
ORIENTAL PANTHEON

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“TAI-PING GUANG JI”: MOTIVES RELATED TO THE DEAD SOULS

A well-known anthology of the early Chinese prose “Tai-ping guang ji” (“太平廣記”, “Extended Records of Tai-ping Years”, hereinafter referred to as TPGJ) was completed in 978. This compilation was drawn up under the order of the Song emperor Tai-zong (ruled from 967 to 998) by a board of scientists directed by a famous minister and erudite Li Fang (李防, 924—996). The introduction to TPGJ tells that during its compilation the board used 344 prose collections (recent research shows that there were about five hundred collections) that date back to the Han era till the beginning of the Song era (from 206 BC to 977 AD). Material in TPGJ is organized in 52 thematic sections, whose titles include key concepts (categories) of the traditional Chinese culture. All these circumstances as well as the fact that many of those collections that Li Fang's board used in the given anthology have been lost, make TPGJ a unique writing artefact from different perspectives. We are interested in TPGJ above all as a source of invaluable information on traditional Chinese beliefs about the spirits of the dead (“鬼”, *gui*).

Speaking about traditional culture or traditional world image in the course of studying the written sources, we don't consider the universe integral and consistent. It reflects the views of people from different social classes from intelligent scribes to ignorant “silent majority”. On the one hand these views are similar in respect to those common things that a member of a certain culture takes in with mother's milk. On the other hand they have significant differences caused by such factors as education, religious denomination, etc. Usually the views of educated minority are analyzed, mostly because they are reflected in theoretical tracts, official papers and writings, i. e. in the so-called “classic literature”, while the layer of ordinary cultural is often disregarded. This is also true for the Chinese

culture. We have a much better idea about the worldview of specific philosophers and the religious-philosophical systems *per se*, than about the “silent majority” worldview. Nevertheless, the ordinary world image (or some of its significant elements) can be restored on the basis of Chinese written sources and above all on the basis of the prose materials of *xiaoshuo* “小說” that constitutes the main part of TPGJ. Traditional *xiaoshuo* prose doesn't refer to classic literature, however it was created not by ordinary people but by educated scribes. It was in the prose *xiaoshuo* (that of course isn't literature in the modern sense of the word) that personal and mental peculiarities of the authors became blurred and less evident, while the subject matter was ordinary, common, and equally familiar to the top and to the bottom. The authors of *xiaoshuo* regarded these texts from the cultural viewpoint, compiling crumbs of information, history, and tales into a comprehensive whole. They knew the same things as ordinary people and even more, that is why their cultural intention was able to arrange heterogeneous material and develop a common universe for different authors. *Xiaoshuo* shows folk beliefs and traditional views not in a natural and spontaneous form of their existence, but in a manner arranged by the culture representatives themselves. This is the case with TPGJ, since the task of the compilers was to make a most representative compendium choosing the most characteristic, striking, and typical features. The collection compiled in the 10th century claims to explain the essence of notions or categories included into the titles of 52 sections as they were represented in classic “low” prose and, consequently, in the common consciousness of that time to a certain extent. Without exaggerating, TPGJ can be called a mirror of traditional spiritual Chinese culture of the 10th century.

The most typical plots related to the return of the dead spirits to the living are presented below in the way they are given in TPGJ. First of all we learn that the dead spirits can return to the world of living and come in contact with the latter in reality and in a dream.

The spirit of dead husband comes to his wife in a dream moved by different reasons. For example, it can be worried about the way of burying its body. Similar case is described in the story “A fighter from Xiangyang” (TPGJ, 322.3) [1]. In the time of Jin, in the beginning of Tai-yuan years (376—396), one soldier died in the army of commander Yang An disposed in Xiangyang and his countryman carried his body to the motherland. One day before the arrival the departed had come to his widow in a dream and said that by mistake the soldier was carrying the body of another man home; and his body could be recognized by a knot in the hair that his wife had tied before he left and he kept it untouched in memory of her. His wife woke up, and everything happened as *gui* said — his body was taken to another house and his wife got the body of another man (see *plate 2*, a wife who prays for her dead husband's soul).

There are cases when a woman dreams about her husband who is still living or somebody else who pretends to be her husband.

Such case is described in the story “Fei Ji” (TPGJ, 316.10). A merchant by the name of Fei Ji and his companions stopped for the night near Lushan mountain and started to talk about how long they had been away from home. Ji said that he hadn't seen his wife for several years by that time and that he took her golden pin when leaving, but forgot it at the window-sill. On the same night he came to his wife in a dream and said that he had been killed by robbers two years before. To prove his words he added that he would leave her pin on the window-sill. His wife woke up and indeed saw her pin on the window-sill! She believed in her husband's death and put on mourning. In one year Ji came home safe and sound. The story does not tell who pretended to be Ji. For example, one of Ji's companions, whom he spent the night near mountain Lushan with, could be a dead spirit that later came to his wife in a dream.

In its turn **the soul of the dead wife can come to her husband in a dream**, being unable to leave him. There are many stories of the kind but I will mention here only one of them called “Liu Zhao”. This story tells about a wife that comes to her husband in a dream and gives him a chain (TPGJ, 316.7). A wife can come to a husband being angry with one of his deeds. Having buried his wife Lü Lun married her younger sister. One day his departed wife came to Shun in a dream and lied down by his side. She was cold as ice. She began to yell at him and blame for marrying her sister. By the way after that conversation Shun was found dead (TPGJ, 322.4).

The dead soul comes in a dream to other people, who used to be his or her friends, in order to help. Such stories often have Buddhist character. In the story “Yuan Bing” the departed Bing comes to his friend in

a dream and gives him advice how to behave himself not to be punished for the deeds after death. He advises to be mindful of Buddhist commandments, since he knew that they work from experience. “The things I had seen before did not agree with everything written in the canons and I assumed that the sages dramatized the situation intentionally. But now I see that there is nothing unusual in this verification of good and evil. That is why it is strictly forbidden to kill living beings”, said Yuan Bing to his friend (TPGJ, 326.1).

The dead soul coming to a friend in a dream can be a messenger from the other world that comes to take the friend when the lifetime of the latter is over. Dong Guan, who was skilled in the art of fortune-telling with the help of *yin* and *yang* signs, kept company with a Buddhist monk Ling-xi and then Ling-xi died. Once he came to Dong Guan in his dream. “He was frightened and said with hostility: ‘The soul of my councillor, why have you come here?’ — ‘The time of your life is over, said Ling-xi with a smile, and here I am to take you’. He pulled Guan by his sleeve. Guan stood up, looked back and saw his body lying on the coach as if in deep sleep. ‘Oh, oh! My home is so far from here and my parents are still alive! — lamented Guan. — If I die here now, who will bury my father and mother?!’ ‘Why get upset about delusions? — objected Ling-xi. — What depends on a man? Just an ability to move his hands and legs, to see and hear. That's it!’” And Ling-xi took Guan to the other world (TPGJ, 346.12).

