

Ueno Tenjin Festival: Fukuichō

Shirushi: Sanmei Noboriyama

Danjiri: Sanmei

The red velvet flag on the *shirushi* float depicts the name of the neighborhood, Fukuichō, in what is believed to be the calligraphy of Matsuo Bashō (1644–1694). The original banner was put into storage for preservation, and in 1990 a new float was built and was given the name Sanmei Noboriyama, or “Sanmei Festival Banner.”

The Fukuichō *danjiri* float is named Sanmei, which refers to the three bright celestial bodies of Edo-era Japan: the sun, the moon, and the stars. The decorative pieces of wood on both eaves of the *danjiri* depict a golden sun, a silver moon, and shining stars. The upper and lower curtains are embroidered with images of dragons surrounded by clouds and forest scenes containing tigers. The middle curtain is embroidered with images of poets composing *renga*, a style of Japanese linked verse. The poets are the Thirty-Six Immortal Poets, and their number represents a *kasen renga* poem, which has 36 stanzas.

The metal borders and fittings of the Sanmei *danjiri* are noteworthy for their precise hairline engravings. Each of the four corners illustrates a member of the *shijin*—the blue dragon, red bird, white tiger, and black tortoise that represent the seasons and cardinal directions in Chinese mythology.

Festival musicians accompanying the Sanmei *danjiri* play instruments such as the *surigane*, a small gong, the *shime-daiko*, a drum, and the *ryūteki*, a bamboo flute. The float attendants wear overcoats decorated with the face of Otafuku, a smiling figure from Japanese folklore whose name shares the “fuku” character in Fukuichō that means “good luck” or “good fortune.”