

Report: Yabu are coming ~Battle in Kure□□

Prologue

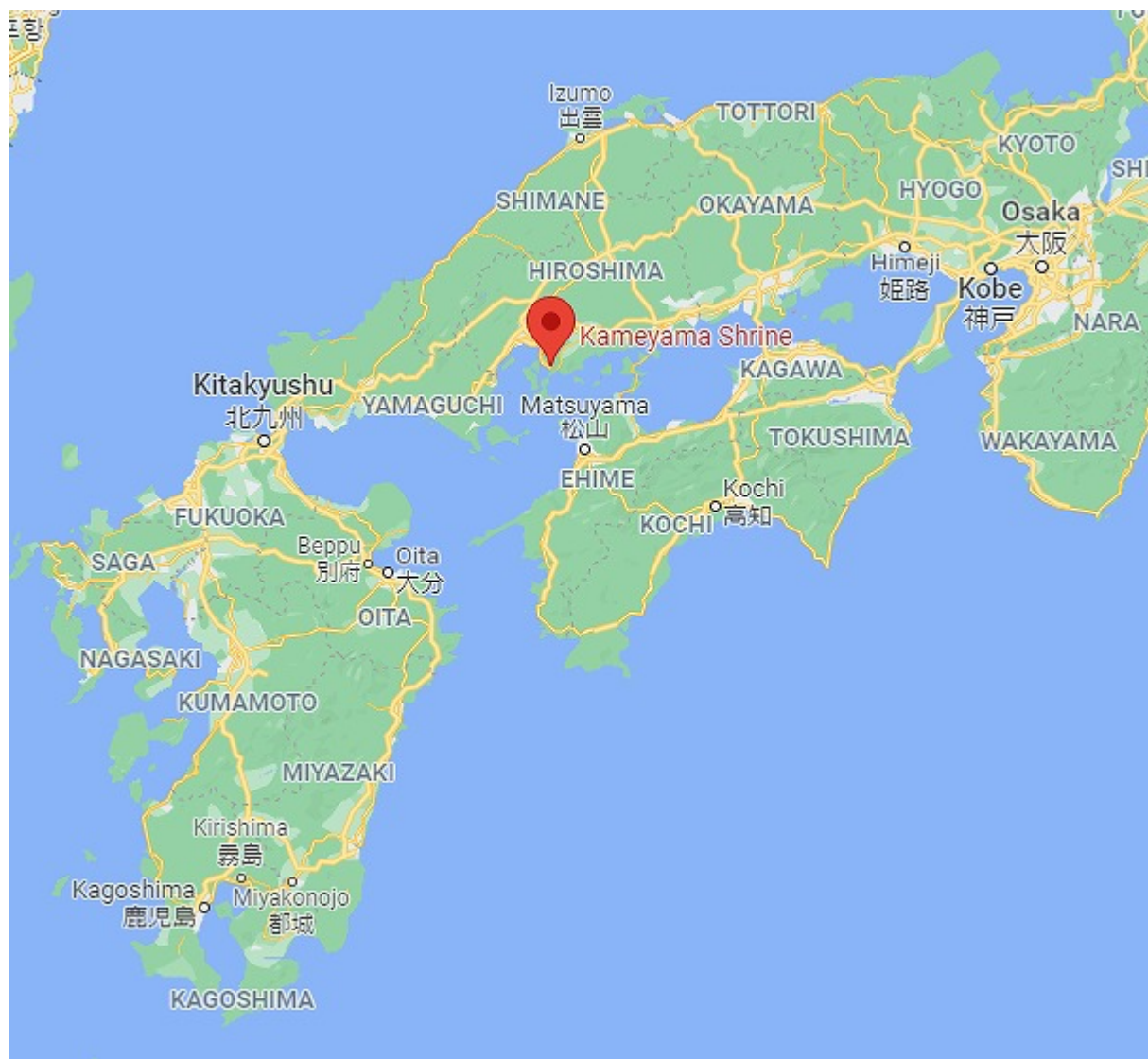


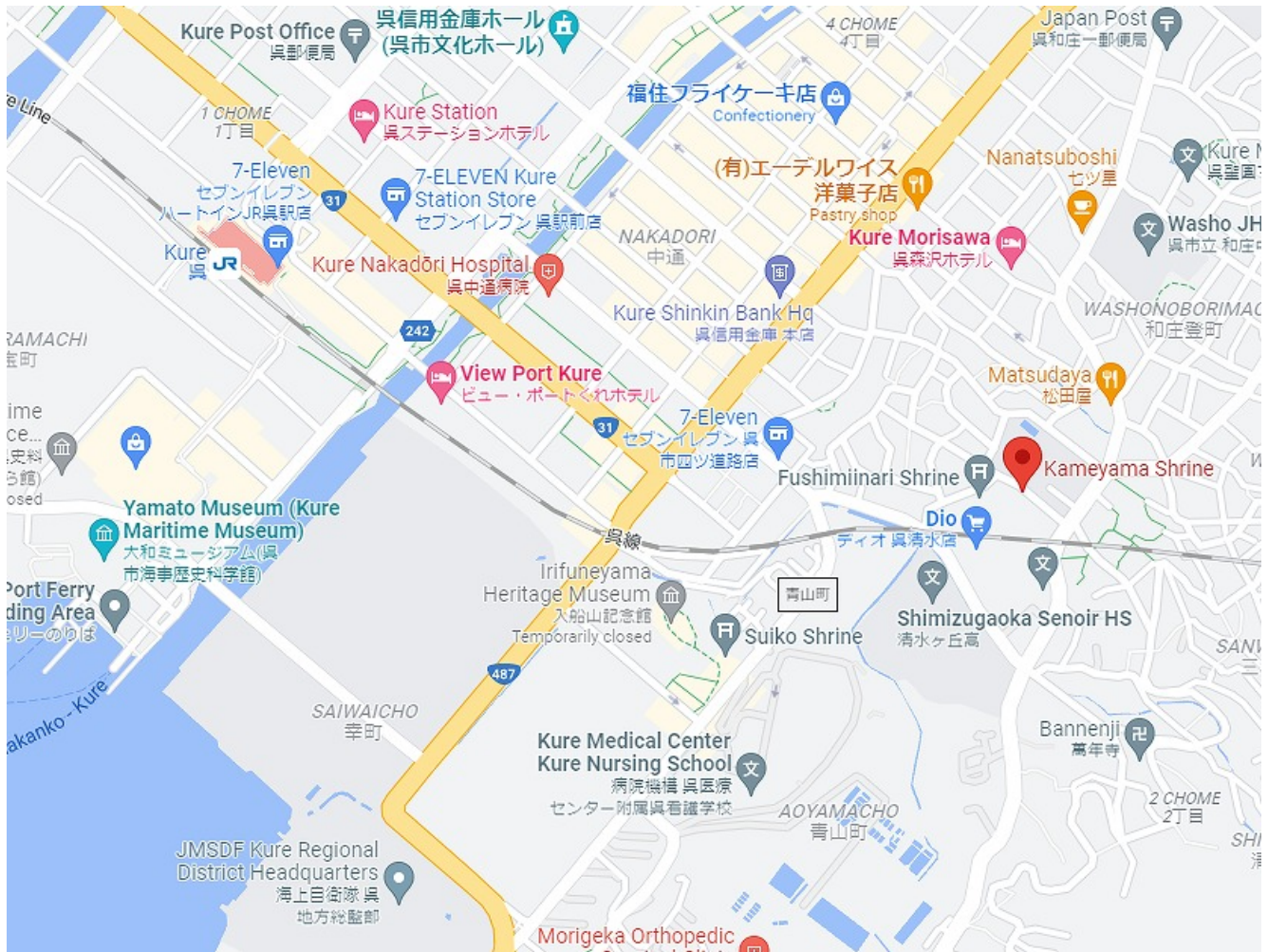
The battle begins with a song with a strange verse. The young people carrying the mikoshi (portable shrine), which is made of three rice bales stacked in a pyramid shape, are already in a state of excitement.

On the other hand, “they” are already standing by in front of the main shrine. The audience could see that they were even more excited than the mikoshi. The masked ogres hold bamboo sticks wrapped in long cylindrical cloth. Their bare chest plates are changing to blood red.