The dead soul can turn to his friend with a request while the latter is sleeping. For example, the spirit can ask to help his relatives in taking the body to his native place, as his family doesn't have money for that, etc. (TPGJ, 332.6)

However more often the dead spirits come to their relatives and friends while they are awake and such contact lasts longer than that in a dream. The story “Xiahou Xuan” (TPGJ, 317.10) tells about a spirit head of the family who comes back home after execution. Sima Jing-wang put Xiahou Xuan to death and the relatives of the executed built a shrine according to the custom and began to make sacrifices to the deceased. Xuan immediately emerged, took off his head and started to ram sacrificial food down the throat. Then he put his head back on and said that he would make a complaint on his executor Sima to another world's authorities and Sima would be punished. Soon Sima Jing-wang deceased without leaving any heirs. A similar case is described in the story “Jia Yong” (TPGJ, 321.13). Killed by robbers Jia Yong is riding back home without the head on his shoulders and the voice comes out of his stomach. The executed Dong Shou-zhi comes home to his wife on the night after execution. Sighing bitterly and not answering his wife's questions (she didn't know of his death at that moment) Dong walked around the basket with chickens and disappeared behind the gate. His wife went out with a lamp and found a lot of blood in the basket. In the morning she learned about her husband's death (TPGJ, 327.9).

The spirit of the deceased husband comes to his wife in order to renew their married life. Yu Song drowned in Yangzijiang and some time later he came back home and resumed his former married life as if he hadn't died. Being afraid of him his wife asked their maid to sleep in the same room. This made her husband very angry. Once they began to talk about money and it turned out that there weren't enough means even to buy food for their son. Her husband said: "Unfortunately, I died too early and made you starve", and he gave two packs of coins to his wife so that she could buy food. One year later his wife died too (TPGJ, 329.5).

The spirit of the dead husband can come home disquieted by the wife's behaviour after his death. One man from Pucheng died when travelling. He kept a *jin* (about half a kilogram) of gold at home and his wife hid it from other members of the family for her own purposes. One year later the deceased came home crying and told his mother about that piece of gold. Then he took a knife and turned to his wife: "Why didn't you give my gold to my mother and hid it?" He wanted to kill the woman, but his mother broke in: "You want to kill her, but you are dead. People will say that I am the killer" (TPGJ, 355.5). One more case is described in another story. A person called Sima I got mortally ill. He called his wife and told her: "When I die, you must not marry for the second time or I'll kill you!" The woman promised not to do that, but when Sima died, she accepted the proposal of her neighbour. At that very moment Sima I came in through the gate riding a horse and shot an arrow from a bow into his wife, which nearly killed her. When the woman recovered from the wound, she wasn't beautiful any more (TPGJ, 321.7). The same thing can happen to the husband too. A person called Yuan swore an oath to his dying wife not to marry for the second time and married immediately after her death. The deceased wife came and wounded him with a knife: "You swore allegiance, why didn't you keep your word?!" (TPGJ, 322.12).

The dead soul might wish to put his business in order. The deceased Li Zai came to life one day after his death. His family gathered around him, began to feed him, ask questions and shake in every possible way. Li explained that he had already died, but returned because he met his first wife Mrs. Cui in the other world. Having learned that Li married for the second time she became furious and Li came back fearing that she could do harm to his second wife. He made the division of property, sent his wife to her parents' house and then died again (TPGJ, 338.7).

The dead soul can be motivated by care for the children. When a deceased father comes back home he normally gives instructions to his children. A certain Hua Yi came home seven years after his death. He came invisible showing only his voice, but after many requests he showed himself to his family and began admonishing his two sons. He said that his life was so short because he committed several misdeeds while living (TPGJ, 322.16).

The dead soul can possess a living person and speak through his mouth. Very often it happens to the

relatives of the deceased. There are several stories when the spirit of a dead father possesses his son for some time and talks with his help. An official Gongsun Da died. All his relatives and officials from the department headed by Gongsun took part in the funeral ceremony. All of a sudden Da's son began to talk with his father's voice. The dead spirit ordered everyone to stop crying and began to admonish them ("and he said more than one thousand words"), then he asked for a brush and paper, covered the whole sheet with writing, dropped it down to the ground and only after that went away (TPGJ, 316.2). Another case is described in the story "Guo Fang": "His little son suddenly took to bed as if struck with disease. He didn't recognize people around him and a spirit began to talk through his mouth. That was his father's voice" (TPGJ, 320.1). Entering another body a spirit can talk with his own voice that is different from the voice of the possessed person (see *plate 1*, praying for the dead ancestors at a house altar).

Often the dead soul of a father comes back home as a messenger from the other world to take the spirits of those relatives whose life has finished (TPGJ, 337.3). It is similar to the cases that happen, while people are sleeping. Sometimes the spirit of the family head wants to help his relatives, who were left without a supporter, with an advice, prediction, etc. (TPGJ, 325.16).

The spirit of the dead wife can come back to her husband touched by his irrecoverable grief. Here is an interesting example. A certain Hu Fu-zhi lived with his wife for ten years and suddenly she died. They didn't have children and Hu regretted that inconsolably. "Suddenly his wife got up and sat on the bed: 'I'm so touched with your grief, my Lord! My body hasn't begun mouldering yet and we can take advantage of our meeting. If you make love with me as before, I'll give birth to your son, my Lord', — she told and lied down. Fu-zhi did as she told him. Without turning on the lights he made love to her in darkness. In ten months she gave birth to his son (all that time she was lying on her deathbed) and then died again (TPGJ, 321.12).

The spirit of the wife can come to her husband to say goodbye before parting. Such case is described in the story "Huan Dao-ming" for example, when the deceased wife came to her husband and spent the whole night in one bed with him. She came to say goodbye, since she had been already appointed a new body. It is an interesting fact that his departed wife couldn't pass through the entrance screen that is traditionally built before the gateway to the court yard in order to prevent evil spirits from getting inside the house, since the spirits can move along the straight line only. She entered the house with the help of her husband, who went out with a lamp and saw her hand sticking out from behind the screen (TPGJ, 319.2). In the story "Wang Guang-ben" unlike in the above mentioned one, where everything happened at night, the wife comes home in the daylight, touched by irrecoverable grief of her family. Her husband could see her, but other relatives could only hear her voice. "Living people and spirits of the deceased have different pathways and I can't stay for long. It is so sad!" (TPGJ, 330.4).

