



Near the mouth of the Nakashima River around 1869. The right side is Nishihama-no-machi, where Shokichi grew up. (Collection of Nagasaki University Library)

### ■ Rice wholesaler Umeya Shoten

Shokichi was born on November 26, 1868, the son of Honda Matsugoro and his wife Noi. He was soon adopted by Umeya Kichigoro and his wife Nobu, distant relatives who had no children. Kichigoro ran a trading and rice business under the name Umeya Shoten in Nishihama-no-machi in Nagasaki (present-day Hama-machi, Nagasaki City).

### ■ Glimpse of a righteous merchant

Shokichi, who was adopted by the Umeya family, often took the money from the store's sales and distributed it to the poor. He hated those who bullied the weak, and once had a big fight with gangsters who were extorting the townspeople. It seems that he had a natural inclination to help others when he saw them in need.



shokichi, around 10 years old



### ■ Shiro Doppo vs. Kuro Doppo

When Shokichi was 16, he had a big fight with Tenda Denkichi, a gang leader. The Shiro Doppo Gumi ("White Doppo Gang," doppo is a type of sleeve) led by Tenda was originally a popular group in the community. During the Nagasaki Kunchi Festival, the group members called for an encore to the snake dance and other performances dedicated to the Suwa Shrine to enliven the dedication dancing. However, the Shiro Doppo Gumi members threatened townspeople and robbed them of their money. Angered by this, Shokichi called on young men who worked at his family's rice store to form the Kuro Doppo Gumi ("Black Doppo Gang") and fought the Shiro Doppo Gumi at Mt. Kompira, defeating them in a spectacular victory. This was featured on the "Pom Poko Pom" peep show and became well known throughout the town.



### ■ A boy with a cat's soul

Shokichi was also a man of rare luck. As a child, he "drowned" in the Nakashima River near his home. People around him thought he was dead, but he came back to life in the middle of his funeral. He also survived a fire on the ship on his way to study in the United States that killed most of the passengers. Thus he was able to escape numerous predicaments with his life force. He was said to have a "cat's soul" in an expression peculiar to Nagasaki.