The Kanto region of Japan
Kanto vs. Kansai

- Fundamental regional division of Japanese history and contemporary life
- Kanto is the region around Tokyo (Eastern Japan)
- Kansai is the region around Osaka, Kyoto, Kobe (Western Japan)
Kanto vs. Kansai

• Kanto – means “East of the Barriers”
• Kansai – means “West of the Barriers”

• The barriers on the old Tokaido highway linking Edo to the imperial capital of Kyoto
Hiroshige print of a barrier on the Tokaido Highway
The Tokaido Highway
Travelling the Tokaido, then
Travelling the Tokaido, now
Kanto vs. Kansai

• Kanto vs. Kansai today
  – Political dominance
  – Economic dominance and dependence
  – Dialects
  – Sense of humor
  – Tastes in food products
  – Ethnic make-up
Tokyo/Kanto – the primate city

In urban studies, the concept of “primate” city refers to a city that entirely dominates the society of which it is a part

– Political dominance
– Economic dominance
– Demographic size
– Cultural influence
– Institutional density