

## Nakanoshima Island and the Town of Ama

The town of Ama occupies the second largest of Dōzen's islands, called Nakanoshima, or "middle island." The island has roughly 2,300 inhabitants, many of whom work in the agricultural and fishing industries. Ama's main products are sea salt, beef cattle, and huge rock oysters called *iwagaki*.

Dōzen was created when the summit of a volcanic island collapsed, forming a depression that filled with seawater, and the islands' volcanic nature is stunningly displayed along the Akiya Coast, Nakanoshima's northern shore. Rugged cliffs of red scoria—sedimentary deposits of hardened magma that have been colored by exposure to the air—tower over clear coves lined with weathered islets. To the southwest, the Dōzen Caldera Lookout gives visitors a view of the inner sea and the other islands of Dōzen, an impressive visual reminder that the islands make up the rim of a submerged stratovolcano.

Partly for its natural beauty and abundant resources, Nakanoshima has long served as a place of exile for emperors and other high-class nobility. During the Heian period (794–1185), members of the court who fell out of favor were often banished to remote islands where they had little political influence. The renowned poet Ono no Takamura (802–852) was exiled for over a year on Mt. Kinkō-ji, on the northern side of the island, and in 1221 Emperor Go-Toba (1180–1239) was forced into residence on Nakanoshima after his failed rebellion against the shogunate. Go-Toba spent the rest of his life on the island, and in 1939, Oki Shrine was built to commemorate the 700th year of his death.

Visitors may notice the common appearance of wooden rice scoops (*shamoji*) in Ama's decor and statuary. This motif is an allusion to the local Kinnyamonya Festival that is held each August. As part of the annual parade, residents perform the festival's signature dance while holding a *shamoji* in each hand.