

Relations Between Akiota and the City of Hiroshima

Akiota and the city of Hiroshima are connected by the Ota River, which has its source on the slopes of Mt. Kanmuri. From there, the river flows in a northeastern direction before making a sharp turn and heading south toward the Seto Inland Sea. The river splits into multiple branches as it emerges onto the broad alluvial delta around the city of Hiroshima. One of these streams runs past the Atomic Bomb Dome, the monument commemorating the destruction of the city on August 6, 1945.

The Ota River and its tributaries, including the Shibaki River, which runs through Sandankyo Gorge, were long used to transport goods through the region that is now Hiroshima Prefecture. During the Edo period (1603–1868), the Kake area (the eastern part of modern-day Akiota) served as the center of *tatara* (traditional furnace smelting) ironmaking in the Chugoku region. The wrought iron (raw iron smelted from iron sand) smelted here was shipped downriver and became the foundation of the iron manufacturing industry that developed around what is now the city of Hiroshima. *Tatara* ironmaking provided raw materials used for needles, files, and saws, which were forged here in great numbers. Even today, about 90 percent of the handheld sewing needles used in Japan are produced in the city of Hiroshima.

The *tatara* ironmaking industry is no longer operational, and an expressway has taken over the Ota River's role as the main passageway between Akiota and the city of Hiroshima. The Ota, however, still provides tap water for both areas, and in the summer and fall many Hiroshima residents make the one-hour drive to Akiota to enjoy the cool breeze and colorful foliage.