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TEACHING TUESDAY

AKIHA FIRE FESTIVAL

DECEMBER 5, 2017

The Akiha Fire Festival is an annual festival that takes place over two days in mid-December at the main Akihasan Hongu Akiha Shrine in Hamamatsu. The shrine itself is over 1300 years old, and is closely associated with the god of protection against fires

The festival's main attraction are the three secret dances: the "dance of the bow", which involves a bow and five arrows show towards the east, west, north, south, and the center of the ceiling; the "dance of the sword", which includes two swords and bell; and finally the "dance of fire" that is performed with a sacred flame in the dark after all lights in the shrine are put out. All three dances include prayers for protection against fire, water damage, and other disasters.

Other parts of the festival include a firewalking ceremony and fireworks displays. It is said that while the festival itself originated in the Nara period (710-794), the current form of the dances has been in use since the Kamakura period (1192-1333).