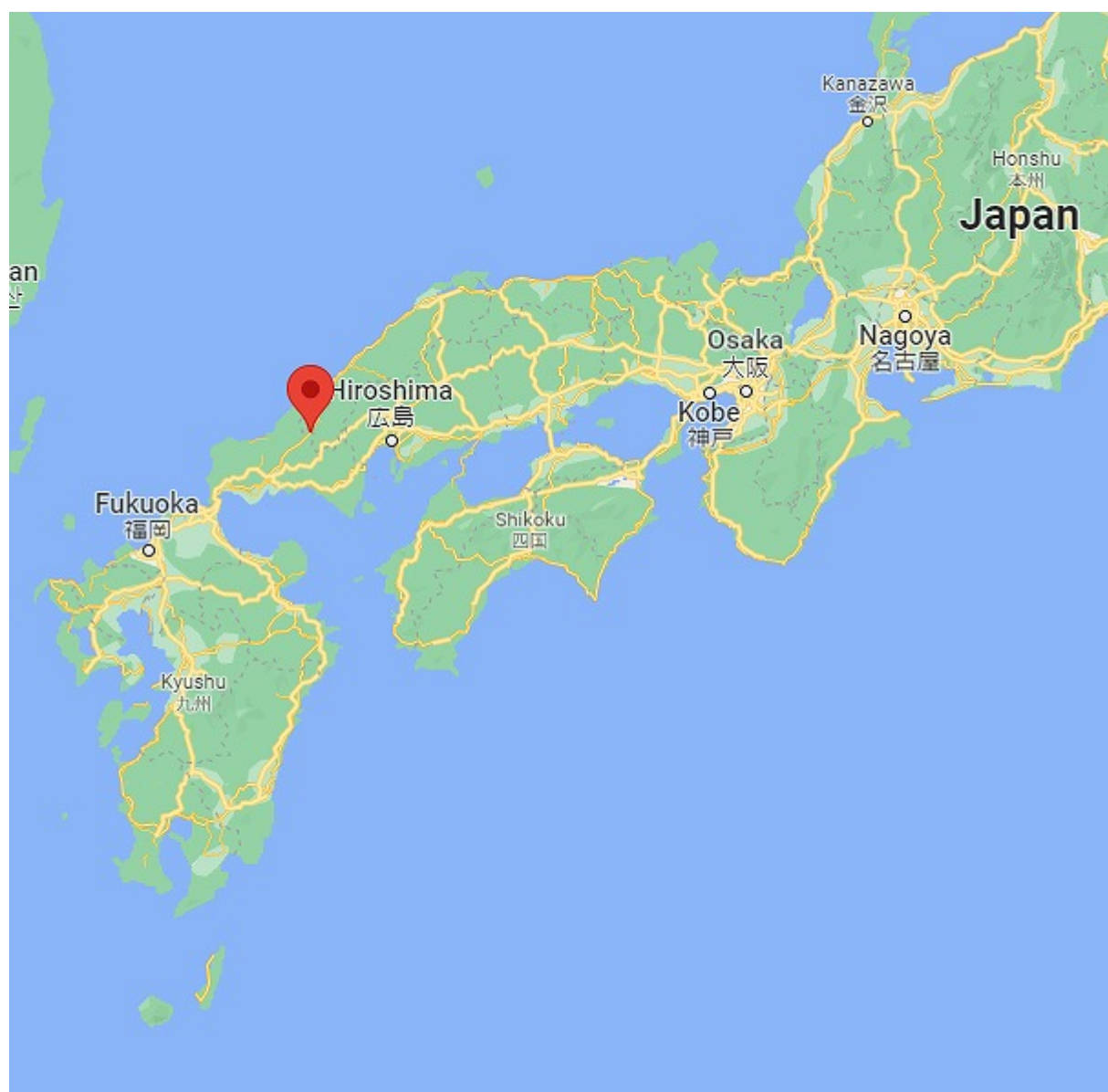
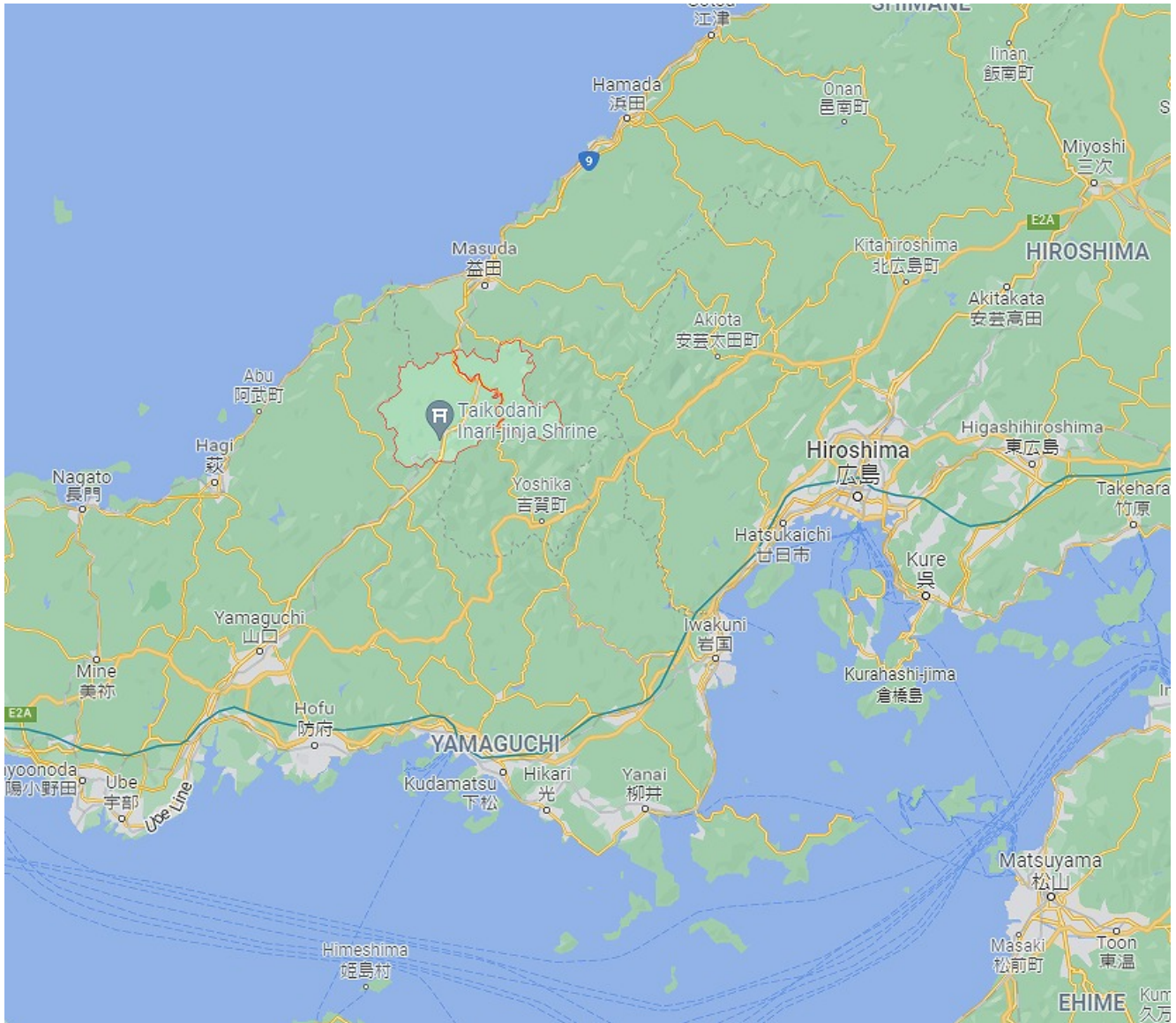


