



# Ama are female breath-hold divers who gather abalone, sea urchin and seaweed.

As they work in the sea, *ama* treasure the natural environment of the ocean; they have maintained a sustainable harvest of these resources for more than 3000 years.

“Let’s register *ama* culture as a UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage!”

## Funado and Kachido — Fishing Methods

*Funado* is one style of *ama* diving; one *ama* works together with one boatman, the *Tomae*. *Kachido* is another style in which *ama* work alone. They may swim from shore to the fishing site, or take a boat to the site as a group. Usually, *funado ama* dive deeper in the sea than *kachido ama*.



Funado Ama



Kachido Ama Riding Together



Kachido Ama from Shore



## Breath-Hold Diving, The 50-Second Battle — Ama Fishing Methods

*Ama* are breath-hold diver fisherwomen who gather abalone, turban snails, sea urchins, sea cucumbers and seaweed without SCUBA equipment. Diving depths are usually 3-4 meters; however, it depends on the *ama*. Some *ama* dive 20 meters down to the bottom of the sea. The dive time is 50 seconds at most.



## Isomegane (Goggles), Isonomi (Chisels) and Wetsuits — Ama Tools

After the era of naked diving, and an era of diving in a white outfit, *ama* started to wear wetsuits to protect themselves from the cold, around 1960. Because wetsuits make them buoyant, *ama* wear a weight belt of 5-6 kg around their waist.



Ama Before Early Meiji Period



Ama From End of Meiji Period to Early Showa Period



Modern Ama Wearing Wetsuits

Important tools for *ama* are goggles to see better in the water and help find prey, and chisels to pry abalone from rocks. There are many different types of chisels. A beach bucket was used to hold the catch, but now a ring float is more common. The ring float has a net attached and provides a support for a quick break between dives. Another important tool for *ama* is a lifeline that connects them to their ring float. Other tools include a beach towel and fins.



Abalone

## Rich Bounty of the Sea — Large Ama Prey Items

Four types of abalone make up the primary catch of *ama*: *Haliotis discus*, *H. gigantea*, *H. madaka* and *H. diversicolor*. *Ama* also harvest turban snails, sea cucumbers, sea urchins and rock oysters. In addition, *ama* gather brown seaweeds: *wakame*, *hijiki*, *arame*, *kayamonori* (*kenori*, *mugiwara*) and *iroro*, as well as red seaweeds: *tengusa* and *funori*.



Turban Snails



Wakame



Sea Cucumbers



Sea Urchins



Ama Gathering Hijiki



Ama Goya — Ama Hut

## Kamado (Fire Pit) — Known today as the Ama Goya (ama hut)

*Ama*'s biggest enemy is the cold. *Ama* still use a fire pit called “*Kamado*” or “*Hiba*” placed in the middle of the *ama* hut. Before and after diving, *ama* sit by the fire to warm their bodies down to the core. The *ama* hut is a very important place. They take naps, chat with *ama* friends and eat meals in the *ama* hut.

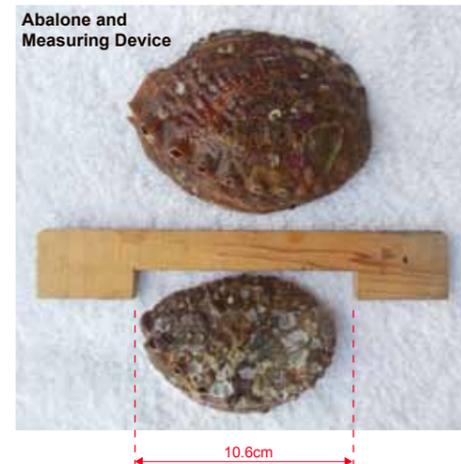
## Promise Not To Take It All — Many Fishery Restrictions

Abalone smaller than 10.6 cm cannot be taken, and *ama* strictly obey this rule. *Ama* do not take small *sazae* (turban snails), sea urchins or sea cucumbers.

Moreover, because seaweeds are a major food source for abalone and turban snails, *ama* restrict their harvest of seaweed to designated seasons, number of days and location.

Rules and regulations include:

- Size
- Season
- Number of days per season
- Hours per day
- Marine preserves (no-take zones)



Abalone and Measuring Device

10.6cm