If the spirit of the dead wife didn't find peace, it can come home invisible and make a mess. Soon after the wife of the official Meng Xiang died, doors and windows in his house began to blow open, mad moans were heard everywhere, knives were thrown by somebody and flew in dangerous proximity to people, etc. The invisible spirit of Meng Xian's wife was identified by her voice. It appeared that she couldn't find peace because she killed a hen in juvenile years. The mess stopped only with the help of *daos* who knew the art of spelling (TPGJ, 325.2).

The spirit of the dead mother can come home worried about her children's destiny after her death or just missing them. The wife of a military commander Zhang died leaving five sons. Soon Zhang married for the second time. His new wife happened to be a cruel person and began to torment the orphans. She even flogged them. In despair the children came to their mother's grave crying and suddenly she came out. She wrote a poem for her husband on her white head-cloth and gave to the children. In this poem she told her husband about their children's sufferings and the father stood up for them (TPGJ, 330.5). A man from Changan (the present-day city of Xian) Ma Zhen once heard a tap on the gate. He went out and saw a boy with a donkey who claimed boldly that a woman hired his donkey to come here from the eastern market. She entered the house and the boy was waiting for her to pay him. Ma was very surprised since nobody entered the house during that time, but he paid the boy and let him go. The situation repeated four times more, until at last Ma saw the woman who turned out to be his mother, who had died eleven years before (TPGJ, 333.7).

An episode when a descendant mother comes to her grown-up son to warn him of a danger is described in the story "Wang Bao-zhi". "On the day you see a white dog you should go to the east one thousand *li* from here and spend three years there, otherwise you'll be in trouble!" The next day Wang indeed saw a white dog and went to the east without any hesitation. Three years later he came back home and his mother appeared again. She said that since Wang did everything correctly he would live till the age of eighty (TPGJ, 320.10).

A number of stories describe episodes, when **the spirit of the dead bride, who hadn't managed to marry while alive, came to her bridegroom's house and celebrated a marriage with him** and the bridegroom knew about the death of his intended. A daughter of a duke fell in love with a young man whose name was Han Zhong and promised to marry him. Han Zhong sent matchmakers to her father, but the duke drove them from the house in anger. In despair the young girl committed suicide and was buried. Han Zhong was in the Prince-dom of Lu (Shandong) at that time. He studied there and returned only three years after. His parents told him about the death of his beloved. The young man came to her grave crying and made sacrifices. The deceased young girl came out and Han Zhong happily took her home. During three days all necessary ceremonies were held and they became husband and wife. The young girl presented Han with a pearl and left. Then Han went to the duke (her father) and told him everything. The duke

had to adopt him as a son-in-law (TPGJ, 316.1, see also TPGJ, 324.12).

Among those who "come back" can be other **young members of the family, worried** (in the same way as the old ones) **about the way their bodies were buried.** For that particular reason Li Ying's sister, who died and was buried in a foreign land, comes home. She tells her brother that robbers have sacked her grave (TPGJ, 336.5). The reason can also lie in the agreement made by the departed with one of the relatives or friends before the death. For example, in the story "Wei Huang" such an episode is described. Mrs. Wei, the wife of the Zhou province head, agreed with her husband's younger sister that whoever dies first should come back and tell about the other world. Having given birth to two daughters Mrs. Wei died. One month later she came home invisible, began to talk to her relatives and said that she had already visited Yanluo-wang, the lord of Hell (TPGJ, 327.1).

The spirit of the dead son comes back home to his parents. This case is described in the story "Wang Ming". Wang Ming's son suddenly came back home a year after his death, called all the relatives and began to talk to them about the past. He told that after death everyone makes satisfaction for the offences committed during lifetime. He also advised how to avoid the dead spirits that come to take those people who must die. One should build high doorsteps in the house so that *gui* stumbled, fell down and forgot what he had come for (TPGJ, 320.9).

A number of stories tell about **the dead spirit coming to his friends.** Coming to his friend, who is normally not aware of his friend's death at that moment, *gui* talks to him in the same way as if nothing had happened. Talented and intelligent young friends An Feng and Xu Kan decided to go to Changan to pass examinations, but Kan respected his parents so much that couldn't leave his mother and An went alone. He spent ten years in Changan and trying to pass examinations and become an official, but he failed. Suddenly Xu Kan arrived. They were so happy to see each other that they spent several days together in an inn talking all the time. Then Xu told that he had left home one year before and had been very worried about his old mother. He proposed An to go home together but the latter refused saying that he hadn't achieve the desired yet. The friends parted and only after that An learned that Xu had died three years before. However Xu implied that in the last line of his poem: "It is difficult to forget the past even at the [Yellow] source" (TPGJ, 344.5). Often the dead spirit can deceive his friend. Thus, Zhu Guan, a friend of Xing Cun, fell mortally ill and came to Xing all of a sudden. The latter asked, of course, about his health and Zhu told that he recovered, while in fact he was already dead, but Xing didn't know that at that time (TPGJ, 351.1).

Often ***gui* gives an advice or a prediction to his or her friend.** More often he advises to follow Buddha's doctrine and not to do harm to living beings. The dead Yu Shao-zhi came to his friend in stocks and all beaten up. He said that he would like to give him advice since they were good friends during his lifetime. "One mustn't

kill living beings. But if you can't get rid of that habit, then don't slaughter bulls! And when you eat meat, keep from eating the heart, since the heart is an embryo for the spirit. Such offence is particularly grave". Yu said good bye to his friend and told that they would meet three years later meaning that his friend would die by that time too. And that really happened (TPGJ, 321.10). Some stories tell about a deceased Buddhist counsellor (*fashi*), who comes to his friend from the other world to confirm the truth of Buddha's doctrine. Buddhist taboo of eating meat is described in various situations, when the dead spirits (more often the adepts of Buddhism) come to their friends to give the benefit of their bitter experience: "While living I couldn't refuse from meat and now I'm in the Hell of Starving Dogs!" (TPGJ, 322.13, etc).