Tsuwano town ~広島県





Access: From Tokyo, take the Shinkansen to Shin-Yamaguchi (about 4 hours) and then the limited express to Tsuwano (about 1 hour).

Alternatively, if you fly, you can go from Haneda to Iwami Airport. From there, take a bus to Masuda. (about 10 minutes), and then take a local train to Tsuwano (about 40 minutes).

A small castle town in the mountains of western Shimane Prefecture. It is especially famous for its Tono-machi Street, which is lined with the ruins of former feudal lords' residences, canals, and white walls. The town is surrounded by mountains, and a river flows through the town a short distance away, spreading greenery. However, access to the area is not very good. Along with the neighboring city of Hagi in

Yamaguchi Prefecture, the town has been featured in a women's magazine as Hagi-Tsuwano, and is especially popular among female visitors. It is also known for its heron dance in the summer.→<https://discoverdeeperjapan.com/2021/08/30/sagimai-everything-is-worth-a-photo-chance/>

There is also a memorial hall for the picture books of Anno Mitsumasa 安野光三, who won the International Andersen Prize. It is also an Important Preservation District for Groups of Traditional Buildings.



























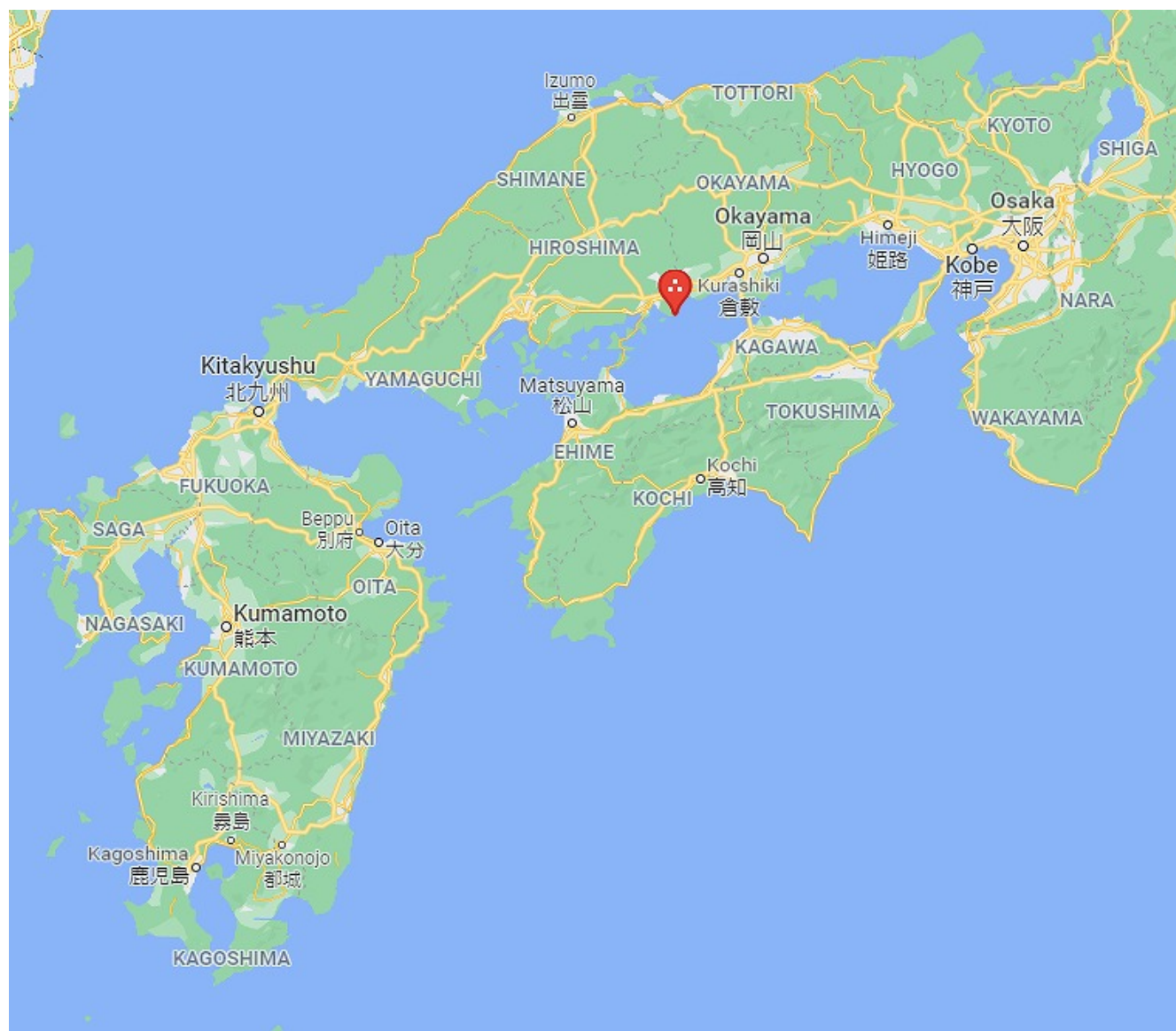
cf.

