

## **The Myths of Japan: The Birth of the Islands**

Having been taught the ways of proper procreation, Izanagi and Izanami go on to have a great many children. First, Izanami gives birth to eight islands: Awaji, Shikoku, Oki, Kyushu, Iki, Tsushima, Sado, and Honshu, forming the Japanese archipelago. These eight islands were the lands ruled by the ancient Japanese. Among them, Honshu, Shikoku, and Kyushu make up three of the four main islands of modern Japan; Awaji is located in the Seto Inland Sea between Honshu and Shikoku; and Oki, Iki, Tsushima, and Sado are in the Sea of Japan. In mythology, Japan is often called “the land of eight islands.” This refers both to the isles first created by Izanagi and Izanami and to an island nation in general; in the latter sense, the number eight is simply a metaphor for “many.” Izanami later births several smaller islands, many of them in the Inland Sea, completing the archipelago.