The dead spirit can also come to any living person, which is considered a return too, since the spirit wants to come back to human life *per se*. *Gui* can come to a person in a dream or when awake for a short or quite a long time. Normally the spirits come to a sick person for a short time. Let us consider several stories about a dead spirit coming to a person **in a dream**:

The spirit comes to make a request. This happened to a military leader Sima Tian during his illness. He dreamed of a young man who called himself Deng-gong (not far from that place there was a joss house of Deng Yi (197—264), a famous commander of the empire of Wei). It was a house made of grass. The old man asked to repair this joss house and Sima ordered to tile it (TPGJ, 318.19). It should be noted that the spirit made a request not to an ordinary man, but to an official holding a high post, who could carry out an even more sophisticated request.

The dead spirit can come attracted by the talents of a sleeping person. This happened to Duan Wen-chang. Once spending a night in a boat he started to play *qin* and heard somebody sighing outside. He stopped playing and the sighing ceased. He looked out and didn't see anybody. He began playing and somebody began sighing again! At that night he dreamt of a young girl who told him about her tragic destiny. Her parents died and she had to kill herself after. The young girl's parents could play *qin* very well and Duan's playing moved her and reminded of the past (TPGJ, 341.7).

In a big number of cases a dead spirit comes to a stranger in real life for a short period of time. Here are some examples:

The dead spirit sings and dances. One man saw two singing and dancing *guis* in the city of Yaocheng at night and both of them were three *zhangs* high (more than ten meters). They sang for a while and disappeared (TPGJ, 346.7).

The spirit cries. Such case is described, for example, in the story "Ni Yuan-zhi". One man more than eight *chi* high (about two and a half meters) appears at night and cries in a sad voice till midnight. Then he disappears (TPGJ, 330.14). As a rule such cases (when the dead spirit can dance, run around, etc.) take place on the

The dead spirit often helps his friends. Sometimes a friend doesn't even expect such kind of help, while the spirit does his living friend a favour from the best motives. For example, in the story "Wang Zhi-du" Ma Zhong-shu and Wang Zhi-du were best friends, but Ma died. A year after Ma came and saw that his friend was still single. Ma said that he would take care of his marriage, decided on the day when he would bring a bride and ordered to make all necessary arrangements by that time. On that day there was a severe hurricane. It was very dark and when the storm calmed down, Wang found a young girl in his bedroom. Having come to senses she said that she was from Henan and the hurricane brought her to his house. Wang and the young girl considered it to be the will of Heavens and got married (TPGJ, 322.8).

gui's grave, near the grave or in a place where the remains of the spirit were left without burying.

The dead spirit leaves his poems. Once a monk of a Buddhist temple in Suzhou saw two men in white clothes at night. They were going up the church tower. The monk waited for them to come down, but nobody appeared. Then he went upstairs but didn't see anybody there. Next day he found three poems written on the wall by those *guis*. One of the poems begins with these words:

The bright and the dark worlds have different ways.
Once we, undeserving, could write poems.
If you want to know, where we sleep in solitude,
Look for two lonely graves to the north of the mountains
Dreary wind sings in tall pine trees,
Its whistle is so clean, but so sad...

In the end of the story it is mentioned that one can see these poems on the wall of the temple even now (TPGJ, 338.3).

Often the poems written by *gui* can be confined to a feast, for example, a feast of cold food (TPGJ, 354.6). This day is a very important one, since it is devoted to the spirits. A *gui* writes poems like an ordinary Chinese scribe.

The dead spirit can come to a person as a silent precursor of a disaster. Once Liu Lang-qing saw a tall man in a very impressive dress. The man was silent and didn't answer any questions of frightened Liu. Then he disappeared and after a while Liu was exiled (TPGJ, 326.3). Moreover, the dead spirit can come as a precursor of death. Once a man called Liu saw a strange creature: "with head of a lion, cheeks covered with white hair, one *chi* high [it is a little more than 30 centimetres. — I. A.], and with arms and legs of a man" (TPGJ 326.6). Often historical figures appear in such stories. For example, an executed Xie Hui (390—426) came to a famous poet Xie Ling-yun (385—433) holding his head in his hands not long before the death of the latter (TPGJ, 323.7).

However **dead spirits can come to a person as a precursor of good**, but this is not typical. In the story

“Liu Cheng” one can read: “Liu Cheng, who lived in the fifth year of Jin reign of Yi-xi (409), saw dead spirits all the time and became an assistant to the head of the province” (TPGJ, 320.15). But then Liu saw a strange boy and a few days later there was a big fire. By the way in some stories the ability to see dead spirits is acquired by people due to progress in getting the knowledge of the right Way or it can be a gift from nature. So, a certain Hu “could see *guis*. Even if he didn't want to, he could not do anything about it” (TPGJ, 319.4).

The dead spirit willingly helps those people who ask for it. One man had to spend a night in the forest because of the snowfall. He asked the dead spirits to guard his sleep and they kept watching him during the whole night (TPGJ, 331.9). Another *gui* helps an orphan by giving him some money (TPGJ, 320.14), etc. But if a man can't understand that the dead spirit has come to help him and refuses this help, it can turn out badly. It happened to a military leader Zhao. Having fallen seriously ill he saw a man in yellow clothes, who came up to the tripod, where Zhao's son was preparing the medicine for his father. The man put a white pill into the medicine, but Zhao's son didn't notice it. Zhao told him everything he saw and his son thought that *gui* wanted to kill his father and poured out the medicine. Then he began preparing another one. After a while the man in yellow clothes appeared again and put his pill into the medicine for the second time. This medicine was poured out too. The spirit didn't come any more, and Zhao died a few days later (TPGJ, 346.2). However sometimes the dead spirits try to do a favour to living people when they don't expect it: “Jinshi Duan He lived in a tenant room in Kehufang quarter. In the eighth year of Tai-he reign he fell ill and stayed in bed for a month. Only after that he

began to feel better. Once he washed his hair and was combing them with a comb leaning over the table. Suddenly a totally naked man got out from a gap in the wall and stood before He without ceremony. This man looked at him and said: ‘Well, you have fallen ill but you aren't married and there is nobody to take care of you. And if you die, what to do then?’ Having realized that it was the dead spirit, He answered: ‘But I am poor, how can I marry!’ ‘Let me be your matchmaker! There is a young girl in one house. She is very beautiful and virtuous. All her relatives hold high posts and she has a lot of distant relations. I have some money, that's why you shouldn't worry about wedding presents’, — that man said. He answered: ‘But I haven't honoured my name yet, I don't even think about marriage!’ ‘Don't be too ceremonious!’ — answered the man. — ‘There's nothing to worry about! Today I'll arrange your acquaintance!’ The man went towards the gate. After a while he came back. ‘She has already arrived!’ — he said. The next moment four men entered the house carrying a gold-filled palanquin. Two maids followed it, one of them with a high hairdo of an adult woman, another one — with that of an infant and both of them were very beautiful. Then two servants in blue headbands came in carrying boxes with jewellery and trunks with clothes. They put all that in the yard. The matchmaker ordered to carry the bride to the side wing, closed the door after her and came up to He. ‘The bride from a noble family has arrived! You don't have to perform any ceremonies. Don't you mind?’ He was so angry that he felt worse and couldn't even raise his head from the pillow. ‘Would you like to look at the bride?’ — asked the matchmaker. He addressed He in such a way for three times, but He refused...” (TPGJ, 49.3).