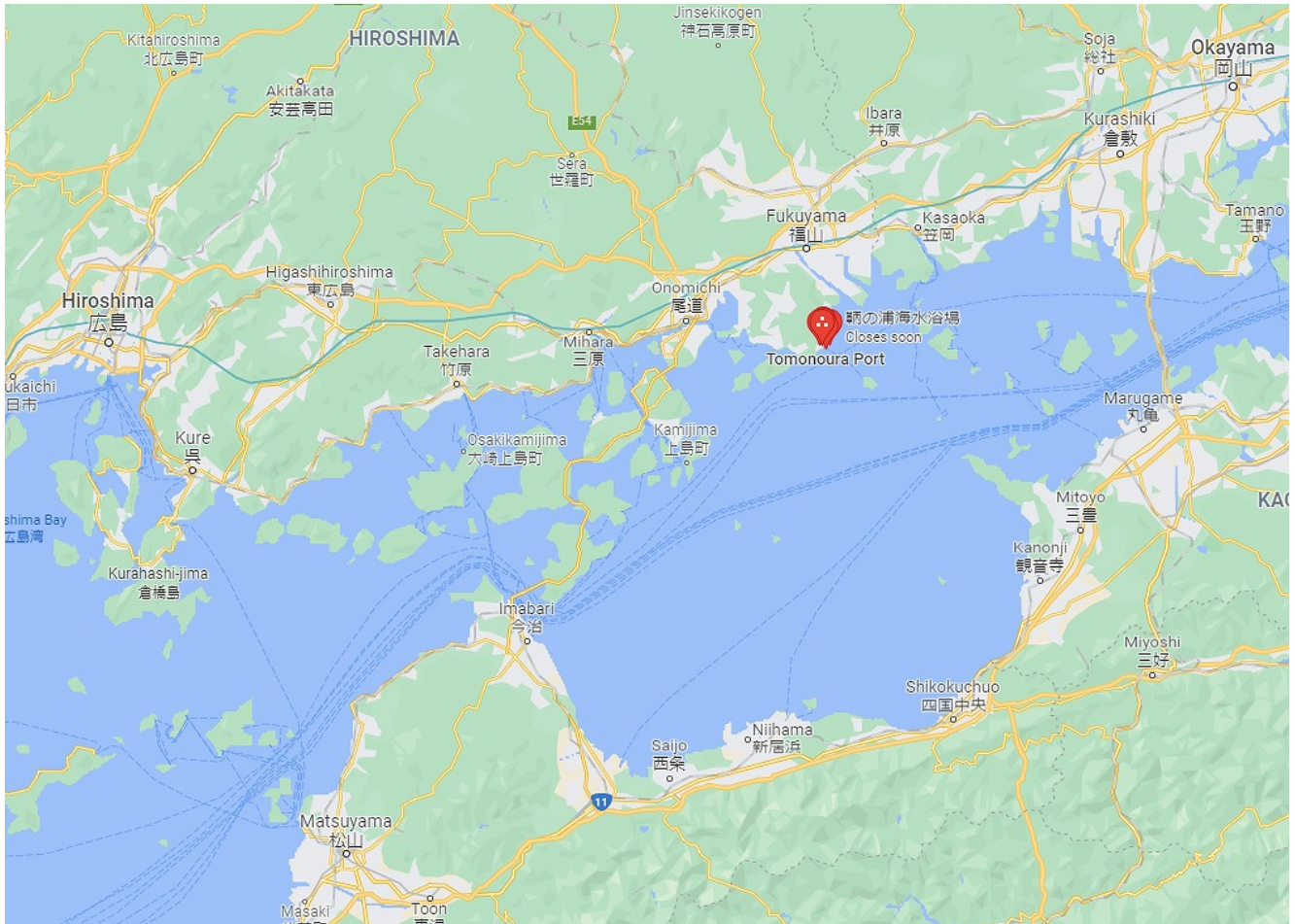
→<https://www15.j-server.com/LUCTWNT/ns/tl.cgi/https://www.town.tsuwano.lg.jp/www/genre/1000000000113/index.html?SLANG=ja&TLANG=en&XMODE=0&XPARAM=q,&XCHARSET=UTF-8&XPORG=,&XJSID=0>

→https://www.kankou-shimane.com/en/destinations/?post_type=destinations&destination_city%5B%5D=iwamiarea&s=&x=35&y=25

Tomonoura□□□□







Address: Tomo, Tomocho, Fukuyama city, Hiroshima prefecture

Access: From the No. 5 bus stop at the south exit of Fukuyama Station, take the bus bound for “Tomo” or “Tomonoura” (about 30 minutes). 550 yen (as of 2022)

Fukuyama is about 1 hour from Osaka and about 30 minutes from Hiroshima by Shinkansen.



You can also watch it on you tube.→

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K0o-4Ek6stw>

In the video we will guide you.



It seems that Tomonoura has been used as a port since quite

from



The ocean currents in this area flow in from the east and west at high tide and collide just in the vicinity of Tomonoura. On the other hand, when the tide is low, the currents divide into

east and west from here. In the old days, people used to sail along the coast, so waiting for the tide was important. The most suitable port for this was Tomonoura.

The people of the time period gradually and gradually built up the harbor through land reclamation and other means, and it took on its present form.















You can look inside an old merchant house and get a glimpse of how people lived in those days. It is said that people in the construction industry today sigh in awe because they can see beams cut out of a single tree, something that is impossible to find nowadays.











When you are surrounded by so many natural townscapes, you

feel like this is normal. However, this is a historical landscape that miraculously remains because it was left behind in the development race. It is easy to forget that townscapes like this used to exist in Tokyo and Osaka as a matter of course.









A ferry connects the town with Onomichi 市, one of the most popular towns in Hiroshima Prefecture along with Tomonoura and other towns. It is nice to see the peaceful scenery of the Seto Inland Sea from the sea. It is also fun to compare it with the port city of Onomichi.

