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TEACHING TUESDAY

NADA NO KENKA MATSURI

OCTOBER 10, 2017

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The Nada no Kenka Matsuri takes place every October in the town of Himeji. This two-day festival is the largest fighting festival in Japan, with the seven villages of Himeji carrying portable shrines which they use to fight.

The first day of the festival is a carrying competition known as Neriawase, but the real spectacle is the second day of the festival. Teams from each of the seven villages gather with their portable shrines, and once everyone is ready, begin to fight. The shrines are knocked against one another at random, and the moment one is hoisted on top of another, the contest is over. Typically, only two shrines are pitted against each other at a time, but often three or four will join the fight.

After the fights have concluded, as dusk falls, the town lights up with a parade of yatai festival floats. Decorated with wood carving, gold and silver handiwork and embroidered curtains, the yatai are carried on the shoulders of men and are surrounded by the men holding *shide*, bamboo poles decorated with colorful paper, each color representing one of the seven villages.