
The Great BANTO of Toyota

Ishida Taizo





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Taizo Ishida The Great BANTO of Toyota

1. Hometown : Between Mountains and Sea

Taizo Ishida served as the President of Toyoda Automatic Loom Works (now Toyota Industries Corporation) and Toyota Motor Corporation. Everyone called him the “Great BANTO of Toyota.” The BANTO refers to the person in the highest position among a merchant’s family employees, especially from the 17th to the 19th century.

Taizo was born in Kosugaya, Chita-gun, Aichi (currently Tokoname city) on November 16, 1888. The Chita Peninsula is in the shape of a boot, and Kosugaya is in central part along the coastline.

The shore around Kosugaya, with its white sandy beach, is a very beautiful place. The sun sets, the sea sparkles like gold and the setting



rays shimmer on the mountain range making it a beautiful sight.

Taizo's father was Tokusaburo Sawada, and his mother was Kou. There were six brothers in the family, with Taizo being the youngest. The house of Sawada was a big farmhouse, and Tokusaburo served as the first mayor of Otani village. His father died at the age of 53, and afterwards his mother raised her six children amazingly through many hardships.

2. His Elementary School Days : Hating to Lose

As a boy, Taizo was mischievous. He would race up and down the slope near the hillside elementary school, and at times dive into the sea and swim about 500 meters, all out of sheer exuberance. Whenever he was about, the villagers would warn each other with a grin, "look out - here comes that Sawada boy! I wonder what tricks he's up to now." The locals remembered him as a cheeky but good boy who listened to adults. He was a favorite of his school teacher, and his impish character was a source of amusement to the men

of the village who loved his playfulness.

Taizo and his friends often played at skimming stones from the shore and also had sumo matches there. Behind



the village near the mountain there was a quarry for extracting polishing sands and he would often play there. The white sand found there was used for polishing tableware. He earned some pocket money by making straw bags to carry the sand.

One day Taizo's mother said, "I must make a good kimono for your older brother because he will be adopted into another family. I'm sorry to ask this of you, but could you please lend me your savings?" Even though he was still only a young boy, he was very glad that his savings could be useful to his family. As an active child, when he helped with anything in the house, Taizo often caused some upset and was scolded and told "don't be so foolish!"

However, Taizo was never discouraged by anything, and so his heart grew stronger.

3. Education : Schooling at Reikei-gijuku, Chita

In those days, few people graduated from elementary school as most children had to stay home to help with farm work. However, Taizo went to Reikei-gijuku to study. Reikei-gijuku was the only upper elementary school in Chita. It had been established in 1888 by Kyuzaemon meiki Morita, who ran a liquor brewery that had been passed down through the generations. Morita was forward thinking and believed that education was necessary for the future of Japan. He invited Miki Mizoguchi from Ise to be a teacher. Mizoguchi was impressed with the educational foresight of Morita, and agreed to do the job. He served as a principal of this private school for many years.

Taizo's eldest brother did not go to upper elementary school, but he liked math. He often asked difficult math questions of Taizo, and when Taizo became stumped he would encourage him saying, "Taizo, ask your teacher how

to solve these questions.” Taizo studied hard in order not to be defeated by his older brother’s challenges. As a result, Taizo earned the praise of his teacher as a hard worker.

The education standard of Reikei-gijuku was high. There were some famous graduates such as Rohei Ishiguro, the linguist also called the

“Father of the Standard Language,” and Zempei Morita, the founder of Shikishima Bakery.



4. First Shiga Prefectural Junior High School : The Rowing Club

Taizo was 13 years old and in the third grade of Reikei-gijuku when his father died. The Sawada family thus lost the central pillar of the family. His mother and older brothers continued to work in agriculture. Taizo graduated from school while also helping his family. However, his family did not have the money for school fees to let Taizo start junior high school.

Taizo was at a loss. Around that time his cousin, Ichizo

Kodama, who worked for Mitsui & Co., Ltd., visited and told him, “you should go to junior high school. Go to school from my house in Hikone.”