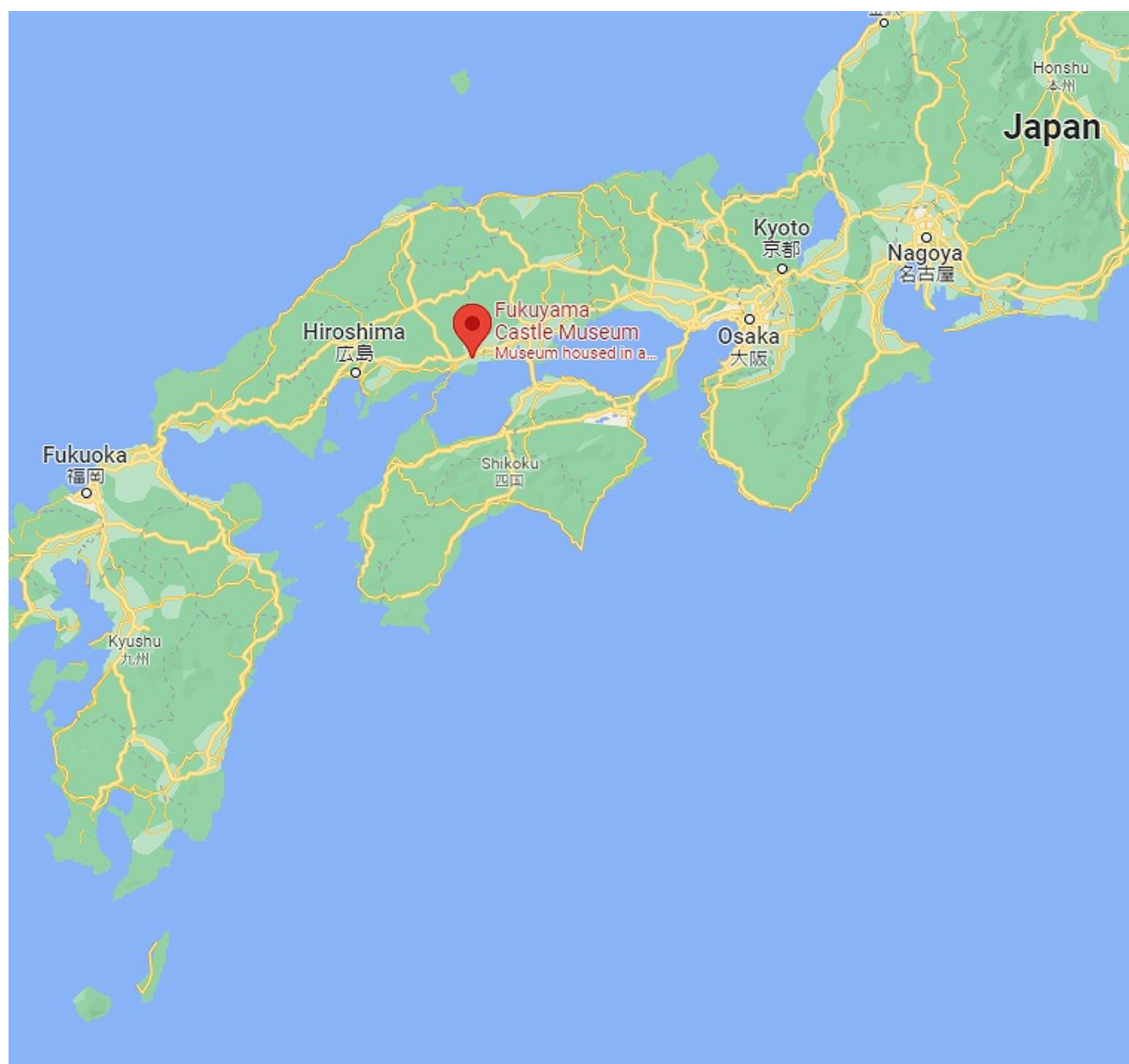
cf.

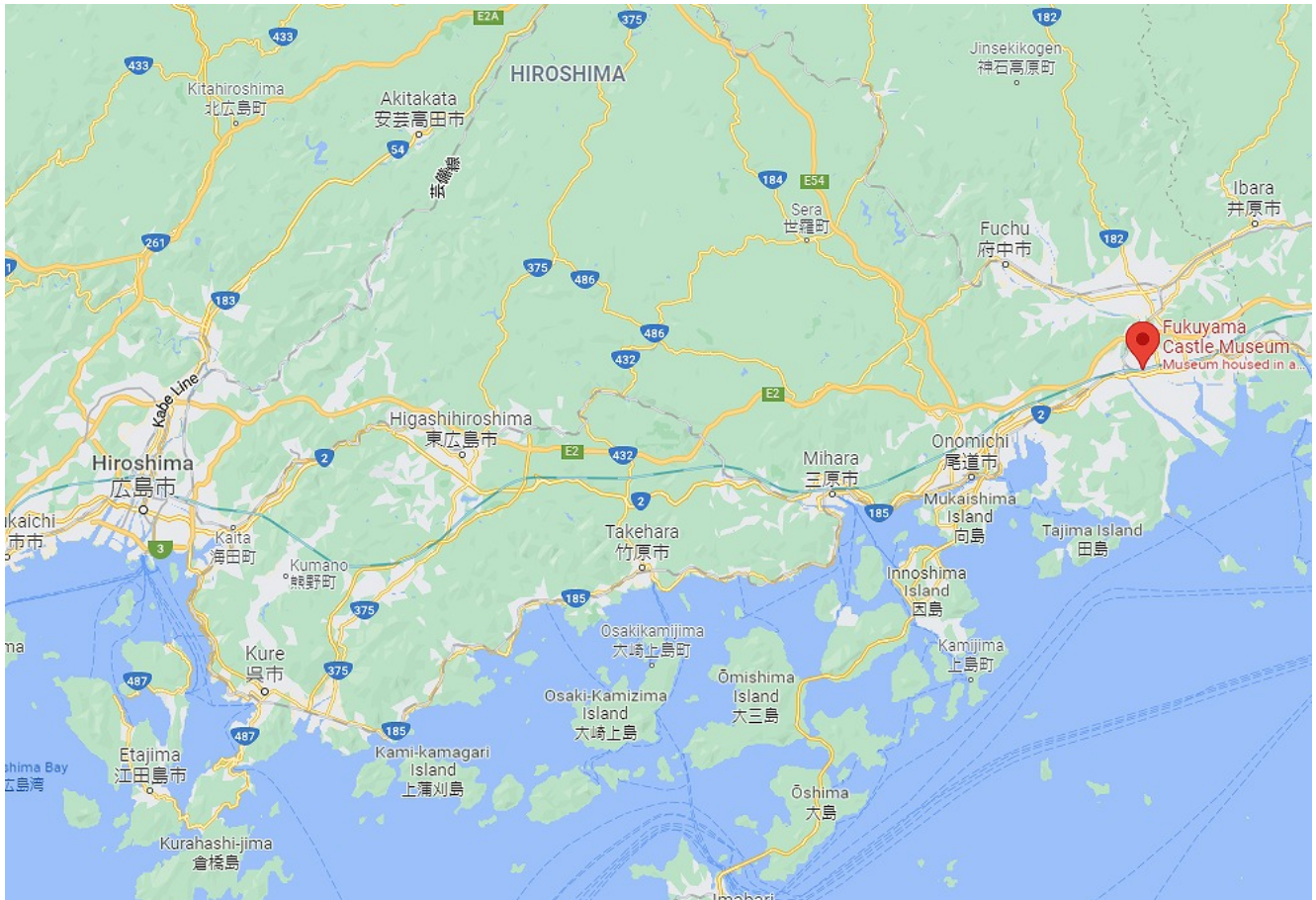
<https://www.city.fukuyama.hiroshima.jp/soshiki/kanko/85749.html>

