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TEACHING TUESDAY

SANJA MATSURI

MAY 23, 2017

The Sanja Matsuri (三社祭; three shrine festival) is one of Tokyo's most symbolic festivals, taking place in the Asakusa district over the third full weekend in May. It is one of Tokyo's three great festivals, and often considered the wildest and the largest.

The Sanja Matsuri originally began as a weekend-long celebration dedicated to the three men who were originally said to have consecrated Senso-ji temple, the oldest temple in Tokyo. The earliest records of the festival date back as early as the 14th century, but the current form was established during the Edo period. The weekend is filled with traditional Japanese music and dancing, along with food stalls, festival games, and an estimated two million people. The Daigyorestu Parade on Friday features a grand procession of people dressed in lavish Edo period costumes and traditional performances. On Saturday, approximately 100 *mikoshi* shrines are brought to Asakusa Shrine from around the district in miniature parades.

But the highlight of the event is the parade of three major *mikoshi* shrines which are carried through the streets of Asakusa on the third day. The Asakusa Shrine-owned *mikoshi* are accompanied by musicians, traditional artisans, and dancers, and more. The shrines then travel all around the district, before finally making their way back to Asakusa Shrine. When the procession arrives at the shrine, the dancers and musicians perform a dance called the Binzasara Mai accompanied by the binzasara, a traditional music instrument.