business—Nikon is a Mitsubishi brand.

Koyata outlined his business philosophy in three principles, which are still revered within the company. They are: Corporate Responsibility to Society; Integrity and Fairness; and International Understanding through Business. He believed that business had an important social responsibility, not unlike current values of corporate governance and sustainability.

The advent of the Pacific War would challenge how Koyata could run Mitsubishi with those principles, amid a highly ideological military-industrial complex. He would be tormented over his desire to patriotically support his country while upholding his global outlook. Two days after Japan bombed Pearl Harbor, Koyata spoke before executives of the Mitsubishi companies. He urged his employees to put all efforts into supporting national interests. And in a bold statement during wartime





FIG. 20. Studio of Ōki Heizō V. Pair of Hina Dolls. Japan. Shōwa period, 1930s. Silk and wood with polychrome. Male doll: 30.5 x 36 cm; female doll: 25 x 65 cm. Seikadō Bunko Art Museum, Tokyo

ensorship, he also advised them not to forget past friendships with the West. Although the company could not continue to trade with their foreign joint-venture partners, it managed to set aside the royalty payments to them, to be paid once their ties could be revived.

During the Pacific War, Mitsubishi fulfilled government orders; its highest profile product was the Zero fighter jet, regarded as the best combat plane during the early years of the conflict. Even before Japan surrendered, the United States had been forecasting its defeat, and how it would occupy and transform the country into a democracy. Among the first measures the Allied Occupation took was to order a “voluntary” dissolution of the *zaibatsu*—as family-run business groups like Mitsubishi were called. Initially, Koyata resisted this measure, but relented under pressure.

Mitsubishi, seventy-three years after Yatarō established the dominant business group of Japan, ceased to exist. The parent company was split into one hundred thirty independent firms that were forbidden from coordinating with one another or using the Mitsubishi name. All family assets were seized, and any members working for the company—which included, of course, Koyata, Hisaya and also my mother’s father and all

of her uncles—were forbidden to work for Mitsubishi. My mother’s family had a drastic change in lifestyle. Many of the larger homes were requisitioned by the U.S. occupation authorities, and theirs was one of them. An American journalist and his family moved in while she and her siblings and parents were relegated to just a few rooms. Her mother, who had eaten meals in a formal dining room waited on by servants, now planted wheat and vegetables in garden plots for food.

In the fall of 1945, Koyata was hospitalized with aneurisms. His condition quickly deteriorated, and he died in December at the age of sixty-six. In his hospital room, which had no heat due to the country’s economic devastation, Koyata composed his final haiku on a piece of paper that he handed to his wife:

秋さまま病雁臥すや霜の上

Aki samazama byōgan fusuya shimo no ue

*Deep in autumn
A wild goose falls ill
On the frost.*

From his hospital bed, he told her, “On the frost’ means I am lying down on the crisp white sheets.”

Koyata’s memorial service was the first large-scale funeral to take place in Japan since its surrender four months earlier. *Life* magazine carried a three-page article on the event, with photos by Alfred Eisenstaedt, known for his photograph of a sailor kissing a woman in Times Square on Victory Japan day. The *Life* article said of Koyata, “He was just 66 and had lived just long enough to see his factories and his country crumble under bombs and defeat.”¹⁹ It is a poignant line to describe the patriotic corporate leader who had visited assembly lines to boost worker morale.

In 1952, when the United States ended its occupation, the ban on using the corporate name was repealed, and the Mitsubishi corporate group slowly revived. Today, it has about forty-five-hundred loosely affiliated companies, including Japan’s largest bank and largest trading company.

Beyond its business achievements, the Iwasaki family’s cultural and philanthropic legacy can be seen in the Seikadō Bunko Art Museum, the Tōyō Bunko library and in Tokyo parks, such as the Kiyosumi and Rikugien gardens. Another venue was added in October 2022, when the Seikadō opened a gallery in the Meiji Seimei Building in Tokyo’s Marunouchi district (figs. 21a, b). A commanding Greek Revival-style structure built by the Japanese architect Okada Shin’ichirō in 1934, it survived the wartime bombings and was used as an office by the U.S. occupation authorities. The Seikadō gallery project had been a long time coming. After Yanosuke purchased the downtown area in 1890, the developers for Mitsubishi had been discussing the creation of an art museum there. It never materialized, but Josiah Conder had drafted a plan labeled “Art. Galleries. Maru no Uchi. Tokio” that included display halls, curators’ offices, a shop and lecture hall.

