

End of the Tokugawa regime  
After Japan's long isolationist period came to an end, trade resumed with Western countries.

Suzuki & Co and Iwai & Co. would go on to become predecessor companies of Sojitz. Naokichi Kaneko of Suzuki and Katsujiro Iwai of Iwai both frequented Kobe's foreign settlement, where they faced injustices but persisted with their daring business initiatives.

When the Sino-Japanese War broke out, Suzuki & Co. entered Taiwan in search of camphor where Kaneko met with Count Shimpei Goto. After previously importing a significant amount of celluloid fabric from overseas, Iwai & Co. was now preparing to undertake domestic production of celluloid by teaming up with Suzuki & Co. for commercialization.



In the same period, Osaka's merchants were uniting under Tomoatsu Godai to establish spinning as a new industry in Japan.



Volume 2: In the aftermath of the Sino-Japanese War, Yahata Steel Works began operations. Following Japan's victory in the Russo-Japanese War, Sojitz's three predecessor companies—Suzuki & Co., Iwai & Co., and Japan Cotton Trading—aimed to further advance Japan's modernization and elevate Japan to the ranks of developed countries.

**sojitz**

**Hassojitz**

発想 × **sojitz**

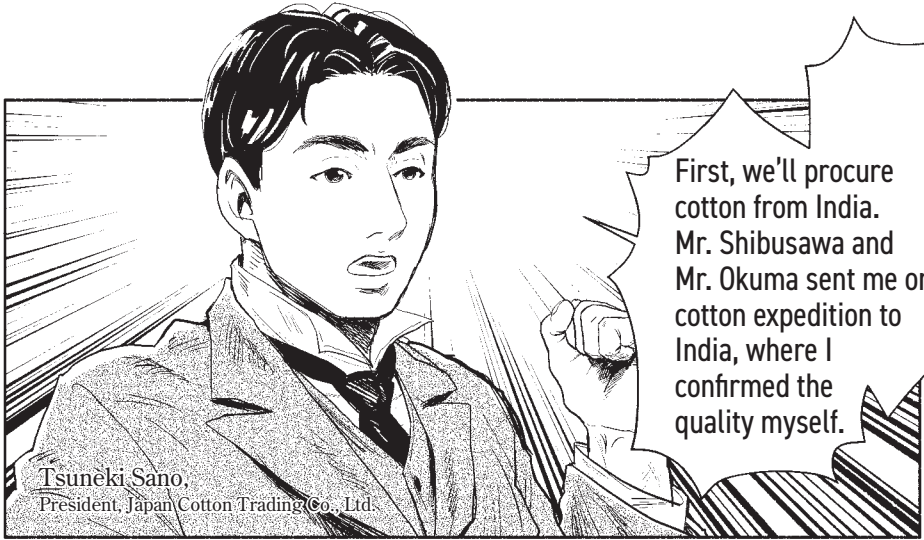
## Chapter 1

### Japan Cotton Trading

The search for cotton: Voyages to India, China, and America

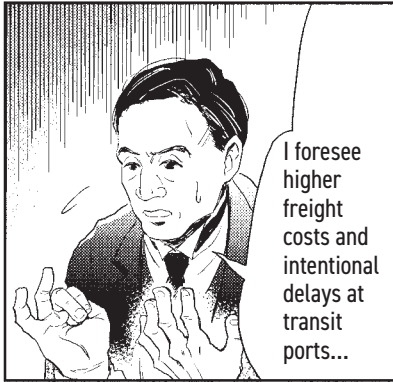




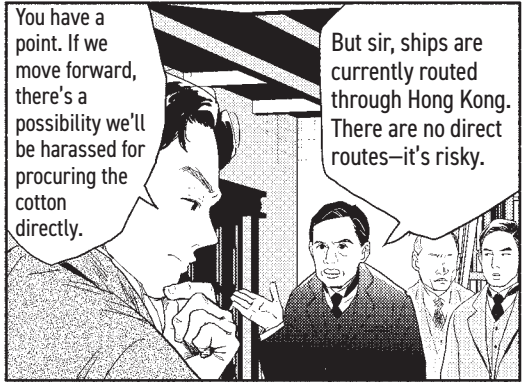


Tsuneki Sano,  
President, Japan Cotton Trading Co., Ltd.