Later, Taizo entered the first Shiga Prefectural Junior High School (currently known as “Hikone East Senior High School”).

From that school, Taizo could gaze across and see Hikone Castle and the Musha window and Namako wall of the Samurai residence nearby. He joined the rowing club after trying out various club activities. The school was near Lake Biwa, and his team practiced there often.

The team was a seven-man crew and Taizo was the stroke. The stroke has the most important role, controlling the overall row rhythm from the stern seat of the boat. Too relaxed, or too intense, and the boat loses its rhythm and becomes unstable. All members of the team work in unison,

matching their breathing, to maximize the speed of the boat. Taizo learned the importance of teamwork during these rowing club years.

5. Shiga : Assistant Teacher

Taizo studied hard at junior high school and wanted to enter senior high school, but once again his family could not afford the school expenses. Through a friend, he began working as an assistant teacher at an elementary school among the mountains of Shiga. However, he could not formally become a teacher because he had only graduated from junior high school. He treated his students and parents well and quickly gained their trust. The students loved Taizo and he felt satisfied and

happy. But soon he began to feel frustrated and depressed and felt the need to escape.

Over time, Taizo began to feel that his character



was better suited for business. He began searching for a business to join that held a lot of potential for the future.

6. Kyoto : Furniture Store Clerk

Taizo was now determined to find work at a company. He went to visit his Aunt Kodama in Hikone who said, "You won't live in the mountains forever, so it would be good for you to become a merchant." Despite earning his Aunt's blessing, he found it difficult to find a way into the business world.

One day his friend introduced him to a western style furniture store in Kyoto called Kawase Company. Taizo was just 21 years old at the time, and began working as an apprentice. He was affectionately referred to as "Taidon" and was popular with his colleagues.

At one time, Kawase Company received a furniture order from the president of Kyoto University, and Taizo was selected by the manager to visit the university and personally collect the order. "Taidon, it may be a difficult task, but go and get this order from the university

president.”

The order from the president was for a new bespoke desk and chair. Taizo came back to the shop with all the sizes and specifications in his hand. He explained the order in detail to the cabinet-maker. During fabrication he often came to the factory to check on the progress until both desk and chair were completed. He then personally delivered the finished products to the president. The president liked them so much he ensured that further orders from the university came to Kawase Company.

Afterwards, the owner of Kawase Company put Taizo in charge of the Osaka branch. The furniture sold well but collecting payments proved to be a challenge.



7. Tokyo : Selling Kimono Fabrics

Taizo was approached by his Aunt Kodama about the idea of becoming an adopted child. In Japan, it is common for

families with no male heirs to adopt a son from another family. Families with more than one son would often agree to this arrangement, as it would mean that a younger son would have the chance to become the heir to a family business or a prestigious family name. Taizo's Aunt was strongly in favor of this adoption, and Taizo eventually accepted the adoption and changed his name from Taizo Sawada to Taizo Ishida. After that, he left Kawase Company where he had worked for five years.

After he became adopted into the Ishida family, Taizo could not find a job and he led an idle life. A relative of the Ishida family in Tokyo was a wholesaler of fabrics for kimonos, and Taizo decided to work as a salesman there. His job was to deliver goods to shops dealing in kimono fabrics and to collect payments. He loaded a lot of goods on a large cart and carried it from shop to shop every day. There



were many slopes in Tokyo, and it was very hard work. He became sick within a year and came back to Hikone, where he sat around again idly, doing nothing from morning until evening.

8. Hattori Company : An Encounter with Sakichi Toyoda

In 1915, Taizo was 29 years old. Ichizo found a new job for Taizo, and he began to work at Hattori Company (now Kowa Company) in Nagoya.

