

The Nature and Morphology of the Yellow Springs Land of Japan: Examples from the Kojiki and Niyonshuti

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Abstract. This paper examines the nature and form in which the term ‘Yellow Spring’ is expressed. The Chinese word ‘huangquan’ means ‘yellow spring’. Beginning with the introduction of the term ‘Yellow Spring’ from China to Japan, the paper explores the role of ‘Yellow Springs Land’ in Japanese mythology from the textual descriptions of ‘Izanagi and Izanami’, ‘Three Precious Children’ and ‘Ohokuninushi’ to explore the status of “Yellow Springs Land” in Japanese mythology and the degree to which serves as a place of death in Japanese mythology. In addition, these textual records are combined with the mapping position of the geographical location of mythological regions in later reality to analyse the physical form of the ‘Yellow Springs Land’ and its actual location, and use the results of the analyses to explain the extent and status of the ‘Land of the Yellow Springs’ as the world after death in Japanese mythology, and what kind of space the ‘Land of the Yellow Springs’ is.

Keywords: Japanese mythology, Yellow Spring Land, Nihon Shoki, Kojiki, Chinese.

1. Introduction

In Chinese, ‘Huangquan’ is mostly translated as the place where people go after death, that is, the netherworld. In ancient times, it was believed that the world was heaven and earth, and the springs were underground, with the Yellow River basin as the centre, and the springs underneath combined with the yellow earth to become the Yellow Springs, so the Yellow Springs area was regarded as the underground world in which people resided after their deaths. Under the influence of the inherent impression, the country of the Yellow Springs in Japanese mythology is now commonly referred to as an underworld (similar to hell or the underworld in other cultures), but the truth may be more than that.

There is no record in the entire Kojiki, including the Nihonshoki, of any human or God (other than Izanami) going to the Yellow Springs after death. Therefore, in Japanese mythology, ‘the land of the Yellow Springs’ does not represent the place where people go after death. In addition, there is no geographical or spatial description of the ‘kingdom of the Yellow Springs’ in the two books, so it can be inferred that the ‘kingdom of the Yellow Springs’ is not like the underworld, which is used to manage and house the dead in the mythological systems of other countries. In addition, it is mentioned in the Kojiki (Records of Ancient Matters) that the location of Yomotsu Hirasaka, where Izanagi and Izanami had a complete break-up in mythology, is the present-day Ifuyasaka in Izumo [1], which is a proof to a certain extent that Yellow Springs Kingdom is more like a country.

All in all, most of the research on the “Yellow Spring Kingdom” so far has focused on the study of the “Yellow Spring Kingdom” in the field of mythology, comparing it with the concept of the underworld in other cultures. By comparing it with the underworld of Greece, Northern Europe, India and other cultures, scholars have tried to reveal the uniqueness and commonality of Huangquan Kingdom in the global mythological system [2]. These studies helped clarify the archetypal structure of the Huangquan Kingdom and its position in Shinto in Japan. Or through archaeological evidence, such as ancient tombs, sacrificial sites, etc., to study the historical background of the concept of Huangquan Kingdom. This type of study explores the relationship between the Huangquan Kingdom and ancient Japan funeral customs, burial forms, and posthumous beliefs. For example, some archaeological finds, such as megalithic tombs and catacombs, are thought to be related to the concept of the Huangquan Kingdom. Based on the analysis of primary documents, secondary literature, cross-cultural comparison and multicultural comparative research, this paper attempts to explain the extent

to which the 'Yellow Springs Land' is 'the world of the dead of Japan mythology' from the historical background, morphological structure of the formation and development of 'Yellow Springs Land', as well as its reproduction and evolution in modern Japan culture. What kind of space is 'Yellow Springs Land'; How it reflects the attitudes of modern Japan society towards death and the afterlife.

In addition, there is almost no special research on the 'Yellow Springs Land', so this paper can provide some thoughts for the academic research related to the cultural intermingling of ancient Japan, and provide a reference for the future research on the culture of the 'Yellow Springs Land'.

