

The windbreaker of the film business



1909

Home and film studio built in Hyakunin-cho, Tokyo*



Commemorative photo of Nikkatsu's founding*

■ M. Pathe

Umeya Shokichi succeeded in the photo studio business in Hong Kong, but was almost arrested for aiding the independence movement. So he and Toku escaped to Singapore. There, using a projector he happened to have available, he started a film exhibition as a business and gained a good reputation. Encouraged by this success, he returned to Nagasaki in 1905 to start film screening. This was the beginning of his full-fledged entry into the film business with the establishment of the photo studio company M. Pathe in Tokyo.

■ Business acumen on display

Although Shokichi was a newcomer to the film business, he launched a series of novel ideas, such as half-price vouchers, and skillfully stimulated the psychology of the general public who were looking for entertainment, leading to increased business. In addition to his financial success, he also began to work on the use of film in education.

■ Establishment of Nikkatsu

Having acquired a vast fortune from the film business, he provided support to Sun Yat-sen. At the same time, he was concerned about the future of the film industry in Japan and worked hard to achieve a major merger of his competitors to make large-scale film production possible in the country. His efforts bore fruit in 1912 when he founded Nippon Katsudo Shashin Corporation, the predecessor of the current Nikkatsu Corporation. He joined the Board of Directors himself, but the following year he stepped down from the company, taking responsibility for the financial losses caused by the stock market crash.