



Scottish Samurai: Thomas Blake Glover, 1838-1911

Alexander McKay

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Thomas Glover arrived in Nagasaki in 1859, just as Japan was opening to the West. Within a few years he had played a crucial part in the overthrow of the Tokugawa Shogunate, providing the rebels with war-winning, Scottish-designed warships, and modern arms. Bankruptcy by the age of thirty was barely a setback and he went on to become a pivotal figure in the rapidly expanding Mitsubishi empire, founding shipyards and breweries. As energetic in his love-life as in business and politics, Glover had a string of Japanese mistresses, one of whom inspired Puccini's Madam Butterfly. This 'Scottish Samurai' was to become an adviser to the Japanese government; he also arranged for many Japanese to visit Britain and see the wonders of the industrial revolution, a lesson they enthusiastically absorbed. Today, Glover is regarded as one of the founding fathers of the Japanese economic miracle.



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