

Kiyomori Legend Memorial Mound

The Kiyomori Legend Memorial Mound was built in 1184 by local villagers who wanted to demonstrate their gratitude to Taira no Kiyomori (1118–1181), the head of the powerful Taira clan. Kiyomori was once believed to have led an excavation project to open the Ondo-no-seto Channel in 1165. This channel, which separates Kurahashi Island from the mainland, has served as a vital watercourse for many centuries. In spite of the legend, ancient records and more recent geological research indicate that the channel formed naturally and was not actually man-made.

According to the legend, Kiyomori created the Ondo-no-seto Channel in a single day. In order to give his men more time to complete the work, Kiyomori used a folding fan to stop the sun from setting. Kiyomori's legendary actions were not limited to this one feat. For example, it was customary in those days to pray for success in the construction of large-scale waterworks by offering a human sacrifice in the form of a "human pillar" (*hitobashira*), who would be buried alive at or near the construction site. According to legend, Kiyomori spurned this custom and instead made an offering in the form of a stone carved with a single character of a Buddhist sutra, which was buried instead. The Kiyomori Legend Memorial Mound also commemorates this display of humanitarianism.

The mound is a stone structure built on a reef just off the east coast of Kurahashi Island, where it looks out onto the Ondo-no-seto Channel. A memorial pagoda thought to contain a Buddhist sutra stands at the center of the monument. This pagoda was erected during the Muromachi period (1336–1573). The Japanese black pine standing next to it is the third generation of pines to watch over the monument; the original pine died naturally and was replaced in 1719, and when that tree died, it was replaced with the current tree, which was planted in 1991.

The Kiyomori Legend Memorial Mound was designated a Tangible Cultural Property by the prefectural government in 1951. The mound is located close to Ondo Bridge, which was completed in 1961 and connects the mainland with Kurahashi Island. The bright red bridge is built high enough to enable even 1,000-ton-class ships to pass through the Ondo-no-seto Channel.