2. Descriptions of the 'Yellow Springs Land' in Various Periods of Time

2.1. The Period of Izanagi and Izanami

It is described in the Records of Ancient Matters that Izanami was burned to death by the flames after giving birth to the god of fire, after which Izanagi, the male god, buried the goddess Izanami in Mount Hiba-yama, between the Izumo and Hōki kingdoms. Izanagi wanted to see Izanami, so he went to the country of the Yellow Springs. The two of them conversed through the door of a locked room, and the goddess said that she had eaten food from the country of the Yellow Springs, and that although she could go back to her original country, she needed to consult with the god of the Yellow Springs, but she would not allow the male god to look at her in the meantime, and he could not help but peep, and he found the 'Eight Thunder Gods' wrapped around Izanami, which Izanagi was afraid of and ran away from. He using grapes and bamboo shoots to delay the goddess's 'Yomotsu-shikome' [3]. He used his 'Ten Fist Sword' to ward off and escape the 'Eight Thunder Gods' and 1, 500 troops sent by the goddess, and sealed the entrance to the Yellow Springs Kingdom with a huge stone at Yomotsu Hirasaka. The two men swore an oath across the stone that Izanami would kill 1,000 people a day in Ashihara no Nakatsukuni, and Izanagi would create 1,500 people a day [1], and this is where the early Japanese concept of life and death was established.

In the first volume of the Nihonshoki (Kamiyo Kami), there are several versions of the death of the goddess and its aftermath, the most detailed of which, when all is sorted out, is mostly the same as that in the Kojiki (Chronicles of Ancient History): Izanami-no-Mikoto (the goddess) gave birth to the God of fire, and then 'The goddess was burnt to a crisp by the fire and dispersed.' Izanagi-no-Mikoto (male god) to pursue the goddess to the Yellow Springs, the goddess told the male god that he came late, she has eaten the Yellow Springs (zao), prepared to go to sleep, and advise the male god return to original kingdom, the male god lit a fire and peeped a 'thick stream of boiling insects' on Ranzun's body. After the male god was horrified that he came to the 'country of filth', hurry to escape, the goddess felt insulted, sent the country of the Yellow Springs of the eight demon-hags to chase after the male god, the male god in the escape threw the hair ring, comb were turned into grapes and bamboo shoots, the country of the Yellow Springs of the eight demon-hags saw this delicious first time to stop and eat, slowing down the pursuit, Izanagi-no-Mikoto fled to the 'Senzu Hirasaka' with a boulder to block the access road, and then the two swore an oath, the goddess said that she wanted to kill 1,000 nationals of the god of the man, the god of the man said that he would be produced every day 1,500 people [4]. Since then, the concepts of life and death have been established, and Izanami-no-Mikoto has been called the 'Yomotsu-ōkami'.

Other versions of the description of the death of Izanami-no-Mikoto in the Nihonshoki are organised in Figure 1 [5].

Six shorter versions of Izanami-no-Mikoto's death in the Nihonshoki.

1. Izanami-no-Mikoto born fire God, the result 'scorched and end'.
2. Izanami-no-Mikoto 'gave birth to the spirit of fire, was scorched by the child and the god retreated, also called God avoidance'.
3. When the goddess gave birth to the god of fire, she was 'burning hot and annoyed', but the goddess did not die.
4. The goddess died after giving birth to the god of fire and was buried in the village of Arima in Kumono, Kii Province, and there were rituals to honour the soul of the god in the area: flowers were offered, drums were beaten and music was played, and flags were waved and songs were sung and danced.
5. Izanagi-no-Mikoto want to see Izanami-no-Mikoto went to the 'funeral place', Izanagi-no-Mikoto 'as if they were born', the two sides can talk normally, suddenly Izanami-no-Mikoto let Izanagi-no-Mikoto do not look at their own, the Surroundings turned dark. But Izanagi-no-Mikoto point fire to see, found Izanami-no-Mikoto 'up full too high', the body attached to the 'eight-coloured Thunder God', the male god is afraid and escape, thunder and lightning on the chase male god, the male god picked the roadside peaches thrown out to the thunder, it will be dispersed.
6. The male god chased the goddess to her 'place', the goddess did not allow the male god to look at herself, but the male god still watch her, and the two of them 'fought each other in Yomotsu Hirasaka', after which the two gods told Izanagi-no-Mikoto that 'Izanami-no-Mikoto 'said she have created the Japanese islands with the male god, no longer seek life, should stay in 'this country '. After the male god left, because he went to 'Yomotsukuni', so he cleaned his body, and in the interim, some less important deities (excluding the gods of the sun and the moon) came into being.

