

Old bulwark against invasion reborn as tourist site

By Masataka Ikezono
Yomiuri Shimbun Staff Writer

FUKUOKA — The ruins of a bulwark built in the 13th century to protect against Mongol invasions have been redeveloped as a tourist site in Fukuoka.

The Fukuoka municipal government has made the Iki-no-Matsubara bulwark ruins, located in the city's Nishi Ward, more accessible to visitors by installing an information board, parking lot and restrooms. Iki-no-Matsubara is the name of a pine forest.

The Mongol Empire, which once dominated the vast Eurasian steppes, attempted to invade Japan twice in the 13th century. After the first attack in 1274, the Kamakura shogunate built the stone bulwark along a 20-kilometer stretch of the Hakata Bay coast. The Iki-no-Matsubara site is one of 11 sections that have been designated as national historic sites.

In 2000, the city government restored the 50-meter-long central section of the bulwark to its original height of 2.5 meters, and opened it to the public. Renovation work on the fence that surrounds the bulwark was completed in August, allowing visitors to examine the wall from as close as a meter away.

A transparent board set up near the bulwark superimposes images of Mongolian military ships and Japanese warriors onto the actual scenery, recreating a view of the centuries-ago attack.

"We want visitors to become familiar with this valuable historical site in Fukuoka," a city official said.

Following requests from visitors, the city government set up restrooms and a



paid parking lot in April, about 200 meters away. The parking area can accommodate one bus and seven standard-sized cars. The municipality initially expected about 450 vehicles a month to use the parking lot, but more than 800 vehicles a month have visited during peak times.

"The novel coronavirus pandemic has subsided, and tourism demand is returning," a city official said.



Courtesy of Kyushu University
The ruins of a bulwark to protect against a Mongol attack that were found on Kyushu University's Hakozaki Campus in October 2016

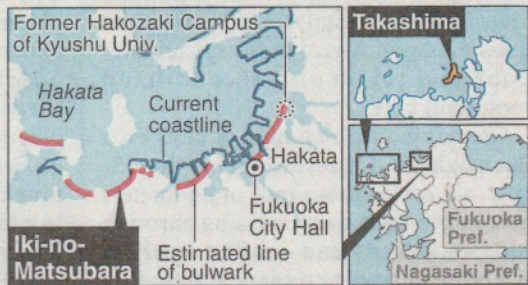


Yomiuri Shimbun photos
A model of a 13th-century Mongol ship at the Matsuura buried cultural property center in Nagasaki Prefecture on Aug. 31



A transparent sign depicts a Mongol invasion attempt in the 13th century.

Yomiuri Shimbun photos
The Iki-no-Matsubara
bulwark ruins after
fence renovation work
in Fukuoka



3rd ship possibly near other wrecks

By Ichiro Komatsu
Yomiuri Shimbun Staff Writer

NAGASAKI — A ship dispatched by the Mongol Empire to try to invade Japan in the 13th century might be located at the bottom of the sea near Takashima Island in Matsuura, Nagasaki Prefecture. It would be the third such wreck to be located after two ships that were discovered earlier.

It is said that about 4,400 Mongol ships were destroyed in a storm during the second attack on the Kyushu region in 1281. Two of them have been found so far — one about 27 meters long was found in 2011 at a depth of 20 to 25 meters, and another with an estimated



Preservation work is underway on an anchor from a Mongol ship.

length of 20 meters was discovered in 2015 at a depth of about 15 meters.

More than 4,000 items have been found in the area, including an anchor, a bronze seal engraved with lettering in the Mongol Empire's Phagspa script, and a spherical clay object believed to be an explosive

shell.

The third ship may have sunk near where the second one was found. A sonic survey gave an unusual response, and a survey using rods to probe the seafloor also yielded positive results. A local board of education will conduct an excavation survey in the future.

An anchor was salvaged in October last year, and efforts to preserve it are underway. Salvaging the hulls would be costly, and a facility to display them would also be required. For these reasons, the vessels remain on the seabed.

Because divers can safely spend only limited time underwater, recovering the vessels is essential for more detailed investigations to take place.