

Radiocarbon dating of archeological remains related with the 13th century Mongol Invasion to Japan

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The shallow sea floor off Takashima, Matsuura, Nagasaki Prefecture, has been investigated archeologically as a potential site where many Mongolian warships exist under the sea sediments. It is historically recorded that more than 4000 Mongolian warships were destroyed by a typhoon during the Mongol invasion to Japan in 1281. The underwater investigations have been performed since 1980, and a lot of archeological remains related with the invasion have been collected there. In 2006, we were allowed to get some archeological remains for 14C dating with AMS. The samples were fragments of palm-bark ropes, lacquer products, bamboo ropes and charred rice. 14C ages for the samples were all consistent with the age of Mongol invasion in 1281.

Recently a body of submerged wrecks most probably originated from Mongolian warship has been discovered in the 1m-deep horizon of the sea sediment off Takashima. During the survey of the new warship, shell samples were collected near the ship. Some shells were recognized to be hull-fouling species, which may have grown up on the bottom of Mongolian warship and preserved along with the broken ship in the sea sediment. We have conducted 14C dating for some shell samples and found out that shells belong to hull-fouling species showed 14C ages consistent with the time of Mongol Invasion. Some other shells not belonging to hull-fouling species showed younger or older dates as compared with the time of Mongol invasion.

Keywords: AMS 14C dating, historical remains, remains from submerged wrecks, Mongol invasion, shell of hull-fouling species