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Artist: Utagawa Hiroshige

Overview of Hirakata-shuku (Tokaido / Kyo-kaido Road) Hirakata-shuku: A Town Where History Breathes

From the early 17th century, the Tokugawa Shogunate promoted the development of roads and the establishment of post towns nationwide. As an extension of the Tokaido Road, four post towns were established: Fushimi, Yodo, Hirakata, and Moriguchi.

Hirakata-shuku stretched 797 ken (approx. 1.5 km) from the East Gate (Higashi-mitsuke) to the West Gate (Nishi-mitsuke). It flourished as a bustling post town, with many traditional townhousesincluding wholesalers (toiyaba), official inns (honjin), travelers' inns, and merchant shopslining the streets.

After the feudal lord Yoshimune became the eighth Shogun, the Kishu-Tokugawa family frequently used the Kyo-kaido Road to demonstrate the Shogun's authority to Osaka and Kyoto. Starting from the Sankin-kotai (alternate attendance) of the sixth lord Munenao in 1741 (Kanpo 1), it became customary for the family to stay overnight at Hirakata-shuku on both their journeys to and from the capital.

Additionally, Hirakata served as a transit port for Yodo River water transport and a distribution hub for goods such as rice, Kawachi cotton, and rapeseed. It prospered as a local center and played a vital role as a key land and water transportation junction where people and goods intersected.

English guide
한국어 안내
中文 指南

⑬ Toiyaba [administrative office for freight forwarders]

Handled all administrative tasks for the post town, including the relay of horses and porters and arranging lodging for official travelers. It also assisted with private transportation, and officials (toiya-yakunin) were permanently stationed here.

⑭ Ship Guard Station for Kasho-bune Ships

Monitored ships traveling up and down the Yodo River, issued permits (funa-kitte), verified cargo against permits, and collected taxes (uwamai).

⑮ Kyoshin

A designated inn belonging to the "Naniwa-ko," a travelers' guild of the Edo period. It had a reputation for being a conscientious and safe place to stay.

⑯ Kagiya [Historic boat inn]

Established in the late 16th century, Kagiya was a representative "boat-waiting inn" (funamachi-yado) of Hirakata-shuku.

⑩ Kosatsuba [bulletin board station]

A facility where official edicts were posted high up in busy markets or transportation hubs to inform the public of laws and regulations.

Ishiba no Kosatsuba from Omi Meisho Zue
Reproduced from Omi Meisho Zue, published by Rinsen Shoten.

⑪ Honjin [Accommodations]