When the song ended, the mikoshi run up to the main shrine with great vigor amidst loud cheers. In an attempt to stop them, “they” violently hit the bales with bamboo sticks. A battle of wills. The excitement of the large crowd of spectators reaches a climax.

Autumn had arrived in the town of Kure.





Date: The second Sunday in October

Location: 1 Chome-9-36 Shimizu, Kure, Hiroshima

Access: It takes about one hour from Hiroshima Station to Kure. It is a 15-minute walk from the station.

Their name is “Yabu”

Their name is “Yabu”. Nobody knows exactly what a “yabu” is. Yabu always appear at festivals in Kure. However, no one knows when they first appeared or why they appear. Their presence is overwhelming. Once you see them, you can’t forget them: the terrifying masks, the straw rising up on their backs like flames or little dolls, and the long bamboo sticks in their hands. Throughout the festival, they roam the grounds of the shrine and the town in all directions. And they intimidate people with bamboo sticks in their hands. They behave as kings

and messengers of the deity during the festival.
What is “Yabu”? This report followed them for a day.

The content can also be enjoyed on
video→<https://youtu.be/yJYglingoEE>



Kameyama Shrine—this is the headquarters of all the yabus. To be precise, the Kameyama Shrine is the headquarters of all the shrines in Kure City. Yabu first appears at the shrine at about eight in the morning. I had heard that, so I came to Hiroshima the day before to prepare for the appearance. In fact, they had appeared in town the night before. And they had been chasing children around and running amok. I didn't find out about it until much later. This was unfortunate. At any rate, it was morning in the city of Kure. I headed for the shrine in the still sparsely populated streets. The road to the shrine is slightly uphill. There were already a lot of stalls waiting to open. After climbing up the last set of stairs, you will see the main shrine beyond the spacious precincts. It seemed that the yabus had not yet appeared. I feel fresh in the morning air when I went out to the town. Yabus are famous in Kure, and there are some ardent fans. There are many people who have covered all the yabus that

appear in the festivals of shrines in Kure City. Some people have done a lot of different research. They collect old photos and ask around about the origin. Still, they don't seem to know for sure how long it has existed. There is no mention of yabu in the textbooks for the priesthood. Yabu is like the guardian deity of the shrine. That's where the discussion eventually settles. Nothing more, nothing less.



Yabu's appearance was quiet. There was no sound. He just appeared with the people involved, visited the shrine, and then took a commemorative photo. There is a pecking order in the line up of appearance. The leader is number 1. It seems to change from year to year, but at this time, there were nine yabus. At this time, there were nine yabus, plus a tengu. The no.1 yabu is in the center, and the rest are lined up in order from left to right. The order of the yabus seems to be quite strict. Eventually, the Yabus started to descend the hill in a quiet line. They took a short break until noon at the building in front of the intersection.



Kure, located in the west of Hiroshima, was a former naval

base. The topography of the city is such that it faces the coast, with mountains looming in the background. Even today, there are many facilities related to the Self-Defense Forces. It was also the home port of the Battleship Yamato (which was built and sunk during World War II, the already outdated symbol of big-ship gunnery), a ship that every Japanese person knows. For this reason, there is a museum commemorating Yamato and a Self-Defense Force museum lining the harbor. More to the point, it is also the setting for a blockbuster movie about a yakuza war. This is the image that Japanese people have of Kure.







Around noon, the Yabus would finally start. The Yabus gather in front of the building in front of the intersection, and people gather to see them. You can see many people holding their children in their arms. The gathering of the crowd makes the festival atmosphere all the more exciting. When the time came, they all started proceeding towards the shrine at once. With all the spectators and people involved in the event in tow. I hurried to the shrine ahead of the others. After all, this festival attracts so many spectators that it is also known as a people-watching festival. The area in front of the shrine, the main venue, was overflowing with people. I managed to get a spot in the front and waited for the Yabus to arrive. I'm sure the Yabus were showing off very Yabu-like on the way, but I gave up looking there. After all, I want to see the main event.

Before the fight~ drumming

This festival is also known as the “People’s Festival. As it was, many people were waiting closely in front of the main shrine.



Yabu arrives. The central performing area was officially roped

off to hold back the crowd of pushers and shakers. They go around saying, "Please don't push". Yabu is different. They shout and violently slam their bamboo sticks into the ground. "Don't come out!" They tend to be intimidating. The children begin to cry.

