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TEACHING TUESDAY

MAEBASHI HATSU-ICHI MATSURI

JANUARY 9, 2018

A symbol of good luck for the new year, the Maebashi Hatsu-ichi Matsuri, or First Market Festival, is known for its hundreds of Daruma dolls. The festival originated from the monthly markets held in the 1600s, and many people come to the first market to burn their old Daruma dolls and buy new ones.

The festival's main attraction is the Otakiage, or Ceremony of Burning Old Daruma. This ritual bonfire invites visitors to bring their old Daruma dolls, used throughout the old year, and return them to the heavens through the help of the god of fire. This is followed by a second ceremony known as the Togyo-no-Gi. A mythological goblin known as Tengu clears the path for the deity as it is carried by the locals in the mikoshi during a high-spirited parade from Hachiman Shrine through the shopping district, where it will remain throughout the festival.

Of course, it wouldn't be a market without the roten street stalls, which line the streets and sell not only daruma dolls, but other new year's lucky items, plants, food, and much more.