FIG. 21a. Meiji Seimeikan, Marunouchi district of Chiyoda Ward, Tokyo. 1934. Important Cultural Property



The Meiji Seimeikan Building (Meiji Life Insurance Building; now the headquarters of Meiji Yasuda Life Insurance Co., part of the Mitsubishi group) was opened in March of 1934. It replaced the “Mitsubishi Nigō-kan” (Mitsubishi No. 2 building), designed by Josiah Conder and completed in 1895. Across from the eastern moat of the Imperial Palace, it was the first major project in Western style to be designed by a Japanese architect, Okada Shin'ichirō, a professor at the Tokyo Academy of Fine Arts (now Tokyo University of Fine Arts), and the first Shōwa-period building to be designated an Important Cultural Property of Japan.

FIG. 21b. In October 2022, the Seikadō Bunko Art Museum opened a new gallery in the Meiji Seimeikan in downtown Tokyo to commemorate the 130th anniversary of the founding of the Seikadō. Director Kōno Motoaki (far side of case, facing us) and his guests, including the head of the Agency for Cultural Affairs, admire the museum's National Treasure Chinese tea bowl (see figure 19) on display for the preview opening, September 30, 2022. Photo: Yoshida Eri



Six months before the launch of Seikadō's new gallery, Director Kōno Motoaki told me, “This will be the realization of Yanosuke's dream” (fig. 22).

My mother and I look forward to visiting the new gallery. Far from holding any items as our own, we will buy entry tickets and join the throngs in admiring the treasures on display.

As Japan accepted its vanquished status and moved on, so did my family. My mother's recollections of her childhood are happy ones. She does not remember hearing any tales of regret about loss of power or wealth. Practical and realistic, her parents had no time for glorious bygones.

When I come across interesting anecdotes in my research, I like to share them with my mother, and in those moments we luxuriate in our exotic past. Sometimes we stroll through Rikugien Park, my great-great-grandfather's former estate, and enjoy the sights of its gentle hills and tea houses, and the carefully groomed pine trees standing by the central pond, just as Iwasaki Yatarō must have done. ☺

NOTES

1. Kōno Motoaki, “Upon the Occasion of the Treasures of Mitsubishi Collection,” from *Mitsubishi shibō ten / The Treasures of Mitsubishi Collection* (Tokyo: The Mitsubishi 150th Anniversary Steering Committee, 2021), 33.
2. Murakami Genzō, *Iwasaki Yatarō* (Tokyo: Asahi Shinbunsha, 1964), 55.
3. Tateishi Yū, *Iwasaki Yatarō* (Tokyo: PHP Kenkyūjo, 2009), 18.
4. Sunagawa Yukio, *Meiji no kyojin Iwasaki Yatarō* (The giant of Meiji: Iwasaki Yatarō) (Tokyo: Nihon Keizai Shinbun Shuppansha, 2011), 73.
5. Sunagawa, *Meiji no kyojin*, 93.
6. Sunagawa, *Meiji no kyojin*, 101.
7. “Reach Beyond the Blue Sky” broadcasted by NHK television in 2021.
8. Sunagawa, *Meiji no kyojin*, 236.
9. Iwasaki Yatarō Iwasaki Yanosuke Biography Compilation Committee, ed., *Iwasaki Yanosuke den* (Biography of Iwasaki Yanosuke) (Tokyo: Iwasaki Yatarō Iwasaki Yanosuke Biography Compilation Committee, 1971), 19.
10. Itō Jūjirō, *Tomi no fukuin* (The gospel of wealth) (Tokyo: Jitsugyō no Nihonsha, 1936), 3–4.
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12. Narita Seiichi, *Iwasaki Yatarō monogatari* (Tales of Iwasaki Yatarō) (Tokyo: Mainichi Wanz, 2010), 133.
13. Takayasu Miyakawa, “Hisaya Iwasaki and the Wharton School,” *Japanese Yearbook on Business History* 16 (Tokyo: Business Historical Society of Japan, 2000), 105.
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15. Iwasaki Hisaya Biography Compilation Committee, ed., *Iwasaki Hisaya den* (Biography of Iwasaki Hisaya) (Tokyo: Iwasaki Hisaya Biography Compilation Committee, 1961), 223.
16. Motonori Makino, “Hisaya and Toyo Bunko,” in *From Dream to Reality / The Iwasaki Mitsubishi Collection*, exh. cat. ([Place of publication and publisher not identified], 2010).
17. *Toritsuteien ni natta Iwasakike hontei / bettei* (Iwasaki family homes and second homes that became city parks) (Tokyo: Tokyo-to Kōen Kyokai, 2018), 34.
18. Miyakawa Takayasu, *Iwasaki Koyata* (Tokyo: Chuō Kōronsha, 1996), 6.
19. “Mitsubishi Funeral / The Head of Japan's Great Family Trust Dies and Is Cremated with Solemn Buddhist Rites,” *Life* (Dec. 31, 1945): 26–28.

FIG. 22. Kōno Motoaki, the director of the Seikadō Bunko Art Museum, Tokyo, and the author, Kumiko Makihara, at the museum, in April 2022. The bronze bust of Iwasaki Yanosuke is by Hori Shinji, 1923.