First, we'll procure cotton from India. Mr. Shibusawa and Mr. Okuma sent me on a cotton expedition to India, where I confirmed the quality myself.

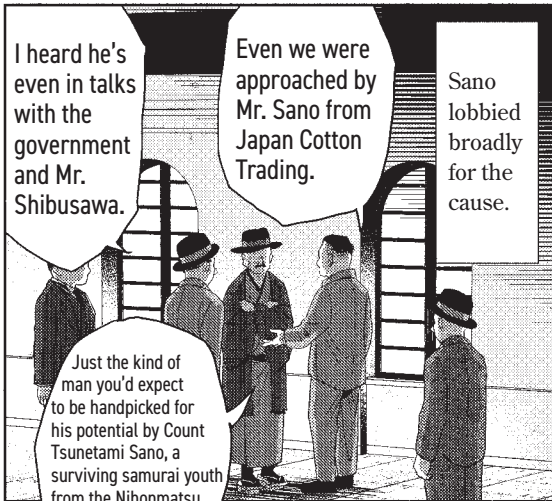


I foresee higher freight costs and intentional delays at transit ports...



You have a point. If we move forward, there's a possibility we'll be harassed for procuring the cotton directly.

But sir, ships are currently routed through Hong Kong. There are no direct routes—it's risky.



I heard he's even in talks with the government and Mr. Shibusawa.

Even we were approached by Mr. Sano from Japan Cotton Trading.

Sano lobbied broadly for the cause.

Just the kind of man you'd expect to be handpicked for his potential by Count Tsunetami Sano, a surviving samurai youth from the Nihonmatsu Youth Corps.



Hmm. If that happens, Japan Cotton Trading's mission won't be realized. Cotton procurement and transport must be carried out by Japanese merchants independently.

\*Refer to Soltiz History Extras (Page 51)



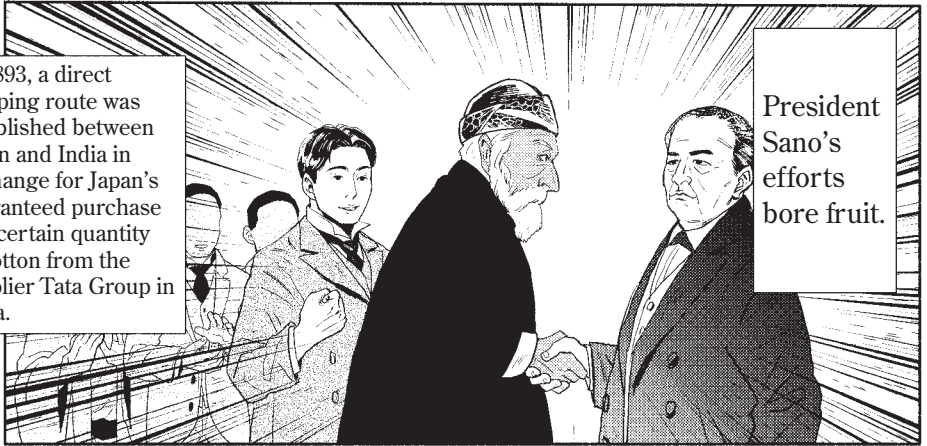
Tsuneki Sano,  
President, Japan Cotton Trading  
Co., Ltd.