One day a strange man carrying an old small bag came into Hattori Company. The man said nothing and sat down silently on a chair in front of the employees. Taizo was working with the accounting books at that time but informed the store manager, "we have a visitor." But the manager replied, "he is the visitor of the president," and did not pay the man any attention. Meanwhile, the president, Kaneshaburo Hattori, appeared and said "hello." After having talked with the president, the man slowly left the shop. Taizo was curious about the man and asked, "who was that person?" The president answered, "he is the famous inventor, Sakichi

Toyoda.”

Within 6 months of Taizo entering the company, the president said to him, “I want you to take a business trip to Shanghai, China.” Once there, Taizo studied everything about cotton cloth before he went to the new branch office in Shanghai. Sales of Japanese goods were booming in Shanghai, and as a result, business was steadily increasing.

Sakichi Toyoda often went to the Shanghai office of Toyoda Spinning & Weaving. One day he turned to Taizo and said, “hey, Ishida, you work as a merchant. Your job is to make a lot of money. I’m so busy spending my days on research, I’m barely able to keep my head above water and



am far from making any money. Actually, I fail to earn money and so I have no money. How about you do the money making for me?”

Upon returning to Japan after this encounter, Taizo's work continued to stay steady, and he was able to live a good life with his family.

9. Restart : Toyoda Spinning & Weaving

In 1927, at the age of 39, Taizo wanted to become independent from Hattori Company, and have a hand at his own business. He went to his cousin Ichizo's house to get some advice. At that time, Ichizo told him to help with Toyoda Spinning & Weaving in Kariya where Risaburo Toyoda, Ichizo's younger brother, worked. Though the economy in Japan was bad, Taizo became the chief manager of the Osaka branch office and worked hard to try to achieve good results for the company.

In 1930, Taizo went to work in Bombay (now Mumbai), India. His cousin Ichizo Kodama died and Sakichi Toyoda, the central pillar of Toyoda, also died that same year. He was devastated to lose three major benefactors in his life, as Kanesaburo Hattori had also passed away as well. It was then that he made up his mind to do his best at Toyoda for

the sake of his three benefactors and for his own future.

Upon returning to Japan, Taizo walked around the factory and point out even small



detailed inefficiencies. His attention to details led to increased efficiencies for the factory. Taizo worked for Toyoda Spinning & Weaving until 1941. Even when the economy was at its worst, together with his employees he was able to improve the affairs of the company and pay them decent salaries.

10. Management of Toyoda Automatic Loom Works

In 1941, Risaburo Toyoda, the president of the Toyoda Automatic Loom Works put Taizo in charge of making auto parts, and he devoted himself to producing quality parts for cars.

World War II ended in August, 1945 but the factories

located in the big city suffered major damage from air strikes by the United States. Fortunately, the Toyoda factory in Kariya escaped damage. After the war, car related production, which was transitioning into non- military productions, helped the Toyoda (now Toyota) group grow.

There were 7,000 employees in Toyoda Automatic Loom Works at the end of the war, but there was no work in the post-war period. Taizo gathered his employees and explained tearfully, "the situation is serious. This company may lose, just as Japan lost in the war. As a company, we want to guarantee your livelihood, but there is no work. There are no materials. There are no customers to sell to. But we can make this work. Believe in us and stay with us." Despite this heartfelt speech, only skilled employees remained at the company. At first, Toyoda produced pans and rice cookers because they sold well. Soon, the spinning and weaving factories began to resume work and orders for the automatic loom increased. Shortly thereafter, there was so much work that they were almost short of hands and materials.

However, in post-war Japan, export was prohibited by the GHQ (General Headquarters of the Allied Nations) because of Japan's status as a defeated nation. Taizo tried to negotiate directly with GHQ to export automatic looms. He was told, "an export ban has been given to Japan. What country buys the goods of a third class country? Japan was defeated in the war. You are being too impertinent." Taizo hung tough with the officer and said, "indeed, Japan lost the war, but it is your subjective opinion that Japan is a third class country. The automatic loom of Toyoda is the same quality as any product from a first class country." Eventually, Taizo was able to get permission to export as a result of his negotiations. 800 automatic looms from Toyoda became the



first Japanese export in the post-war period, and Toyoda continued to grow as a company.