<https://youtu.be/K0o-4Ek6stw>

Fukuyama castle







Access: Get off JR Fukuyama Station north exit, 5 minutes on foot. It takes about one and a half hours from Osaka by Shinkansen. About 30 minutes from Hiroshima.

→<https://youtu.be/K0o-4Ek6stw>

History 1

Fukuyama 福山 is located in the eastern part of Hiroshima Prefecture. In the latter half of the 15th century, a major war broke out in Kyoto, which rapidly weakened the power of the Ashikaga 足利 clan and the shogunate, which had previously reigned as shoguns, and ushered in an era of warring factions. The small Mori 毛利 clan defeated the giant Ōuchi 大内 clan in the west, and also defeated the Amago 安美 clan in the east, bringing the Chugoku region under their control.







Statue of the first lord of the domain





History 2

In 1600, the armies of the East and West clashed head-on at a place called Sekigahara 関ヶ原 in present-day Gifu Prefecture. The Tokugawa 徳川 clan, which led the eastern army, won the war. The Mori 毛利 clan, which was the general of the western army, lost most of its territory and was reduced to owning only a part of Hiroshima Prefecture. The Tokugawa Shogunate sent a cousin of the feudal lord to Fukuyama. Thereafter, three feudal lords took turns to rule the area.

In the 1870s, the forces that crowned the emperor with the goal of overthrowing the shogunate defeated the Tokugawa clan and ushered in a new era. The people who played a central role in this were the former Mori clan. The new government tore down many of the buildings of Fukuyama castle. The World War II destroyed many of the buildings, and World War II air raids burned down the few remaining structures. Therefore, what we see today is a faithful reconstruction of the original in 1966.







The station is in front of the castle.



Located right in front of Fukuyama Station on the Shinkansen, you can walk down the station to a park with a castle right outside. The castle tower (the main building) can be entered if you pay the admission fee. The location is slightly elevated, so you can enjoy a panoramic view of the town of Fukuyama.

cf.

<https://translation2.j-server.com/LUCFKYMC/ns/tl.cgi/https://www.city.fukuyama.hiroshima.jp/site/fukuyamajo/?SLANG=ja&TLANG=en&XMODE=0&XCHARSET=utf-8&XJSID=0>

