**Eda Shrine: The Purification Myth**

The Japanese creation myth centers on the deities Izanagi and Izanami, brother and sister, whose union results in Izanami giving birth to the islands of the Japanese archipelago and to various deities that are to inhabit them. Izanami dies while giving birth to the god of fire, and her brother, unable to bear the grief, attempts to retrieve her from the underworld. But when Izanagi reaches his sister, Izanami tells him that she cannot return to the realm of the living because she has already eaten food prepared in the land of the dead. Izanagi flees, pursued by the deities of the underworld, and seals the passage between the two worlds using a giant boulder.

Desperate to wash off the contamination of the netherworld, Izanagi strips off his clothes and cleanses his body by immersing himself in water. This purification results in the birth of various deities, among them three of the most important gods in the Shinto pantheon: Amaterasu, the sun goddess; the moon deity Tsukuyomi, lord of the night; and Susanoo, god of the sea and storms.

In the *Kojiki*, the first written chronicle of Japan, the purification of Izanagi is described as taking place in the province of Hyuga (present-day Miyazaki Prefecture). When scholars in the eighth century first compiled the creation myths in Nara, the capital at the time, they likely chose Hyuga because it is located far away facing the southeast and was therefore considered the place closest to the rising sun and, by extension, to the realm of the gods. The purification is portrayed as taking place at a river mouth lined with lush plains where evergreen plants grow. This location symbolized eternal life rather than any specific place in the real world, but it was later tied to various locations in Hyuga. One such site was the area around Eda Shrine, which enshrines Izanagi and Izanami.