***Gui* appears in the house of a man.** It happens rather often, because *gui* wishes to return to the world of the living. In the house of Chen Xi-lie appeared a *gui* who recited poems and sang songs. People asked who he was, where he was from and what he was doing there. “I am just walking here. I'll walk a little bit and then go away”, — answered *gui*. Then he expressed a wish to get some sacrificial food and clothes. When they refused to give him the required things, he began to swear and disappeared after a while (TPGJ, 335.4).

Since a man (with his family) and the dead spirit live in one house (it is often the house of the departed where another man lives), they must establish their relations. ***Gui* admits superiority of the man if the latter has merits in any kind of activity.** Commander Chen started to live in a government premises that had a bad reputation, since the officials who had lived there fell ill and died. Right after Chen moved in, he noticed different strange creatures and tried to fight with them: he shot an arrow from a bow, rushed at them fearlessly with a sword or a stick. That lasted for quite a long time and one day he heard a voice: “I am a dead spirit and I don't want to live in one house with a human being. But you, mister, are wise and frank and I would like to serve you as a younger brother. Will you allow me to do that?”

Chen agreed and since then the spirit behaved himself. They established brotherly relations. *Gui* often talked to Chen, warned him about troubles, while Chen made sacrifices, when *gui* asked for it (TPGJ, 355.3). Such peaceful coexistence is rather typical and can last for a long time — till the death of a man or till the moment when the other world authorities will send *gui* to another place. But the story of a commander Chen ends in a different way: Chen invited a magician, who wrote a complaint against *gui* and burned it at the altar. This action was very unexpected, because *gui* didn't do any harm to Chen and on the contrary — he helped him. *Gui* himself didn't understand what had happened: “We became brothers, my Lord, how could you make a complaint against me? Do noble-minded statesmen, leashed by the ties of friendship, act in such a way?” However *gui* had to leave. He was mistaken, since Chen wasn't really wise and frank.

Appearing in the house **the dead spirit can have different intentions, but the first one is getting sacrifices.** It is quite natural since only in this case *gui* can support himself. Taking into consideration the importance of making sacrifices for the dead spirits, it is easy to understand why *gui* often uses his magic skills. Thus, appearing in the house of Chen Qin-sun the dead spirits

asked him to make a sacrifice of a black cow from the farm. *Gui* threatened to kill Chen's son within twenty days if he doesn't obey, but the man answered: "The period of human life is defined and it doesn't depend on you!" In twenty days the boy died. Then *gui* threatened to kill Chen's wife. Chen persisted and didn't sacrifice his cow. His wife died too. *Gui* appeared and said that he would kill Chen, but the latter remained adamant. The time defined by *gui* passed, but Chen didn't die. Then *gui* came and began to repent: "You have an inflexible will and you deserve great happiness! Don't tell anybody about all that. If the Earth and the Heavens learn, it won't be good for me. The thing is that I saw a decree of the registry carried by a devilkin-courier. It pointed out that your son and your wife's period of life had come to an end and I decided to take advantage of that and ask you for food!" (TPGJ, 318.21). It isn't quite clear if all the dead spirits can change the length of a man's life and influence his destiny without any reason. In any case if the spirits have such abilities they belong to those *guis* who hold high positions in another world and have enough power after death. That is why in the world of the living such kind of *guis* appear as eminent officials followed by guards but not on foot and alone.

Since dead spirits are inclined to threaten people, it is easy to explain the fear of them. Moreover, *gui*'s influence can be expressed not only in form of open threatening and extortion, but also visually, **when the dead spirit appears before a man having a strange (i, "異") and frightening (gui, "怪") look.** *Gui*'s intention to frighten somebody and overmaster him or her does not always have a certain aim. Spirits can do harm to a person for no particular reason. Thus in one story *gui* with a strange appearance used to get into the stomach of a small girl and talk out from there yelling out threats. He nearly harried the girl to death (TPGJ, 320.3). Another *gui* that appeared in the house of Yang from Wuxian looked like a monkey. He used to take food away from people and bother the masters of the house in other ways. Yang got angry and ran after him with a knife but *gui* turned into his wife, while his wife changed into *gui*. In the end Yang killed his wife (TPGJ, 318.9). It is evident that a man has every reason not to expect anything good from the meeting with the dead spirit.

However in some stories a person is **aware of meeting the dead spirit, but isn't afraid of it.** "Ruan De-ru once met *gui* in the corridor. He was all black, as high as one *zhang*, and had very big eyes. He was in white clothes and in a headband. He stopped before De-ru. Having coped with his fear De-ru said with a smile: 'It's true that *guis* are disgusting even by appear-

ance!' *Gui* was ashamed and ran away" (TPGJ, 318.20). Very often those **people who are not afraid of the meeting with dead spirits tend to attack *gui* first.** Having met *gui* at the door of a church *daos* Fa-li leaned upon him, tied to the pole with a rope and began to beat him with a stick. Then Fa-li decided to prove if it was true that *gui* could turn into something or somebody. He tied him to the same pole with an iron wire and waited till *gui* disappeared in the evening. Such behaviour didn't have any consequences for the monk (TPGJ, 327.6). Attacks of an invisible *gui* can be successful too. Noticing a footstep of two *tsun* long (about 6.5 cm) on the floor an official Liu Shu-lun began to hunt an invisible *gui* with a sword. He slashed air at random and obviously killed somebody, since there was blood on the floor (TPGJ, 325.12). These attacks are not provoked by the dead spirit, though a person often attacks *gui* being driven to despair by his disturbance (taking things, bothering at night). The abovementioned story about Yang is a good example of such case (TPGJ, 323.3, TPGJ, 327.11). Often courage (or presence of mind) showed by a man when meeting *gui* foreshadows his future fame. One winter night Lu Yu-qing traversed a field. It was very cold and Lu was freezing. Suddenly he saw a fire with people sitting around it. Lu came up to them to warm himself a bit, but the fire turned out to be cold. Lu was surprised and asked what the matter was. People sitting around the fire burst out laughing. Having realized that they were *guis*, Lu whipped his horse in cool blood and galloped away. "If you, young gentleman, haven't been scared by them, you are lucky! You'll be wealthy and noble!" — as one of the locals predicted Lu. And that really happened, since later on Lu got a noble rank (TPGJ, 328.14).

