Ancestor Worship in the Ihai-wake Custom;
The Distribution of Ihai (Memorial Tablet) of Deceased Parents
——Ihai (Memorial Tablet) Worship in Jishabara,
Nakanojō Town, Gumma Prefecture——

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In the Chūbu and Northern Kantō Districts, as well as in Izu Toshima, there is a custom concerning “ihai (memorial tablet)” worship; that is, when a parent dies, tablets are made for the number of children, and distributed to each of them. The characteristics of this custom called “Ihai-wake” (distribution of tablets) can be summarized in the following four points: ① More than one tablet is made for one deceased person. ② Children of the deceased perform memorial rites in honor of the deceased in equal degree. ③ In the families of children, tablets of the parents of both the husband and the wife are worshipped equally. ④ With the passing of generations, tablets of the deceased of the paternal line are worshipped together with the tablets of the maternal line distributed in each generation. If we compare this custom with the form of tablet worship predominant in Japan, a remarkable point is that tablets which exceed the boundaries of the “Ie” (family), such as the parents of the wife or the mother, become the objects of worship. What position do the tablets thus brought in from other families occupy in the tablet worship of the region as a whole? What concept toward the dead and ancestors exists in the background to this custom?

Analysis of examples of tablet worship in the Jishabara area in northern Gumma prefecture can be interpreted as follows: In the Jishabara area, distributed tablets from other families are called “Kyaku-Botoke (guest souls)” and are conceptually distinguished from the “Ie-no-Hotoke (family souls)” meaning the dead of the family through the generations. However, no distinction is made between them in daily services. Worship of parents, whether of husband or wife, is considered to be a natural duty for children. After the children die, the memorial services for these “Kyaku-Botoke” are carried on in the same manner as the “Ie-no-Hotoke”, until individual memories of the dead fade out. Then the distinction of “Ie-no-Hotoke” and “Kyaku Botoke” itself loses its sense, and both finally fuse into a vague ancestry. In Jishabara, there is no procedure for the intentional removal of distributed tablets (of wife’s line). This means simultaneously a lack of consciousness in positioning the dead of the family as the “ancestors”. Consequently, in Jishabara, the tablet worship of the recent dead, whom the present family members knew directly, is the basis of tablet worship. Here, the “ancestors” can be understood to mean all of the dead parents of each actual family member (the householder and his wife, their heir and his wife, and the parents and the grandparents of the householder), that is, a confused conglomeration of the worship of the dead based on individuals.
Ghosts and the Gods of the Earth in Taiwan Chinese Society

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This paper is a hypothesis on the relationship between the ghosts and the supernaturals of the earth in Taiwan Chinese society.

In Chinese society the spirits of ancestors and ghosts are clearly distinguished. Ghost-"Gui"("kui") are considered to be spirits of those who died without descendants, or, those who died leaving a bitter grudge in this world. They are seen as being in an unhappy state in the otherworld. So such ghosts haunt this world spread disaster. However, the ghost has a changeable character, he can change into either an ancestor or a god. In preceding studies a ghost is regarded as an outsider of the spiritual world, those who has no systematic structure. But in this paper it is clear that the ghost is never wander in a chaotic world.

Gods who control ghosts apper in communications between men and ghosts. These gods are not only concerned with the otherworld and this world (yin-yang worlds) but also with the earth world. Some ghosts have risen to become such gods, but the gods still have ghost's characters.

In the completion ritual called "Xiedu"("Siatho"), or thanks to the earth, the man who builds the construction has to clear off the evil from the site, and purchases the site from the site-owner spirit "Dijizhu"("Tekico"), or foundation spirit. The Dijizhu is considered to be the former site-owner, whose spirit remained on the site after his death. In other words, Dijizhu is originally a ghost, and the ghost becomes the owner of the site in yin world. Dijizhu is an ambivalent category of spirit, he has two kinds characters of god and ghost.

A site becomes fit for human habitation only after it shifted from yin world to yang world. The earth has the function which links yin and yang worlds. Men and ghosts are intermediated by the supernaturals of the earth. Through the earth on which they live men can understand that this world cannot cut away from the other world. In Chinese society yin world is recognized having same systems of this world. By connecting yin world and the earth, and by giving a certain structural order to the ghosts who have a drifting character, man can feel and interprete the supernatural world in his everyday life.