

TEACHING TUESDAY

SANNO FESTIVAL

JUNE 14, 2016

Last Friday marked the end of the annual Sanno Festival in Tokyo, one of the largest in all over Japan. It takes place in mid-June in even numbered years, alternating with the Kanda Matsuri which takes place in odd numbered years. The Sanno Festival extends over a week, but the main attraction is a parade that winds through central Tokyo over the course of nine hours.

The festival dates back to the early Edo period, and was one of only two permitted by the Shogun to enter the grounds of Edo Castle. The festival started as a ritual procession asking for protection from fire for the castle, which was under construction at the time, and celebrating the founding of Edo (now Tokyo) as the capital of Japan. Even after the castle burned down, the festival continued to thrive, although it is no longer as big as it used to be.

Today the festival consists of the parade, food stalls, games, and a large, walk through hoop which is said to erase any bad luck and protect you for the next six months. The parade itself starts in one of the business districts and travels through the heart of Tokyo, accompanied by some 500 people clad colorful historical costumes carrying mikoshi (portable shrines), dashi floats, and drums.