

Excursions

A visit to Toyohashi Gion Festival

Vedant Saboo and Jaiyam Sharma
Research interns from IIT Delhi, at Electronics Inspired
Interdisciplinary Research Institute

The centuries old, Gion Festival in Toyohashi is renowned for the hand held fireworks —tezutsu hanabi—produced by igniting a powder contained in large bamboo cylinders.

In fact, Toyohashi is acknowledged as the birth place of tezutsu hanabi, and the Toyohashi Gion Festival is the perfect way to see the special at first hand. The festival is held annually over the third weekend of July during which time a wide range of fireworks, including tezetsu on Friday evening, light up the skies of over the banks of the Toyokawa River that flows through Toyohashi City.

Having never seen hand held fireworks we really looked forward to seeing this historical event close up. Our inquisitiveness led us to the festival slightly early, so we visited the remains of Yoshida Castle before walking across to Yoshida Shrine, the venue for the Friday-tezutsu firework display.

The initial fireworks display was given by groups who guided bamboo cylinders that were attached onto hand driven carriages. In what seemed to be like a ritual, the flames being emitted from the bamboo cylinders exploded as a climax to the beautiful fireworks. We were particularly amazed to see how only one cylinder could produce so many different kinds of firework.

After having some delicious rice cakes we saw the main part of the tezutsu display. We saw how brave men stabilized ignited cylinders vertically by intricate hand movements.

In India, our home country, fireworks are more common and not limited to professionals. However, they are much smaller and none are handheld which clearly explains our excitement at seeing the tezutsu fireworks.

The ambience of the festival was enhanced by the young people dressed in kimono and yukata. Seeing everybody enjoying the evening made this our first ever Japanese festival, something that we will remember forever.

Vedant Saboo and Jaiyam Sharma

Research interns from IIT Delhi, at Electronics Inspired Interdisciplinary Research Institute



Two men holding tezutsu fireworks at the Toyohashi Gion Festival