Not all of attacks by *guis* finish happily or serve as a sign of great future. **Such attacks often result in the person's death.** The main character of the story "Wang Zhong-wen" saw a white dog (white is the colour of mourning). Wang liked it so much that ordered to take it with him. Suddenly the dog turned into a man of disgusting appearance. In surprise Wang started to beat him with a whip and ordered his servants to do the same. The man disappeared and within a month Wang and those servants, who flogged that man saw him again and died (TPGJ, 319.14). The same thing happened to Liu Qing-song. He attacked *gui* that got out from the gap in the floor. *Gui* ran away and Liu fell ill and died (TPGJ, 321.6).

It should be noted that in the majority of the abovementioned cases a man and the dead spirit do not normally talk to each other and their meetings do not last long.

A person spends night in the house of the dead. This happens when a man caught by bad weather on his way or at night can't find accommodation. It may be said that the spirit patronizes and does a favour to a living person by letting him or her stay for the night in his house, which is a magically transformed grave.

In the majority of episodes the main character of narrative prose *xiaoshuo* is a man and very seldom the central figure of the story is a woman. Thus the traveller who is getting a shelter for the night would be a man in most cases. However the dead spirits that let him in and act as hosts can be both male and female. Let us consider some examples.

Qin Shu was going home from the capital when the night overtook him. Qin wandered out of his way. Having caught sight of a light in the distance, he went towards it in the hope of finding accommodation for the night. Soon he came up to a hut, where a young girl lived. Hesitating to come into the house Shu asked the young girl a permission to spend the night in the yard, but soon she invited him into the house and offered to sit at the table. Noticing that the young girl lived alone Shu made her an intimate proposal. She agreed with a laugh. They spent the night in one bed and in the morning the girl presented Shu with a ring saying that they would not see each other again. Having galloped away for a few meters he turned round and saw a grave-mound instead of the hut and he lost the ring soon after the occasion (TPGJ, 324.1). Certain aspects should be noted in such kind of stories. **The dead spirit meets a traveller and invites him into the house that is characterized as a poor one in the text.** As a rule it is a hut made of canes and grass without fire in the fireplace or without the fireplace at all because of great need (TPGJ, 327.15, etc). However in a number of stories **a traveller can find himself in a luxurious palace**, when he spends a night at the house of a departed woman, who used to hold quite a high position in society. Such case is described in the story "Zui Luo-she", when the main character Zui was passing by a luxurious palace with a red gate one evening. A servant stopped the man and said that his hostess would like to see him. Zui was surprised, but went into the palace and met a beautiful woman there. She began to treat him with splendid dishes. And though Zui had realized that the beauty wasn't a human being, he spent the whole night with her having a good time. In the morning she presented Zui with a jade ring and bundled him off. He walked away. Having taken a few steps he looked back and saw a grave of course (TPGJ, 326.7). Often a dead spirit makes a request to his guest in return for providing him with a shelter. Caught by bad weather and darkness on the way a certain Zhang Yu asked for accommodation in a luxury house. He was welcomed by a woman of about thirty who said that she hadn't been a human being for a long time already. She began to complain that her ex-husband gave her children to a maid, whom he had a relationship with. But the maid treated children dreadfully and even beat them. "I would like to kill this maid, but the living energy of the dead is so weak! That's why I want you to help me. I will pay you well". Yu understood that she wanted him to kill the maid and immediately refused. But the woman assured him that he must just tell everything to her husband. Yu carried out her request (TPGJ, 318.11).

Thus it is evident that the Chinese believed there was a direct dependence between the social position of a person during his or her life and after death.

Another essential circumstance of such meetings is a present **that a female *gui* and a man exchange in the morning when parting.** However a traveller may not make any present to the *gui*, while female *gui* would always give a souvenir to him: a ring, a pendant for the belt, a pouch for fragrances, a fan, a poem, etc. Later this

gift can disappear or it can be the reason of revealing the truth about *gui*.

The third thing to mention is that **such meetings are usually followed by sexual relations.** The proposal to have intimate contact can be made by the guest as well as by the hostess. The latter often proposes it in a poem explicitly stating her desire. Female *guis* that write poems usually have other talents and are often described as fine by nature, inclined to express refined emotions, poetic melancholy, playing musical instruments. Houses of such *guis* are far from being poor and miserable.

This group of stories is related to another one telling about **a meeting of a man with a dead woman that happens in some place.** A female *gui* can, for example, come to a man attracted by his talent. Wang Gong-bo could play *qin* well. Once he had to stay at a roadside bower for the night and admiring the moon Wang began to plunk. Suddenly a beautiful young girl appeared and said that she liked to play *qin* very much. One thing led to another and they laid their instruments down to sleep together. In the morning they exchanged gifts at parting. Then it turned out that it was the spirit of a departed young girl buried not far from that place (TPGJ, 318.15). The spirits can also have a feature or a thing that reveals their inward nature. For example their body can be as cold as ice; one can feel a strong smell of blood or stink when they appear; they can carry a special sack with their own bones which they forbid to look at, etc.

The meeting can happen in a house with a bad reputation. They said that a spirit of one dead man haunted a bower outside western gate of Ruyang city and many of those who had spent a night there fell ill and even died. Some Zheng Qi, who wasn't afraid of that, stayed there for the night and spent it with a beautiful young girl. In the morning a guard looked into the bower and saw a dead body lying aside Zheng who was still asleep. After that Zheng had pain in his stomach for a long time (TPGJ, 317.8). In general, a meeting in a "bad" place is much more harmful for a person than a contact in the house of the departed.

A number of stories describe the **main character meeting a famous beautiful woman of the past.** Liu Dao and his friend Li Shi-bing were on the way to Hangzhou. One fine day they heard women's voices from the roadside forest. The next moment a maid came out from behind the trees and said that two ladies wanted to see them. After a while these ladies came out from the forest too. They were extremely beautiful young women in luxurious clothes. The friends began to bow them and invited to partake in their meal. As it turned out later one of them was a famous beauty of the past Xi Shi. In the morning they exchanged gifts and parted (TPGJ, 326.5). It should be noted that meetings with Si Shi are rather frequent (TPGJ, 327.7, etc.) A characteristic feature of such kind of stories is the fact that when a main character meets a famous beauty of the past, **he takes the opportunity to make love to her as well as to learn in detail about the times she witnessed** that didn't find reflection in historical writings. The character is drawn by the anxiety for knowledge and the beauty tells him

willingly about the past. Often the beauty plunges into recollections on her own initiative.

