

THE CEREMONY TO
COMMEMORATE
THE ONE HUNDRED AND TENTH
ANNIVERSARY OF THE PASSING OF
Tomiji Hirano
1846–1892

DECEMBER 1ST: THE CEREMONY was held by the Hirano family on Sunday, the 1st of December 2002, at noon, at the Hirano family graveyard, Yanaka Graveyards, Nippori, Tokyo. Many people from various industries: typefounding, typography, printing, shipbuilding, navigation, public works and others joined the ceremony, and this demonstrates that Tomiji Hirano's achievements have expanded to a broad range. Also, a monument that had originally been built in Nagasaki in praise of Hirano's achievements was recently moved to the graveyard. The monument was introduced for the first time to those who were present at the ceremony.



Tomiji Hirano (1846–1892) was born in Nagasaki. In 1861, at the age of sixteen, he started working as an apprentice engineer at Nagasaki Ironworks, and he was trained by Shozo Motogi who later succeeded in developing modern Japanese typefounding techniques in the 1870s. In the next year, he became a member of the crew of the steamships *Victoria* (94 tons, built in

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Sydney in 1857) and Charles (138 tons, built in Bombay in 1846) that were owned by the Tokugawa Shogunate. In 1867, at the age of twenty-three, Hirano was hired by the Tosa Domain as a First Engineer for some ships. In 1868, he returned to the Nagasaki Ironworks factory and worked as First Engineer for the warship Choyo. In 1869, he was appointed to General Manager of Kosuge Ship Repair Dock run by the ironworks. In 1870, he was appointed to Administrator of Nagasaki Prefecture, and General Manager of Nagasaki Ironworks and of the Kosuge Ship Repair Dock.

In 1871, Shozo Motogi pleaded for Tomiji Hirano to take over the business of Motogi's typefoundry, and Hirano accepted the offer. In 1872, he opened a new typefoundry factory in Kanda, Tokyo. In 1873, he moved the factory to Tsukiji, Tokyo. In 1876, at the age of thirty-one, he temporarily worked for the Ministry of Interior to produce printing machines. He formed Ishikawajima Hirano Shipyard at the place of former Ishikawajima Shipyard of the navy (the shipyard is the predecessor of today's Ishikawajima-Harima Heavy Industries). In 1879, he asked Shigeru Magata of his typefoundry to recut a Mincho typeface owned by the foundry, and Magata visited Shanghai to investigate the possibility. Hirano borrowed the rights to run Yokohama Ironworks and renamed it to Ishikawaguchi Ironworks. His shipyard started launching many ships and boats. In 1885, at the age of thirty-eight, he had some members of his typefoundry

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(Naonosuke Matsuno, etc.) visit China to begin sales of type, and they formed a firm named Shubun-kan with printing facilities in China. In 1884, he formed Hirano Civil Engineering and received an order for building a railroad from Onda (Shibuya) to Megurogawa in Tokyo. In 1885, at the age of forty, he integrated and reorganized his printing and typefounding factories and formed Tokyo Tsukiji Typefoundry. He started working on building the cannanship Chokai for the navy. In the next year, he formed Tokyo Hirano Kisen [steamships] Associates. In 1887, when he was very busy with many projects (railway construction for Japan Railway, waterworks building for Yokohama city, etc.), he suffered a stroke, and was paralyzed on his right side. In 1887, at the age of forty-two, he succeeded in building the Azumabashi iron bridge over the Sumidagawa River in Tokyo. Four companies including Tokyo Hirano Kisen Associates were merged and Tokyo Gulf Kisen Company was formed (it is the predecessor of today's Tokai Kisen). In 1890, at the age of forty-seven, he started a mining enterprise, but he abandoned it due to disagreements with investors.

In 1890, he had a stroke again, while he was speaking about an issue of iron pipes used for waterworks in Tokyo, and he passed away. He was buried at Yanaka Graveyards. In 1918, the government conferred a noble title on the late Tomiji Hirano.

THE PASSING OF TOMIJI HIRANO



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