

Voice of Tohoku Gakuin Podcast

Episode 8: Traditional Festivals in Sendai

Keita: Hello and welcome to the Voice of Tohoku Gakuin. This podcast is produced by the students at Tohoku Gakuin University. I'm Keita and a junior in the English Department.

Minori: And I'm Minori and also a junior in the English Department.

Mitsuki: And I'm Mitsuki and also a junior in the English Department. We're your presenters and we have a lot of things for you to listen to today, but before we start I think we should introduce ourselves.

Keita: Yes, so tell me about yourself, Mitsuki.

Mitsuki: I like to play and watch baseball. My favorite team is Tohoku Rakuten Eagles. This year I went to see them play many times. Now, this team isn't strong, but many players have a lot of potential. I want to go there more this year. How about you, Minori?

Minori: I like to listen to music. My favorite singer is Justin Bieber. I often sing his songs.

Keita: I like to watch soccer very much. You know we had the world cup in Russia recently so I enjoyed watching so many games. Ok, so let's move on to a today's topic. Today, we'd like to introduce you to some traditional festivals in Miyagi, so that you can enjoy them more. We hope you enjoy the podcast.

Keita: First, Minori how about if you talk about Aoba matsuri?

Minori: Sure, Aoba matsuri is famous for "Suzume Odori" and held on the third weekend in each year of May in Sendai. Also "Suzume Odori contest" takes place and many participants compete in dancing.

Keita: Thanks, it sounds like a great festival. I wonder why the dance is called “Suzume Odori”. Is it related to something about sparrow? Because “suzume” means sparrow in Japanese.

Minori: Yes, Suzume Odori includes jumping, walking and waving two folding fans, it looks like feeding sparrows. So it is named “Suzume Odori”. Do you get it?

Keita: Of course. If you are interested, there are some videos of Suzume Odori online on YouTube or something, so if you want to know more, please check them out.

Mitsuki: I’ve heard that Aoba matsuri has a strong relationship with Date Masamune. So I’d like to know more about the historic background. Can you tell me about it?

Minori: Of course. There was a festival in Sendai that was the largest festival of the Sendai area in the Edo period. It was reborn as “Aoba matsuri”, it is held at Aoba shrine on the anniversary of the death of Date Masamune, the founder of Sendai. So as you said, this festival is one of the symbolic festival of Masamune.

Mitsuki: I see, so this festival has been going on for a long time. Last time I visited, I remember there were so many people and all the streets were filled with people. Actually how many people visit this festival?

Minori: It is said that approximately a million people from around Japan and overseas joined last year. Now, this festival has become one of biggest symbols of Miyagi.

Keita: I see, thank you Minori. Then, why don’t you tell us about Tanabata matsuri, Mitsuki?

Mitsuki: Ok, let me talk about one of the biggest summer festival, Tanabata matsuri. This festival is held from August 6th to 8th every year. In

this festival we can see a lot of Japanese streamers decorating the streets.

Keita: Thanks, it sounds interesting. Can you explain the origins of this festival?

Mitsuki: Sure. Originally, it was born in China as a festival for women and the improvement of arts. After it came to Japan, it attracted widespread popularity as a festival of agriculture.

Keita: Thank you. Aoba matsuri has a strong relationship with Date Masamune. Is Tanabata Matsuri also related to him?

Mitsuki: Yes. He devoted himself to the education of women. So when he found out the origin of the festival, he tried to encourage the public to hold Tanabata Matsuri.

Minori: What a great man he was! Generally, Tanabata is held in July, right? So I'd like to know the reason why our Tanabata matsuri is held in August. Do you know why?

Mitsuki: Yes, it's a simple reason. When we count the months using the lunar calendar, July becomes August.

Minori: I see. Also I'm interested in Japanese streamers. Are they different from the usual one?

Mitsuki: Of course. Japanese streamers are made of traditional Japanese paper and they have many colors and sizes. Every year children write their wishes on streamers, hoping their dreams will come true.

Minori: It's an interesting event! So Tanabata matsuri is an important festival, especially for children.

Keita: Yes, thank you for your explanation. Unfortunately, it is time

to finish up. So can you give a final message to our listeners?

Minori: Ok, thank you for listening to our podcast!

Keita: Thank you for listening to our podcast, I hope you enjoyed your time with us. See you next time.

Mitsuki: Let's enjoy the summer in Sendai together!