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 supernatural of the earth in Taiwan Chinese society.

In Chinese society the spirits of ancestors and ghosts are clearly distinguished. Ghost-Jui (“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, one who has no systematic structure. But in this paper it is clear that the ghost is ever wander in a chaotic world.

Gods who control ghosts appear 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 te 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 of 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 interrelated 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 shifting character, man can feel and interpretate the supernatural world in his everyday life.