Very often **when a man meets a female *gui* they begin to live together as husband and wife.** Having come to a man in the appearance of a beautiful woman of easy virtue, a female *gui* doesn't cut these meetings off and stays for quite a long (fixed by the Heavens) period of time. At first a man, captured by the beauty of his beloved, can't realize who he has twisted fortune with. But once he knows the truth, first of all he tries to get rid of her or even kill her. This happened, for example, to a certain Zhong. His friend noticed that Zhong had changed and there was something strange in his behaviour. He inquired and Zhong told that he had entered into intimate relation with a beauty one could rarely find. The friend said that she must be *gui* and advised to kill the maiden. Zhong took his friend's advice and wounded the maiden when they met. Following the trail of blood in the morning he came up to a grave to find the body of his beloved there (TPGJ, 317.9). (There are very few cases when the spirit of dead man lives with a living woman. See, for example, the story "Mrs. Meng" (TPGJ, 345.9). Once a merchant's wife meet a spirit of a departed young man who offers to make love to him. This intimate relationship lasted for one year till her husband arrived from a trip).

However there are other episodes when a man does not reject a maiden *gui* after learning the truth. The head of the province Li Zhong-weng saw a female *gui* for the first time in his dream. She told him who she was but Li didn't show disguise (and maiden *guis* as a rule fear that). When he met her in real life they began living as husband and wife (TPGJ, 319.1). The desire to get rid of such beloved is quite clear basing on the belief that **a maiden *gui* entering into sexual relation with a man gives him diseases and death.** In the story "Li Tao" such a beauty came to the main character at night. "Tao realized that it was a dead spirit and didn't speak to her at first. The young girl walked away with downcast eyes". Then a maid servant made him ashamed and Tao changed his mind and started to talk and even flirt with the woman. Everything finished with fornication. Then the maiden said that they had had intimate relationship long before. They had lived together for more than ten days when his mother learned about that and came down on Tao. At first he refused to break off with the maiden but then he fell ill. It is interesting that the maiden *gui*

didn't leave him but was looking after him, gave him herbal tea and sat at his bed-side as a wife. Soon she left — the term of their relationship finished (TPGJ, 333.8).

The theme of an "old relationship" is very popular in TPGJ and in *xiaoshuo* prose in general. The spirits of dead women often mention this old relationship that had taken place in their juvenile years or even in another life. But often **the maiden *gui* is moved not only by the interest to a man's talents or by an old relationship but also by an unsatisfied uncontrollable passion.** It leads to one time contacts as well as to long-term intimate relations. Such case is described for example in the story "Wang Zhi". A beautiful girl didn't have a chance to get married while living and after death she comes to a traveller-student and they live as a married couple for a month. When parting the maiden gives him a bronze mirror that helps to reveal the truth (TPGJ.328.12). These motives are used very frequently. The departed maiden often presents her beloved with different things or just leaves something in his house. Normally these are the things that were put in the coffin (jewellery or living essentials as a rule). Generally it happens when the coffin has not been put into the earth yet. On noticing the absence of a given thing in the coffin the relatives begin to look for it, which was the case with Wang Zhi. The relatives found the bronze mirror in his house and accused him of theft. In order to purge himself of suspicion Wang had to tell everything. The spirits of married women can be spurred on to such actions by their dissatisfaction of their married life. This happened to a dead wife of one man. The spirit of the woman had intimate relations with the head of the province while her husband was away from home. When her husband arrived the dead woman left that man. Once the head of the province showed him a silver bowl that the maiden spirit had presented to him and the man recognized that bowl since he had put it in the coffin of his dead wife himself (TPGJ, 335.7).

It is particular interesting that **the maiden-spirit is usually inclined to take revenge for infidelity of her beloved.** Thus Yang Bei having been in a relationship with a dead woman was ill for a long time. When the maiden *gui* left him, Yang took his elder brother's advice and got married. One year later the dead woman suddenly appeared and began to yell at him. Soon after that Yang fell ill and died (TPGJ, 334).

Another group of stories describes the meeting of a man with the spirit of a dead man and their relationship. If the spirit of a dead woman is moved by a desire to have intimate relations, **the spirit of a dead man is driven by interest in talents of a living man and by admiration at his skills and knowledge.** Often the dead spirit gives accommodation to a traveller.

The dead spirit can invite a traveller into his house. Wei used to take interest in Daoism in his juvenile years and didn't believe in spirits. One evening he was overtaken by a snowstorm. The storm was so severe that Wei couldn't continue his way. Suddenly *daos* ap-

peared and invited Wei to his home to wait for the storm to pass, stay overnight and talk of this and that. Having come to his place, they entered the house and sat before the fire. Drinking wine and eating they began talking of Dao' doctrine. Then the host started to talk about the spirits of the deceased and Wei strongly objected their existence saying that there was nothing to talk about. "But the thing you exalt — is Dao, the Way of the immortal", — answered *daos*, — "why do you slander so vigorously the dead spirits? They have existed since the Earth and the Heaven came into being! If your Dao is high then the dead spirits and ghosts won't dare to do

you harm. But if your Dao hasn't reached the necessary height — they will hurt you!" Wei didn't believe him. In the morning he said good bye and went away. When Wei looked back he saw a grave instead of the house! Since then he believed in ghosts (TPGJ, 327).

It should be noted that **not all the meetings with the spirits come off well for a man**. For example a merchant Chen saw a big estate on his way home. When he came in there looking for accommodation he met a man of ugly appearance. "The moon came out of the clouds and the merchant saw that man's face. It was absolutely black and there were no pupils in his eyes". Chen ran away and thus managed to escape. Then he learned from one old man that a harmful *gui* haunted that place (TPGJ, 317.16). The story "Hu Yun-yi" tells that on their way to a new place of employment Hu Yun-yi and his wife were stripped clean by robbers. One old man had pity on the robbed couple and gave them shelter. He was so kind that offered Hu to leave his wife at his place for some time, proceed alone and come back for her after taking charge of the service. Hu agreed and went on alone. Having arrived at the destination he got a letter from his wife. She wrote that had already cried her eyes out and found comfort with a young man who lived at the old man's house too. Raving with anger Hu went back at once in order to revenge that insidious old man. However he found only a grave there and when he dug it out he saw his wife's dead body (TPGJ, 344.4).

