

## **Hayashi Razan**

A statue of Hayashi Razan (1583–1657) stands at the very center of the town of Gero—a fitting honor for this Confucian scholar, whose praise for the area’s hot springs propelled them to fame.

Razan’s work was widely read in the Edo period (1603–1868), and he was highly regarded. He advised the first four leaders of the Tokugawa shogunate, which ruled the country during that time, possessed extensive knowledge in a wide range of fields, and penned everything from philosophical writings to travelogues.

Razan listed Arima (in modern-day Hyogo Prefecture), Kusatsu (in modern-day Gunma Prefecture), and Gero (then called Yushima) as the top three hot spring towns in Japan. The list he compiled in the early 1600s echoed one that Zen monk and poet Banri Shuku (1428–1498?) had written nearly two centuries earlier. The top three hot springs (*onsen*) listed by Shuku featured Yushima alongside Arima and Kusatsu; Razan’s affirmation of that list helped Gero gain renown.

Hayashi Razan and Banri Shuku are both memorialized on a bridge that crosses the Atano River. Their statues, standing practically facing each other on opposite sides of the bridge, are a popular local attraction.