Figure 1. Six shorter versions of the description of Izanami-no-Mikoto death in the Nihon Shoki

2.2. The Period of Susanoo-no-Mikoto and Amaterasu Omikami

In the Kojiki, the male god alone gave birth to the male god Sushusan-no-Mikoto, who was in charge of the ocean and who often wept, causing droughts, and when the male god asked him why he was crying, he told him that he wanted to go to 'Haha-no-kuni, Ne-no-kata-su-kuni'. The 'Haha-no-kuni' means 'Land of my late mother', and 'late mother's country' is the country where her mother was died, which is the 'country of the Yellow Springs'. The 'Ne-no-kata-su-kuni' is largely the same as 'Ne-no-kuni', which appears in the Nihonshoki (Chronicles of Japan). In the Nihonshoki, Ne-no-kuni can be understood as a very distant country, and there is no mention of the country of Haha-no-kuni. In the Kojiki, 'Ne-no-kata-su-kuni' is closely associated with Haha-no-kuni, and in the subsequent dialogue between Sushusan-no-Mikoto and Izanagi, the only words that appear are 'I want to go to Haha-no-kuni' [6].

2.3. The Ohokuninushi Period

In the Kojiki (Records of Ancient Matters) of this period, the Ohokuninushi falls in love with Princess Suseri-Hime, the daughter of Susanoo, who lives in Ne-no-kata-su-kuni, and the two of them elope, and Susanoo chases the two of them to Yomotsu Hirasaka [7]. In this text, Yomotsu Hirasaka is located in the vicinity of Ne-no-kata-su-kuni. In this story, the connection with death and defilement is completely lost in Yomotsu Hirasaka.

3. The Nature of the Land of the Yellow Springs and Its Morphology

3.1. To What Extent is the 'Land of the Yellow Springs' the 'World of the Dead in Japanese Mythology'?

Based on the description of the Yellow Springs Land in the period of Izanagi and Izanami, it can be concluded, in conjunction with the entire text, that almost all the gods or people in Japanese mythology have nothing to do with the Yellow Springs Kingdom after their death. In fact, the only one explicitly mentioned in the Chronicle is Izanami-no-Mikoto (Izanami) who went to the Yellow Springs Kingdom after her death. In addition, the 'Land of the Yellow Springs' is described in the

Nihonshoki as a world where there are virtually no dead people, but only living creatures that already exist there, such as the Yellow Springs Army and the Yomotsu-shikome. In both the Kojiki and the Nihonshoki, it is also only described that Izanami is to kill 1,000 people a day, and there is no mention of them being housed or brought to the Yellow Springs Land.

According to the descriptions of the Yellow Springs Land in the Period of Susano-no-Mikoto and Amaterasu Omikami, it can be concluded that the Kojiki was compiled without describing the attribute of the world after death only as 'the country of the Yellow Springs,' or adding the attribute of the 'first place in the world after death' to the country of the Yellow Springs. In addition, in the Nihon shoki Kami no Yo no Shimo no maki scrolls, Izanagi-no-Mikoto is described as being secluded in the 'Yumiya' on Awaji Island, and it is also said that he went up to heaven and entered the 'Hinomiya'. This could be interpreted as a sign that he was unwilling to go to the land of the Yellow Springs because of his conflict with the goddess, this paper argues it is clear from this description that the land of the Yellow Springs is not the only place to go after death. In addition, the Kojiki and the Nihonshoki (collectively called the Kiki) record that even the god of fire, who caused the death of the goddess, did not go to the Yellow Springs after he was cut down by Izanagi [1,2]. Thus, the descriptions of the 'Yellow Springs Kingdom' in the two books of the Chronicle further confirm that the concept of the 'Yellow Springs Kingdom' is not like the 'underworld' in other mythological systems, where is not just a world to manages and houses the dead.

