

### *Niiran Kan Toi*: The Landing of the Gods

Taketomijima's vibrant island identity can be seen in its *matsuri* (festivals), songs, dances and crafts, but the people also recognize a reliance on outside forces, especially the divine. The upright stone here, known as *Niiran Kan Toi*, marks the legendary landing point of the gods who annually sail to Taketomi from far away *Nirai Kanai* (the Okinawan analogue of paradise). Bringing grain seeds, and the promise of a bountiful harvest, they moor their vessel to this stone. Their arrival is celebrated in a ritual known as the *Yuunkai*, which takes place every autumn on the eighth day of the eighth month by the lunar calendar. The ceremony is presided over by *kantsukasa* (women priests), and involves chanting, singing *toncha*, and the beating of drums and gongs.