Report: Yabu are coming ~Battle in Kure□□

Prologue

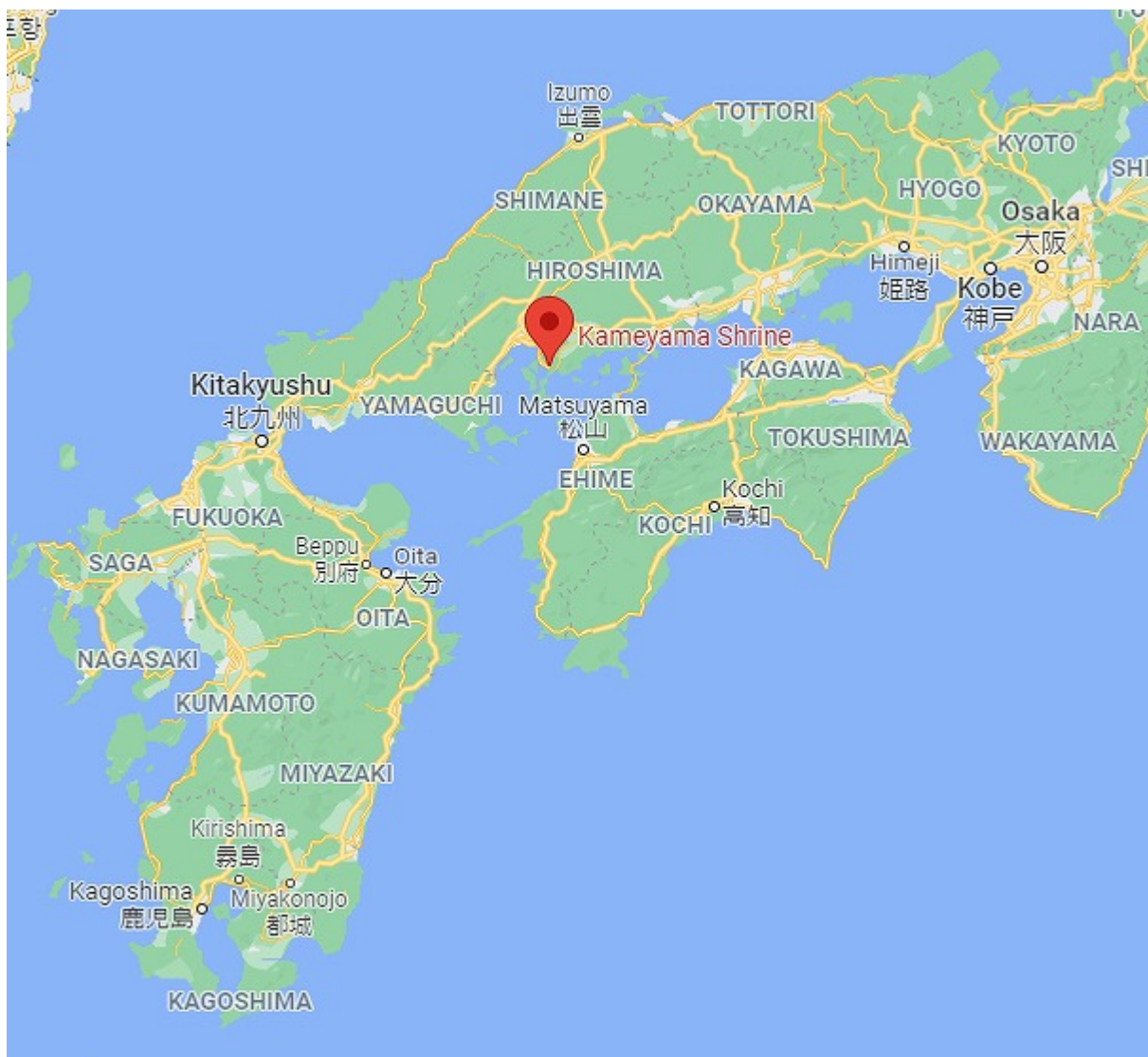


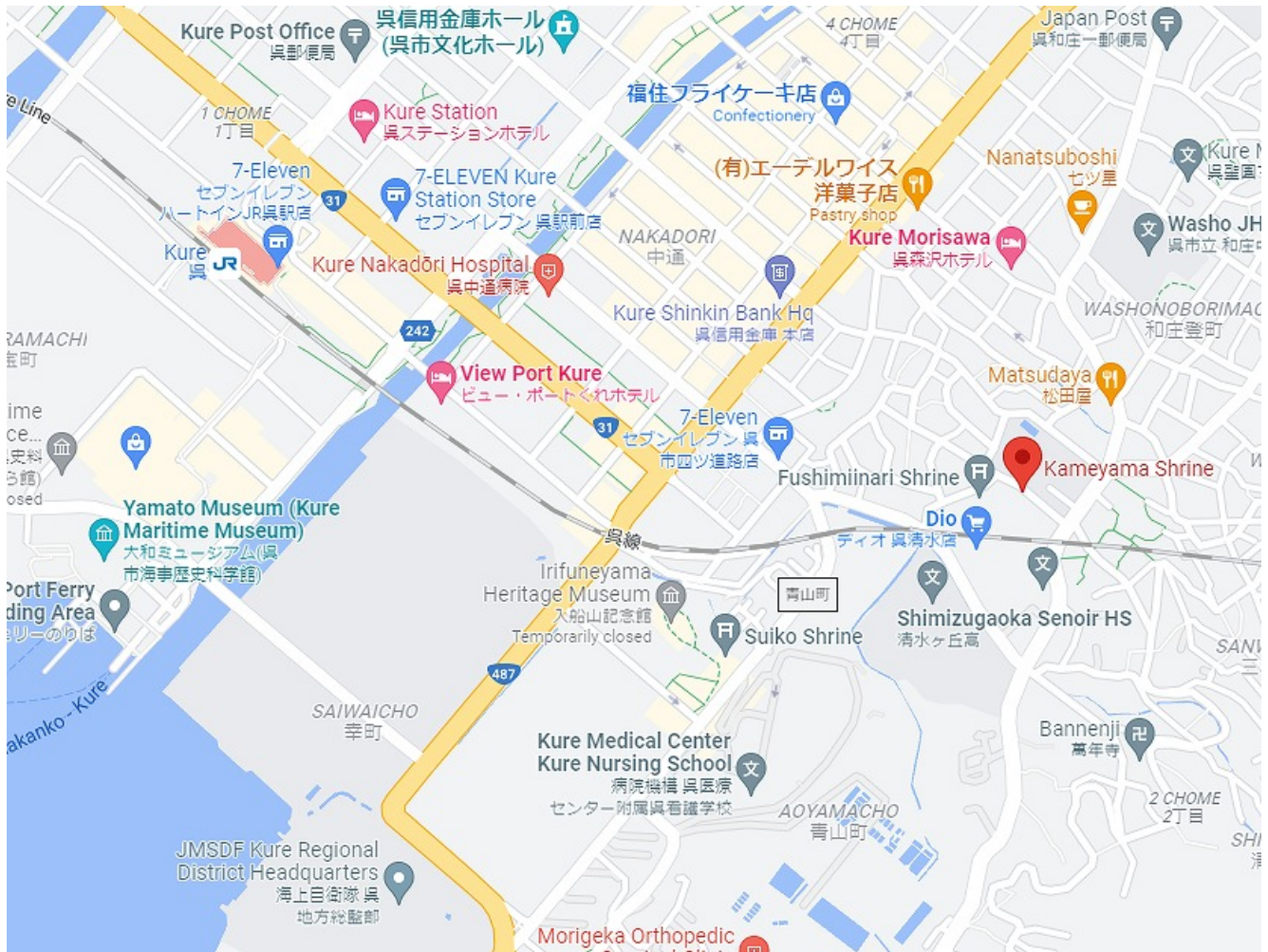
The battle begins with a song with a strange verse. The young people carrying the mikoshi (portable shrine), which is made of three rice bales stacked in a pyramid shape, are already in a state of excitement.

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.



**Sagimai~ Everything is worth
a photo chance**



<http://tsmoyo.jp/sagimai>

Date: 20th and 27th of July every year

Location: Yasaka shrine and Tsuwano town, Tsuwano town, Katari district, Shimane prefecture

Access: By air, you can go from Hagi/Iwami 〇〇〇〇〇〇 Airport to Tsuwano via JR Shin-Yamaguchi 〇〇〇. By Shinkansen: JR Shin-Yamaguchi. Or, if you want to use Sunrise Izumo 〇〇, take the night train from Tokyo to Izumo via Osaka. From there, you can take the JR conventional line to Tsuwano via Masuda 〇〇.

Area



A small town in Shimane Prefecture had handed over from

generation to generation one of the most beautiful performing arts in Japan. The place is Tsuwano 津和野. Together with Hagi 萩 to the west, it is a castle town that is popular among female tourists. Shimane Prefecture, to which Tsuwano belongs, is largely referred to as the Chugoku region. It belongs to the northern part of the region. The Shinkansen runs through the southern part (which includes Hiroshima Prefecture), but not the northern part. Therefore, transportation is not very convenient, and it is one of the least populated areas in Japan. It is about one-tenth the size of the neighboring domain centered in Hagi (the former domain's area of control). The remains of samurai residences line the town and people call it the Little Kyoto of the region.