According to the story, Ohokuninush falls in love with the daughter of Susano, who lives in Ne-no-kata-su-kuni, and after they eloped, Susano-no-Mikoto chased them to 'Yomotsu Hirasaka', where they returned to Izumo. In this story, 'Yomotsu Hirasaka,' has lost all connection with death and defilement. In the description of the kiki, Izanagi needs to cleanse his body of impurities after returning from the 'Land of the Yellow Springs,' but the Ohokuninush and the family of Susano do not. This text proves that the 'Yomotsu Hirasaka' and the 'Yellow Springs Kingdom' are not bound together, 'Yomotsu Hirasaka' more like a passageway connecting the entrances to the Yellow Springs Kingdom.

The original concept of life and death in Japanese Shintoism (before the 'Shinbutsu-shūgō') was that death was a state of defilement, and that the soul after death was considered to be unclean, and that the relatives of the deceased were required to undergo a purification ritual called 'Harae'. In addition, there was no complete and fixed burial ceremony for ordinary people [8]. In addition, in early Shintoism, the spirits of the dead continued to exist and could become guardian spirits. Therefore, the function of the tomb was more to commemorate the existence of the dead than enclose the soul's place of return.

In view of the above, this paper argues that, from the point of view of each of the compilers of the kiki, the 'Land of the Yellow Springs' is not the only 'mythical underworld' in Japan. Strictly speaking, the 'Yellow Springs Land' is a narrow view of the afterlife on the islands at the time of the founding of the kiki, or a view of the afterlife that belongs to Izanami alone, and does not represent the mythical world of the afterlife. Moreover, the simplicity of the text's description of the 'Land of the Yellow Springs' and the short length of the text show that Japan's portrayal of the world of the afterlife was lacking at that time. Therefore, in combination with the Japanese 'Shintoist' viewpoint, it can be further surmised that Japan did not have a complete construction and knowledge of the world of burial and death at that time.

3.2. What Kind of Space is 'Yellow Springs Land'?

Since the word 'Yellow Springs' in Chinese has the meaning of underground, combined with the description of the goddess as being dead, dark and dirty, it is easy to think of 'Yellow Springs Land' as the underground world. The descriptions in the kiki do not reflect the underground meaning either. In the version of the country of the Yellow Springs mentioned in the Nihonshoki, the goddess wants to go to bed and the male god lights a fire to see what is going on. This episode only shows that the surroundings were gloomy, possibly at night or in a palace-like building, and does not prove that this was the underground world. According to the description of the Yellow Springs Kingdom during the

time of Izanagi and Izanami in the Chronicle of Ancient Events, Izanami was buried in Mount Hibayama between Izumo and Houki, which are the names of the places in reality history(Figure 2) [9]. The last place where the male god left, ‘Yomotsu Hirasaka,’ has been referred to as ‘Ifuyasaka’ in present-day Izumo. Therefore, this study speculates that the Yellow Springs Country is located somewhere in Izumo country.



Figure 2. Map of Japan during the Sengoku period (the blue-circled areas are Izumo and Houki) [10].

After Susanoo killing the Yamata no Orochi in Izumo, he built his own palace in Suga in Izumo, where he and his daughter lived. Later on, the Ohokuninushi was pursued by his brothers and fled to the ‘Ne-no-kata-su-kuni’ mentioned earlier, where he met Susanoo and his daughter. The above description in the Kojiki suggests that the ‘Suga’ of Izumo is most likely the ‘Ne-no-kata-su-kuni’.

There is no more detailed description of the country of Yellow Springs during the period of the Ohokuninushi, but only a description of Yomotsu Hirasaka, which, together with the reference in the introduction to the Record of Ancient Matters, describes the location of Yomotsu Hirasaka, where the mythological breakup between Izanagi and Izanami took place, as being the present-day Ifuyosaka in Izumo, and which is located in the vicinity of the ‘country of the Ne-no-kata-su-kuni’. In addition, the Ohokuninushi was born in Izumo and later became the king of Izumo. From the above, I deduce that Yomotsu Hirasaka is probably not just a passageway connecting ‘Yellow Springs Land’, but is located in Izumo Kingdom, or at least a road connecting Izumo Kingdom and ‘Yellow Springs Land’. Susanoo lived with his daughter in ‘Suga,’ or ‘Ne-no-kata-su-kuni’, in Izumo [7], and neither the two books nor other Japanese historical sources record any actual meeting between Susanoo and his mother (Izanami), so this paper’s inference that the ‘Ne-no-kata-su-kuni’ can be ruled out is ‘Yellow Springs Land’, and that Yomotsu Hirasaka is close to ‘Ne-no-kata-su-kuni’, so it may be a road at the junction of the three kingdoms in its essence. When the Ohokuninushi escaped to ‘Yomotsu Hirasaka’

