

Banri Shuku

Zen monk and poet Banri Shuku (1428–1498?) was the first known person to proclaim Gero one of the best hot spring towns in Japan, along with Arima Onsen in modern-day Hyogo Prefecture and Kusatsu Onsen in what is now Gunma Prefecture. His widely read writings drew visitors to Gero during the late Muromachi period (1336–1573).

In the early Edo period (1603–1868), Confucian scholar Hayashi Razan echoed Banri Shuku's thoughts when he declared Gero to be one of the best hot springs in the land, and the town became known far and wide. Both Shuku and Razan are memorialized in statues on a bridge crossing the Atano River. The statue of Shuku was unveiled at the annual Gero Onsen Festival in 2015 to honor him for his contributions to the area.