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# TEACHING TUESDAY

## OHMATO TAIKAI

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For 400 years, Sanjūsangen-dō temple in Kyoto, Japan has been closely associated with archery. This is never more apparent than during the Ohmato Taikai, or Festival of the Great Target, which attracts roughly 2000 participants from all over Japan every January.

Ohmato Taikai has its origins in the Edo period, when a samurai named Asaoka Heibei was said to have shot 51 consecutive arrows down the veranda of the temple. This started the festival, which was originally known as the Tōshiya, and much more rigorous. The Tōshiya was divided into four distinct events, including hitting a target with 100 arrows, 1000 arrows, and trying to get the highest number of target hits in 12 and 24 hours. The Tōshiya was phased out in 1861, after 255 years, and replaced with the Ohmato Taikai. Today, the archers shoot in groups of six, with only two arrows, a two-minute time limit and only 4 targets. Archers that hit the target with both arrows go on to the next round.

The festival is lively, as it is held in conjunction with the temple's most important mass, the Yanagi-no-Okaji, or Rite of the Willow ritual, and Japan's Coming of Age Day. In addition to regular festival food stalls, people dress up in furisode and sometimes hakama to celebrate.