Jamsheji Nusserwanji Tata,  
Leader of India's Tata Group

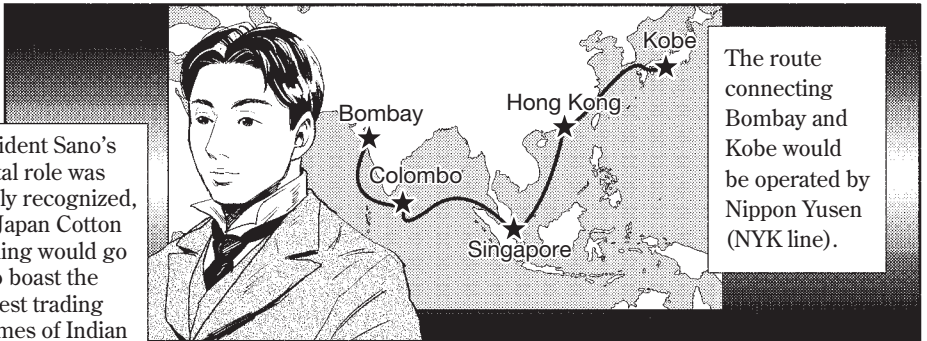


Eichi Shibusawa,  
Spinning industry executive



In 1893, a direct shipping route was established between Japan and India in exchange for Japan's guaranteed purchase of a certain quantity of cotton from the supplier Tata Group in India.

President Sano's efforts bore fruit.



President Sano's pivotal role was widely recognized, and Japan Cotton Trading would go on to boast the highest trading volumes of Indian cotton in the industry.

The route connecting Bombay and Kobe would be operated by Nippon Yusen (NYK line).

Mr. Tanaka has close ties to Masayoshi Matsukata of Satsuma, Hirobumi Ito of Choshu and Taro Katsura. He helped to develop Osaka alongside Mr. Godai.

Apparently, our next president is Mr. Ichibe Tanaka. What kind of person is he?

What an impressive man!

Rumor has it he hates any crooked dealings.

After President Sano, Japan Cotton Trading appointed Ichibe Tanaka as its second president. Tanaka was said to be one of the three most prominent leaders in Osaka's business community at the time.

The Hankai Railway (currently the Nankai Electric Railway) is straight because the strait-laced Mr. Tanaka was involved in its establishment.

Hire the best graduates. If we're up against the world, we need promising young talent working for us.

As the new president, Ichibe Tanaka took action right away by appointing junior staff.

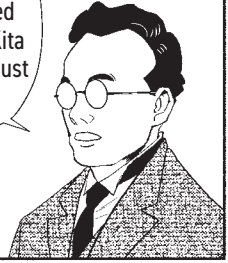


Osaka City Commercial College would go on to become today's Osaka City University.



He graduated second in his class from the Osaka City Commercial College. Principal Naruse referred him to the company.

In that case, we do have the talented Matazou Kita here who just joined.



Ah! The son of the famous Mr. Kita who built that large orchard and helped to lay the Nanwa Railway? Call him here!

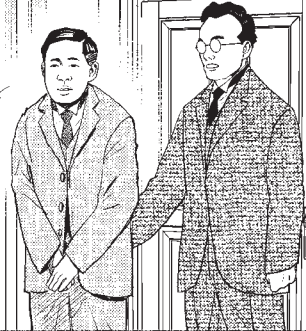


Mr. Kita is originally from Katsuragi in Nara Prefecture. His father is the prominent Choshichiro Kita.

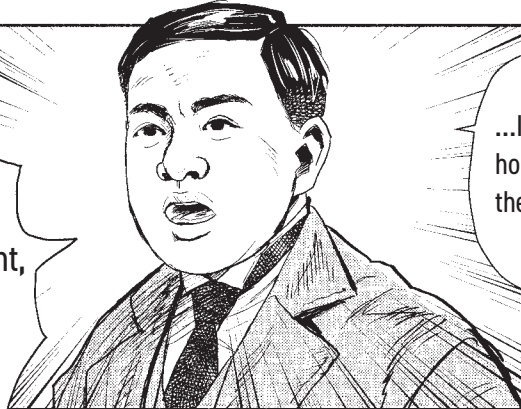
Tell me what you'd like to do at Japan Cotton Trading.



