Hayagane Megane Bridge

This stone aqueduct, built in 1674, was the first of its kind in Japan and is the oldest aqueduct in the country. The Ōmuta area suffered many disasters in the early 1600s, and in 1637, a severe drought and an insect infestation totally destroyed the area's crops. The consequent unrest and turmoil in the villages troubled the ruling Tachibana samurai family.

A solution to the drought was urgently needed, so the Tachibana decided to dam the Hayakane Valley. The dam was completed in 1664. It stood 10 meters high and 80 meters wide. The next problem was how to distribute the water. To get to the fields in the valley, the irrigation canal would have to pass over the Ōmuta River. A wooden structure would collapse under the water's weight. The Tachibana's second solution was to adopt Chinese bridge building technology, which had first been used in Nagasaki in 1634.

The 11.2-meter-long, 3.15-meter-wide bridge was built using tuff quarried

nearby. It took 10 years to complete. With a new supply of reliable water, the rice harvest in the villages dramatically increased the following year. This single-arched bridge was named Megane Bridge (Spectacles Bridge) after the bridge in Nagasaki, which resembles eyeglasses when its two arches are reflected in the river. Hayagane Megane Bridge was also used by people and horses.

In 1898, a hole was poked through the roof of a mine shaft below the reservoir, draining all the water. Fixing the reservoir was too difficult, and the dam and irrigation canal were abandoned. Part of the bridge was rebuilt in the twentieth century. The Hayagane Megane Bridge is designated a National Important Cultural Property.