History





In 1542, the lord of the time learned the dance from the neighboring prefecture of present-day Yamaguchi. However, it was originally from Kyoto. It was once discontinued, but in 1643, the lord sent his vassal directly to Kyoto to learn it again. Although the practice has died out in Kyoto and Yamaguchi, it has continued here to this day. People in other areas perform the so-called “Sagimai” (the heron dance) , but this is the only one where it has been passed down correctly and is considered to be the oldest.

Features



<http://tsmoyo.jp/sagimai>



https://www.all-iwami.com/feature/detail_41.html

Two people perform the role of the heron. Both wear white

clothes and scarlet hakama (an old Japanese costume, similar to pants). On their heads are imitations of herons, and on their backs are feathers. The dance looks very graceful, but the feathers they wear are made of 39 layers of Japanese cypress and weigh about 15 kilograms. We can see that the old people devised a way to make the wings look most beautiful when they are open. In addition, there are two “stick-wielders,” drums, flutes, and singers. Each of them wears a traditional formal dress and accompanies the group.

On the way





https://www.all-iwami.com/feature/detail_41.html



<https://www.kankou-shimane.com/destination/21279>



First of all, the Little Sagimai Dance, performed by an elementary school girl, precedes it. After that, the group departs, led by Sarutahiko wearing a nose-high mask. Then, from the Yasaka Shrine, the group dances for two hours at 11 locations in the town. Seven days later, the dance is performed at nine locations, following the reverse course.