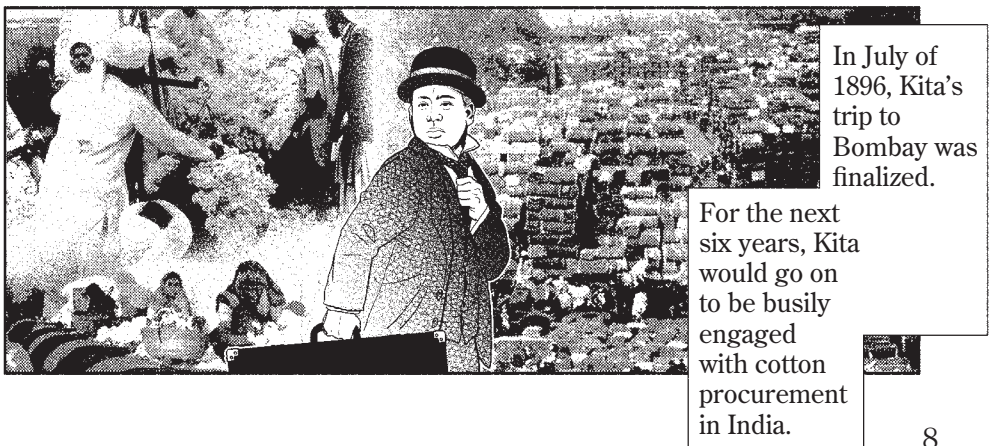
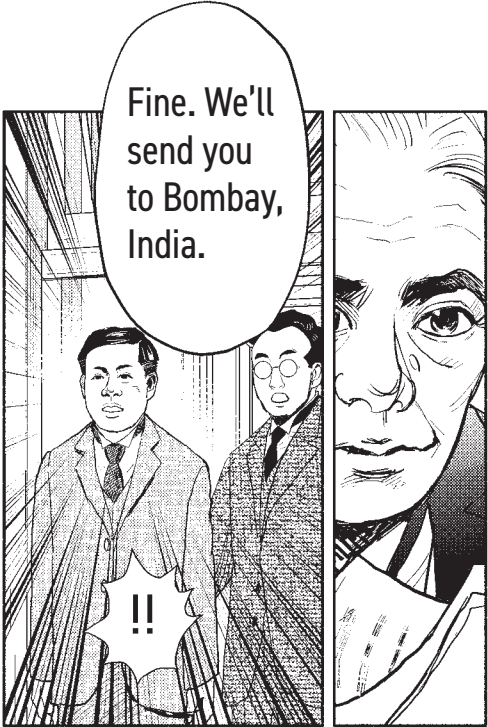
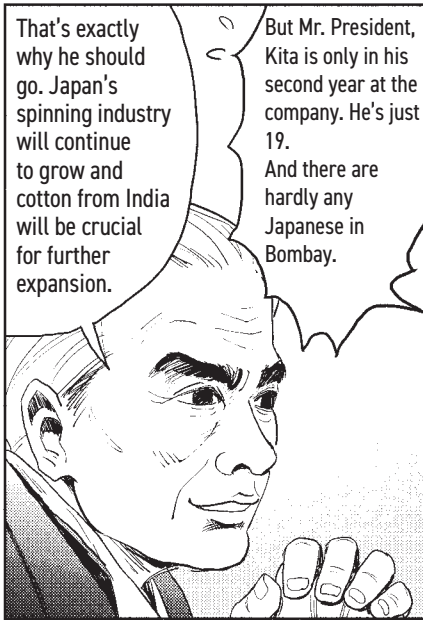
I'm Kita. How can I be of assistance?



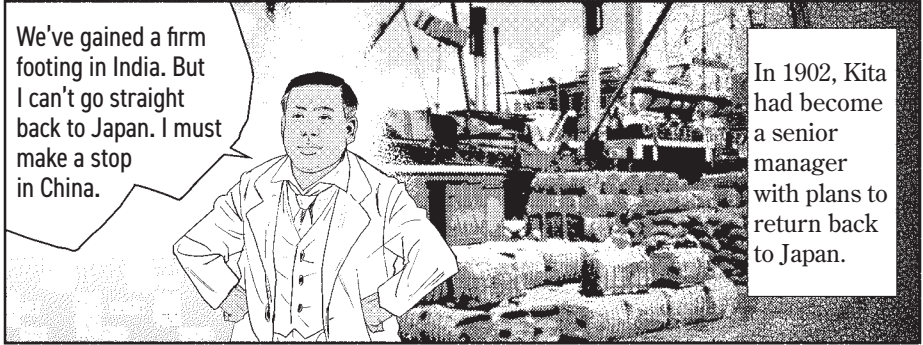
Mr. President, please send me abroad!



