

### **Shirongo Matsuri Festival**

The Shirongo Matsuri is an annual religious festival held in the summer. The highlight is a competition between the island's *ama* divers to be the first to find a matched pair of abalone, which are then delivered to a nearby shrine as an offering. The abalone are described as “male” and “female,” but they actually represent two different species with slightly different shapes. The star and lattice shapes decorating the *ama*'s gear are called *seiman* and *doman*, respectively. Embroidered with thread or inscribed with purple ink made from seashells, these traditional symbols protect the wearer from evil spirits and the unpredictable nature of the sea. The festival is held every July, though the exact dates vary by year. This is a rare chance for visitors to see and interact with *ama* as they prepare for the ritual.