with Susanoo's daughter, Susanoo chased him to 'Yomotsu Hirasaka' and called out from afar, and the word 'afar' is mostly used to describe horizontal space rather than vertical relationship of the underground world.

In the Manyoshu, there are many descriptions of a person's place of return after death as a 'mountain' [11]. Izanami was buried on Mount Hiba-yama in the Kojiki, and the word 'Hirasaka' originally meant 'hill, slope,' so 'Yomotsu Hirasaka' may refer to the slopes of Mount Hiba-yama, and the 'Yellow Springs Land' may also be located on Mount Hiba-yama.

Therefore, this paper argues that the 'Yellow Springs Land' is not a form of the underground world, but a form of a country that is on the same plane as country ruled by Izanagi and has a certain spatial range, both based on the current mythological implementation of the location on the ground and in the myth.

4. Limitations of the Kojiki and Nihonshoki

It should be mentioned here that the preface of the Kojiki states that the reason for its creation was to 'eliminate falsehoods and establish tangible', and thus the Kojiki was written [12]. Obviously, the Nihonshoki, which was written eight years later than the Kojiki, overturned the Kojiki's 'tangible'.

The above-mentioned burial in 'Arima Village', simple death, and 'place of burial' are all non-Yellow Springs Land versions of history, which shows that the Nihonshoki, the first official history of Japan compiled by the Japanese imperial court, exceeds the idea of 'compiling the only official history' in its attitude to collections the differences in the versions of the stories and the multiple sources. By insisting on keeping different versions in one book, it conveys that the court at the time regarded these sources and versions as 'canonical myths' as well. Combined with the fact that the compilation of this book was ordered by Emperor Tenmu, who had gained power through the Jinshin War, to declare his imperial lineage to the outside world, the compiler of the Nihonshoki, or the process of compiling it, was to a certain extent under the influence of the Imperial Household, and it is necessary to interpret it from a critical point of view.

The Kojiki is similar, because the original purpose of eliminate falsehoods and establish tangible was the same: to unify the ancient legends, myths, and histories, and thus the emperor's claim to be the descendant of the gods, which would be conducive to the stability of the Emperor's power. Therefore, it cannot be argued that the Kojiki is the standard version of Japanese mythology.

Since there are political influences in both books, their interpretation must be more multifaceted. This paper analyses and compares in detail the descriptions of the 'Yellow Springs Land' in the three periods of the Kiki and the loopholes and doubts arising from each of the three periods of the Kiki, as well as elaborating on the viewpoints on the nature and morphology of the 'Yellow Springs Land'. For reasons of space, this paper cannot analyse in detail more documents, such as the 'Fudoki' and the 'Manyoshu', which predate the 'Kojiki'.

It is hoped that this paper will be useful to scholars who are interested in other aspects of the study of 'Yellow Springs', and that it will provide a direction for in-depth research.

5. Conclusion

To summarise, from the analysis of the records of the two books of Kojiki and Nihonshoki, the 'Yellow Springs Land' should be a kind of 'after-death view' in a narrower sense in the 7th and 8th centuries in the Japanese islands, and not the 'world of the dead' or the 'underworld' in Japanese mythology. Moreover, the 'Yellow Springs Land' was not a dark and dirty underground world, but it was a country which has certain spatial range on the same plane as Izumo and other real countries, this space is inhabited by beings that were originally bred in the Yellow Springs Land.

From the descriptions of the 'Yellow Springs Land' in the two books of the Kiki, it can be concluded that the concepts of life and death in Japan in the 7th and 8th centuries were simpler than those of other cultures. In addition, the aversion to death in Japanese culture at that time and the lack

of Shintoism in shaping the world after death influenced Kiki's further descriptions of the 'Land of the Yellow Springs'.

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