...I'll speak honestly then.







We've gained a firm footing in India. But I can't go straight back to Japan. I must make a stop in China.

In 1902, Kita had become a senior manager with plans to return back to Japan.



Not to worry. I've already contacted the new president. He'll understand.

Mr. Kita, the company says you must return to Japan...



Another trip? Just when he can finally return to Japan...

Yes, Kita says he will make a stop in China on his way back.

Is it word from Kita in India?

According to Kita, China is the next priority. My father trusts him. Kita's judgment never errs.



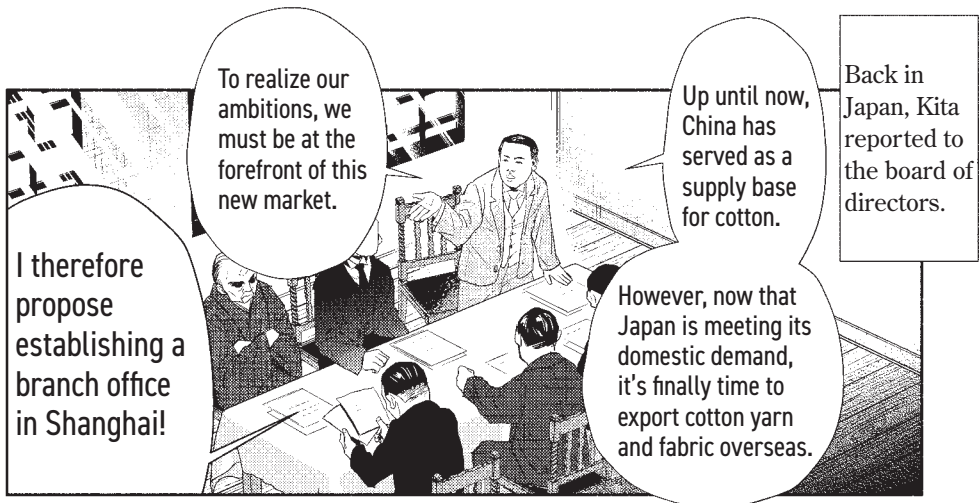
The new president of Japan Cotton Trading was Ichibe Tanaka's son, Ichitaro Tanaka.

Headquarters designed by Kingo Tatsuno



Kita visited Shanghai and Hankou to survey China's cotton market.





To realize our ambitions, we must be at the forefront of this new market.

Up until now, China has served as a supply base for cotton.

Back in Japan, Kita reported to the board of directors.

I therefore propose establishing a branch office in Shanghai!

However, now that Japan is meeting its domestic demand, it's finally time to export cotton yarn and fabric overseas.



Expansion into China is absolutely necessary for Japan Cotton Trading's diversification.

We can't be intimidated. China has a large population and a promising market in close proximity to Japan.

But Japan's conflict with Russia is intensifying. We could get embroiled in a war any day now.

That's true, but...

or build a foundation as a trade nation.

If we do not tap into China's market, Japan will never successfully expand overseas, export manufactured goods,

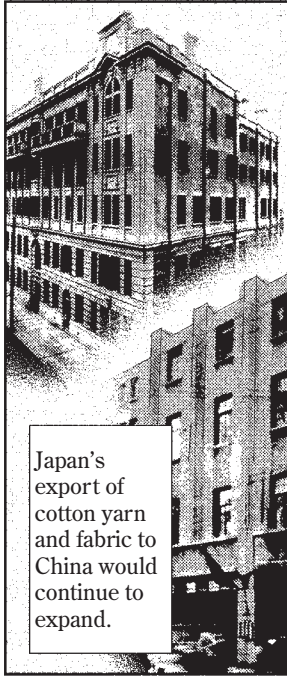


Let's establish a Shanghai branch office for Japan's future.