11. Great BANTO of Toyota Motor Corporation

Toyota Motor Corporation was founded by Kiichiro Toyoda, the eldest son of Sakichi Toyoda. When Sakichi visited America and inspected the auto industry there, upon returning to Japan he said to Kiichiro, "I have dedicated my whole life to the weaving machine, but the era of the car has come upon us. Make cars. Use the best Japanese minds and skills and produce excellent cars that no other country can make. Do it for Japan. Kiichiro, who was also a technical expert and similar in character to Sakichi said, "I agree with you. I'll make good cars." So Kiichiro put his best foot forward to developing high quality cars.

It was in the corner of the factory of Toyoda Automatic Loom Works in Kariya that Kiichiro began to develop cars in earnest in 1933. The first car was completed in 1935. Establishing a car company was difficult in Japan at that time. Not even the largest, most powerful corporations wanted to touch the auto industry at that time. However, the auto industry was supported by the government and car development was pushed forward in Toyoda Automatic

Loom Works.

In 1937, Toyota Motor Corporation became independent from Toyoda Automatic Loom Works and by 1949, 10,000 cars were being produced every year. However, when the threat of bankruptcy was caused by a recession, Taizo was asked by the president of Toyota Motor Corporation to step up to become the president of both Toyota Motor Corporation and Toyoda Automatic Loom Works. In his first official greeting as president, Taizo said, "If we are able to improve the achievements of this company, I would like to invite Kiichiro Toyoda, the founder of the Toyota Motor Corporation to return to his position as president." This speech is one of the many reasons why he is called the "Great BANTO of Toyota."

With the start of the Korean War, orders suddenly increased. The company tried to reduce inefficiencies,



and as a result, the achievements of the company steadily improved.

In the spring of 1952, Taizo asked Kiichiro to return as president. Kiichiro was pleased and said, "I'm so happy that you have allowed me to make cars again. Any kind of hardship is tolerable, as long as I can make cars." Sadly, in March, Kiichiro died at the young age of 58 due to a sudden illness.

In 1958, Taizo decided to construct the Motomachi factory in Toyota city. It would be the first factory built exclusively for automobile production in Japan. Automotive mass production system became possible with the completion of this factory, and with this, Kiichiro's lifelong dream also came true.

12. Kariya City and Ishida Science Award

In 1957, Taizo became an honorary citizen of Kariya city. In that year, he founded the Ishida Science Award (Kariya city science meeting for presenting research papers). In 1960, he established the award in Kariya city, a child student

inventive idea exhibition, to foster manufacturing in children.

In 1963, he gave a lecture to teachers at the Aichi science education study meeting, held in Kariya city. The subject of the lecture was “Developing a powerful wisdom.”

In the lecture Taizo said, “who would have thought that fiber could be made from oil? I often joke that with research, outrageous things could be made from the stones and sands around us. A map of the future holds the answers to what else could be born from something else. But I feel that if there is no limit to research, we can make the map of the future a reality. On TV, we see scenes of a fairytale where a wind might sweep us up and carry us off to a distant land. Who is to say that this couldn’ t happen? When I was a child in elementary school, we read novels about airplanes and airships. Perhaps these are fairytales that have been realized and even exceeded the fairytale itself. Research truly has no limits.” He passionately spoke of the importance of research and creation and how scientific development improves the world and supports the development of countries.

Over his life, Taizo changed his occupation many times

and experienced various hardships. But it was his strong conviction and superior business mindset that supported manufacturing in the Toyota group and eventually earned him the title of "Great BANTO of Toyota."



In 1970, he was awarded the First Order of Merit with Grand Cordon of the Sacred Treasure (now called the Grand Cordon of the Order of the Sacred Treasure).

Taizo Ishida died in 1979 at the age of 90.