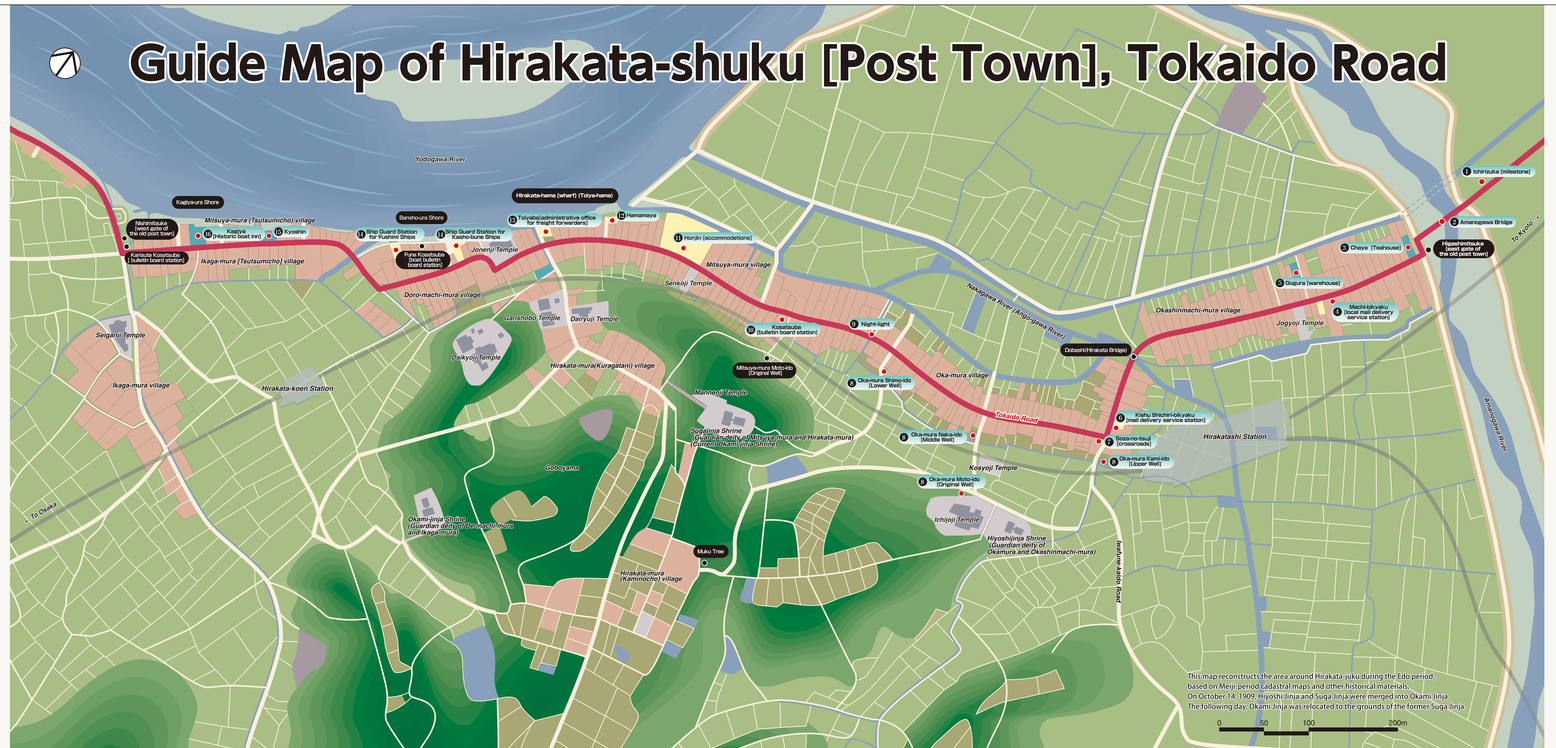
A private accommodation for high-ranking officials such as imperial envoys, feudal lords (daimyo), and court nobles. The Ikejiri family held the hereditary position of managing the Hirakata-shuku Honjin. Unlike ordinary inns, it featured a formal gate, a grand entrance, and a raised room (jodan-no-ma).

Seki from Tokaido Gojusan-tsugi (Kyoka-iri Tokaido) by Hiroshige
Collection of the Yokohama Museum of History

⑫ Hamamaya

Handled cargo brought from various villages, loaded it onto ships, and stored goods that had been unloaded.

Guide Map of Hirakata-shuku [Post Town], Tokaido Road



❻ Kishu Shichiri -bikyaku [mail delivery service station]

The Kishu Domain established its own communication network between Edo and Wakayama. Hirakata-shuku had a Shichiri station in Okamura. During the Bunka and Bunsei eras, couriers stationed at the Tenjinbashi residence in Osaka would stay in Hirakata-shuku starting about a month before the Kishu Lord's procession to handle everything from preparations to remaining administrative tasks.

❼ Soza-no-tsuji [Crossroads]

Named after the residence of Soza Kadono, who ran an oil refinery. This was the junction between the Tokaido (Kyo-kaido) Road and the Iwane-kaido Road.

❽ Okamura Community Well

Because the well water in Okamura had a high iron content (kanake), water was piped in from other wells producing high-quality water to serve the upper, middle, and lower sections of the village.

❾ Night-light

A permanent night lamp for the Myoken-gu Shrine. It stands on the boundary between Okamura and Mitsuya Village.

❶ Ichirizuka [milestone]

Established every ri (approx. 3.9 km) on both sides of the highway. Trees such as enoki (hackberry) or pine were planted here, serving as a guide for travelers to measure distance.

Shono from Tokaido Gojusan-tsugi (Kyoka-iri Tokaido) by Hiroshige
Collection of the Yokohama Museum of History

❷ Amanogawa Bridge

Popularly known as the "Zentori-bashi" (Money-taking Bridge). The Kishu Domain maintained its own exclusive bridge here.

❸ Chaya [Teahouse]

A rest and accommodation facility for private travelers.

❹ Machi-bikyaku [local mail delivery service station]

A delivery service used by commoners and merchants. In Hirakata-shuku, a shop called "Suya" served this role during the Bunsei era (1818–1831).

❺ Gogura [warehouse]

Warehouses used to store rice for land taxes or in preparation for crop failures. One was located in each village.