I hear you.

At last, products manufactured in Japan will be sold overseas.

Japan's manufacturing industry will become a source of wealth for the country.

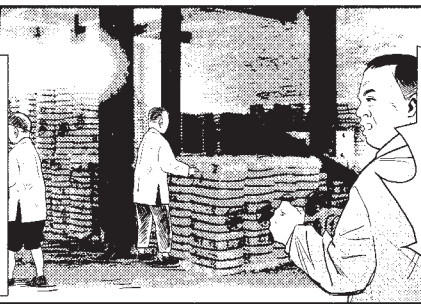


In this fashion, Japan Cotton Trading went on to set up a branch office in Shanghai in 1903. At just 28 years old, Kita was appointed to be the manager of the office.

Japan's export of cotton yarn and fabric to China would continue to expand.



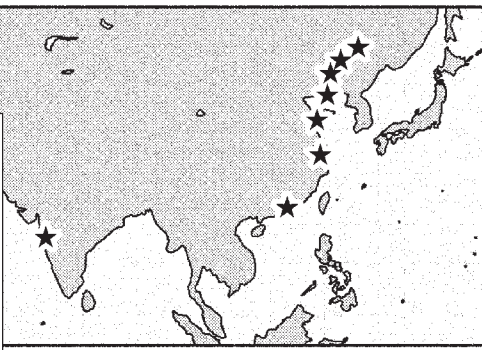
As a result of these efforts, Japan Cotton Trading emerged as the top supplier of Chinese cotton.



Some merchants are weighing the cotton down with water to cheat the system. Press the cotton to remove the moisture before sending it to Japan. Business is won by those who build trust.

China remained an important trading base for cotton.

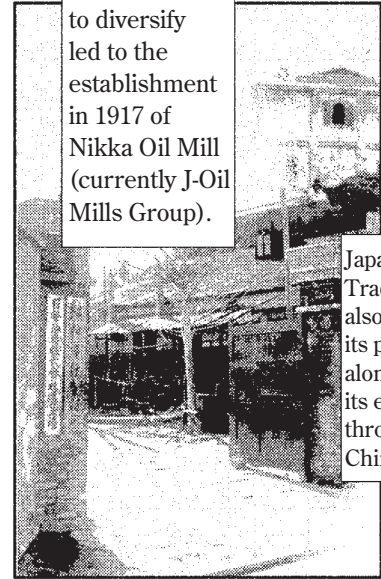
Kita helped to build one of the largest networks for a Japanese trading company.



Later, Kita convinced top leadership of China's promising market, and the company established offices one after another in Qingdao, Tianjin, Hong Kong, Dalian, Niuzhuang, Tieling, and Changchun.



Kita's efforts to diversify led to the establishment in 1917 of Nikka Oil Mill (currently J-Oil Mills Group).



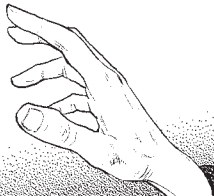
A network of offices was not the end of Kita's contribution.

Japan Cotton Trading was also diversifying its products along with its expansion throughout China.



Oil can be extracted from cotton. We can't pass up this opportunity.

Kita...



1910, Ichibe Tanaka was on his deathbed.

My abilities are limited, but I promise to do everything in my power.



I leave the rest to you. Now is your time. I'm relying on you to advance Japan's industrial development...



Ichitaro had died suddenly two years earlier, and Ichibe was therefore reappointed as president. Kita was now left to shoulder a major weight.