Two drums are brought in and Yabus beat on them. The festival has begun. After the drums are beaten for a while, the people involved clean up the area. Then they set up the drums again. This time there is only one.

There is only one person who can beat it. The first yabu. The black-faced, sturdy-looking yabu beats the drum. In front of him, a strange creature appears. A lion. The lion is lying on the ground, as if asleep.

Before the fight~ Who's at the top?





Yabu beats his drum as if to provoke. Eventually, the lion rises and confronts Yabu.

The sound of the flute flowed heavily and monotonously. It was as if a sacred air had been poured into the room. Yabu beat the drum slowly. It was a heavy bass sound that seemed to resonate in the pit of everyone's stomach.

The lion quietly raises his body. The sound of the flute becomes a little lighter. It plays a melody that seems to be angry at something fun. The yabu drums also lightened up to the melody, as if they had changed from four beats to eight.

The lion raises its body and undulates violently. The rhythm of the drums becomes even faster. Eventually, the people move the drums aside.

The content can also be enjoyed on video→<https://youtu.be/ejqypW59HSM>



Yabu replaced the *bachi* drum sticks with a long bamboo stick and swung it down to the ground. The dry sound of the bamboo bursting echoes through the air. The rhythm became even faster, and the lions went into a frenzy. Finally, the two clashed head-on as if to show off their respective powers.

It is said that this is the final battle to determine which is the more worthy of being the guardian of the gods, the yabu or

the lion.

Tonbo vs Yabu



The content can also be enjoyed on video→<https://youtu.be/CupESF45BGI>

Yabu defeated the lion and successfully won the position of divine protector. As if to show off their power, they held up bamboo sticks high in their hands and somehow began to run vigorously around the main shrine. Before long, not only the yabus, but also a group of musicians start running. During this time, Hyottoko came out and danced in front of the spectators.

After running three laps, Yabu finally settled down in front of the shrine. The young people carried Tombo mikoshi (portable shrine) , and everything was ready. Already a small skirmish broke out between the two, and shouts of anger flew around. The Tombo song begins. As soon as the song ends, the tonbo rushes toward the shrine with great force. Yabu tries to stop it by sticking a bamboo stick into the bale. Finally, the long battle began.



Tonbo is pushed back. Still excited, the Tonbo and the yabu continue their skirmish. The Tonbo lunges again. Sometimes the Tonbo pushes out to the top of the shrine steps. Sometimes the Yabu pushes back at once in front. This battle is repeated over and over again, never ending. For more information on this battle, please watch the video.

The battle lasts for about half an hour. At the end of the battle, which had been going on without end, the Tonbo pushed the boulders away and they disappeared into the main shrine. This is how the people dedicate the harvested rice to the shrine.

In fact, the Yabu does not interfere with the Tonbo's dedication of the rice bales. They are just checking to see if the dragonflies are offering strange rice.

To the town

The content can also be enjoyed on video→https://youtu.be/RJ4Vg4_vAVo

It took a while for the waiting time to become like a photography session with Yabu. Parents taking care of their children, girls lining up to take pictures with them. This continued even after they left the shrine and started down the hill. With the enthusiasm still intact, people continued on to the town.





The little ones still cry a lot, but as they get a little older, this changes. When they get older, they will take pride in not being afraid of the yabu, and the yabu will become a hero.



The group surrounded the yabu, and the portable shrines and

the musical performers went out into the town as a group. The mikoshi is carried by women here. In recent years, people of the town alone has not been able to secure enough women to carry the mikoshi, so they have asked women from nearby universities to come and carry the mikoshi.

In the center of town, a circle of people had already formed. Since this was an annual event, people knew the place and the event all too well. Even so, they felt compelled to gather together when they heard that Yabu was coming and that there would be a festival.

On this day, there is only one festival at Kameyama Shrine, but depending on the day, there may be festivals at three or four different shrines. Each yabu runs rampant amid our town. This is how the people of Kure have enjoyed the Yabu and the festival, and will continue to do so in the future.







The festival in Kure has just begun. Festivals will be held at various shrines over the next month or so. Now I want you to see it for yourself.

