

JAPANESE CREATION

Before there was heaven and earth, there was darkness. In the midst of this darkness was a swirling mass in the shape of an enormous egg, containing all things.

Slowly over the course of many years, the lighter and purer part drew itself away from the heavier and denser part. The heavy material settled to form the earth; this was IN (yin). The lighter part rose to form the Heavens; this was YO (yang).

IN and YO were opposites, but one could not exist without the other. IN is the feminine and YO is the masculine, and all things in the world have the properties of one of these two forces. From this separation, the first beings appeared. They were Izanagi "Male who Invites" and Izanami, "Female who Invites".

Izanagi and Izanami found themselves on the floating bridge of heaven and peered down into the darkness below. All they heard was the sound of rushing water.

"Is there no land beneath us?" they asked each other. Izanagi thrust a jeweled-tipped spear into the waters.

As he drew it up again, the drips formed the island Onogoro-jima, which means "Spontaneously Created Island". The two gods descended to this island to live. Izanagi and Izanami decided to become husband and wife and build the land together.

They agreed that each should walk in the opposite direction around the World Axle, and when they meet each other again, they would be married. So they set off to the south and north and walked for days and weeks and months. Finally they met each other in the middle.

Izanami was the first to speak; "What a lovely man I have met!" she exclaimed.

But this distressed Izanagi, who felt that it should have been him, the man, to speak first. He declared this unlucky and determined that they would do this again.

Thus Izanagi and Izanami turned around and walked in opposite directions for days and weeks and months, to meet again on the other side of the World Axle. When they met again, it was Izanagi who spoke first; "What a beautiful maiden I have met!"

Izanami explained that, as the IN force, there was a part of her body which was empty. Izanagi replied as the YO force, that there was a part of his body which was too much; therefore they completed each other and became one as husband and wife.

Their first child was the island of Ahaji. They produced six more islands and declared it the Great Eight Island Country (Japan).

Izanami gave birth to the sun goddess, who was so radiant that they sent her to rule in heaven and called her Ohohiro-me no muchi.

Their next child was to be her consort, the moon. He was called Tsukiyumi no Mikoto and was sent to accompany the sun and rule in heaven at her side.

Izanagi and Izanami produced many more children who became gods or elements.

They were very happy together for many years. Izanami's last child was the god of fire; she was burned to death during his birth and was whisked away to Yomi, the underworld.

In despair, Izanagi left all of their children and grew old and lonely on the far island of Tsukuji.