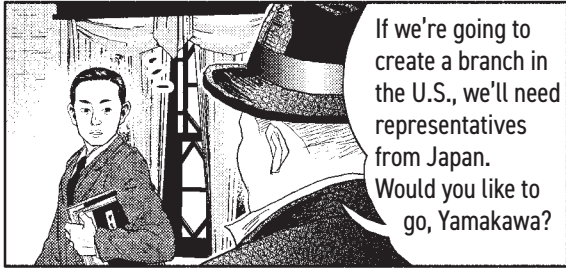
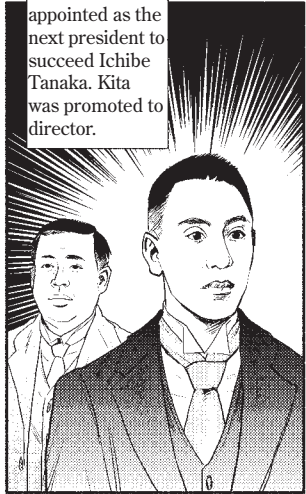
Limited abilities? Hah.



If we're going to expand further,

Japan Cotton Trading relied on Jokichi Takamine—the first chemist to discover adrenaline—in order to procure cotton manufactured in America for the first time. America is the world's largest producer of cotton.

Seishichi Shikata was appointed as the next president to succeed Ichibe Tanaka. Kita was promoted to director.



If we're going to create a branch in the U.S., we'll need representatives from Japan. Would you like to go, Yamakawa?



it's got to be to America.

While I'm at it, I'm going to take a business trip around the world.



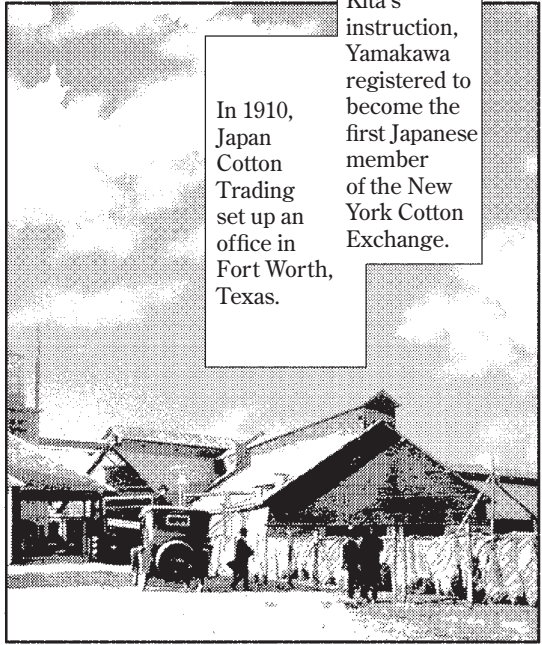
Mankichi Yamakawa

Of course.

Even after becoming a director, Kita preferred to make on-site visits, even going on the occasional expedition overseas.



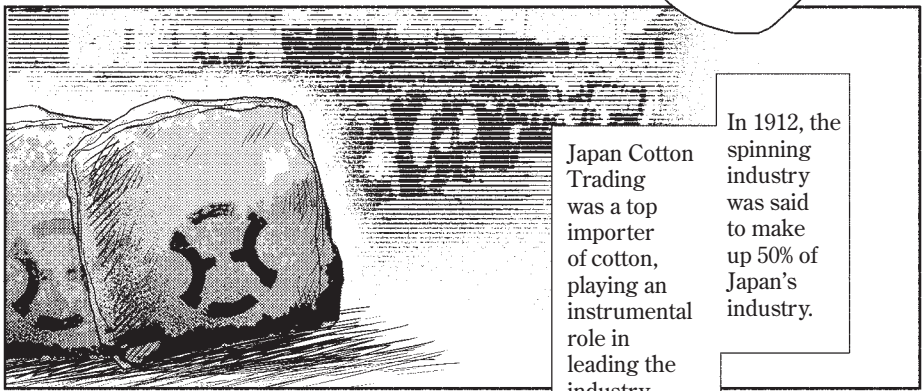
The long Texas summer is brutal.



Following Kita's instruction, Yamakawa registered to become the first Japanese member of the New York Cotton Exchange.  
In 1910, Japan Cotton Trading set up an office in Fort Worth, Texas.



But everything we do is to enrich Japan. I can't give up now.



In 1912, the spinning industry was said to make up 50% of Japan's industry.  
Japan Cotton Trading was a top importer of cotton, playing an instrumental role in leading the industry.