Much like a maiden *gui* the dead spirit can come to a person it has interest in. Once in the evening Ji Kang was playing *qin* when somebody more than one *zhang* high (more than three meters) appeared. When Ji tried to peruse him, the stranger puffed off the lamp that

lit the place. "I had lived here before and was killed at this place. I heard you playing, my Lord, the melody is pure and soft, unlike in ancient times. That's why I came to listen to you". Ji and his guest spent the night talking (TPGJ, 317.11). Often in such cases *gui* teaches a man to play a musical instrument and proposes to versify rhymes together (TPGJ, 324.4, TPGJ, 349.5).

The reason of *gui*'s coming **can be a man's quality that he is famous for**: poetic talent, respect to parents, hospitality. Apart from being rich and hospitable *jinshi* Lu was famous for his poetic talent. One evening a man of a very imposing appearance came to him. "I heard you write beautiful poems. That's why I'm here". He turned out to be a great poet Shen Yue (441—513) who had passed away long before. Lu began to treat him with wine and showed hospitality. All night long they versified poems and had fun together with one more *gui*. "Soldiers will rise in rebellion here in two years", — warned Shen Yue before leaving, which actually happened later (TPGJ, 343.1). Sometimes the dead spirits predict not only forthcoming disasters, but also the life span of a person (TPGJ, 336.1, etc).

Apart from meeting the spirits in their house, **people can come across them in the vicinity of the burial place** staying overnight in a remote post office or in an outlying inn. *Jinshi* Zu Jia stayed overnight at an empty Buddhist monastery together with his servant. Fascinated by the beauty of the moon Zu decided to take a walk around the yard. Suddenly a man appeared and began to talk to him. They sat down on a mat and engaged in conversation about classical writings and canonic texts and then recited some poems. In the morning the guest went away and later Zu learned that it was *gui* (TPGJ, 344.8).

Special attention should be paid to those cases when living people meet messengers from the other world who can be their relatives. These messengers usually come to the world of the living in order to accompany to the other world the souls of those people who must die. Performing his formal duty *gui* **asks the person to give him a ride** on a boat (cart, etc.) without uncovering himself. A necessary attribute of an official from another world is a book (a roll) with the names of those who must die (it reads: "On that day go to that village and take that man"). Once Zhou Shi met a person with a book under his arm, who requested to give him a ride on the boat. Shi agreed and after ten *li* the official asked to stop at a village. "I leave my book in your boat, mister. But don't open it", — said the man and left. It didn't take long for the messenger to get the souls to the boat and soon mournful crying could be heard from the village (TPGJ, 339.1). Shi opened the book and saw that there were lists of the people, who were supposed to die. His name was written in the end of the list too. He was horrified and pleaded the official to let him live. Though the man disapproved of Shi opening the book he told: "Go

home now and don't go beyond the gate for three years, only in this case you can delay death". Shi followed the advice. He didn't leave home for two years, but then his father sent him to their neighbour's funeral and Shi couldn't refuse. Having stepped outside the gate he saw that official with the book, who said that nothing could be done and gave him three days to settle up affairs. Three days later Shi died (TPGJ, 316.11).

Sometimes **the messengers can take the soul of a person whose name is not included in the list by mistake**, due to ignorance or lack of attention. In the story "Tang Bang" two men in red clothes came and took the main character to a huge grave. "You were ordered to take Tang Fu, why did you take Tang Bang then?" — the chief yelled at them. Tang Bang came back to life and Tang Fu living nearby died (TPGJ, 322.1). A giant was chasing a monk Hui-jin who was fiercely resisting the former. On seeing his opposition the giant decided to clarify if he was the right one and asked for his name. "The last name is right, but the name is wrong!" — said the giant on hearing the answer and disappeared (TPGJ, 354.11, 346.3 etc).

Sacrificing to the spirit of a dead stranger, burying the body of a person, deposition of a poorly buried body,

burying the bones left without entombment — all these deeds entail gratitude of the spirits. However, it seems

that re-entering the bones or sacrificing to an unknown spirit of a deceased, the person is acting out of good motives having no lucrative impulses and expecting no gratitude.

In the corridor of his house Huan Gong found a hole that turned out to be a grave upon a closer view. "And every time when eating Gong put the food before the grave first. That was going on during one year". Suddenly somebody appeared and said that this was his grave and he had died over seven hundred years before. All his descendants passed away and there was nobody to look after the grave. That's why it is in such a poor condition. "Your virtue touched me, mister, and in gratitude for that I would make you the head of Ningzhou province", — said the visitor (TPGJ, 322.5; a slightly changed version of this story with indication of the same source is given in *juan* 320 of TPGJ). Once Xu found somebody's grave in his plot of land and began to share his food with the dead spirit. He cried loudly: "Hey, a field ghost! Come here to eat my food!" (TPGJ, 320.78). In the story "Fang Xuan-ling" the main characters sacrificed to a grave of a stranger. While doing that they heard an interesting dialogue between the dead spirits. One spirit outside calls another one and says: "Hey, twenty *li* to the east from here one countryman makes a grand feast for the spirits. There will be a lot of wine and food [they mean sacrificing — *I. A.*] Will you go there?" "I am already drunk and have a full belly of meat, and I am on duty above all. I can't go! Thank you for inviting me!" "But you are always starving, where did you get wine and meat? And you are not an official, what duty are you talking about? Why are you cheating on us?" "The head of the province gave me a task to follow the two ministers and they have treated me kindly to meat and wine. That's why I can't go" (TPGJ, 327.13). Living people can benefit a lot from overhearing conversations between dead spirits, if they are able to use that information in the right way. The next dialogue took place in one family after the birth of a child: "Well, have you seen the baby? What will his name be? How many years will he live?" "It is a boy! His name will be A-nu, he will live fifteen years". "And what will cause his death?" "He will be employed to build a house and will

fall from the roof and die" (TPGJ, 316.6). One man overheard that dialogue but didn't believe it. Fifteen years later the prediction of the spirits came true.

The dead spirit can express gratitude as well as revenge. *Gui* can show gratitude for help in different ways and by all available means. A military leader Shi didn't believe in ghosts and settled in a "bad" house. One evening a man in official clothes came to him and said: "I am a Han commander Fan Kuai and my grave is not far from your closet, mister. I suffer much for that reason. If you carried my grave to another place, I would generously repay for it". Shi agreed to reinter the bones of the commander. The story ends in the following way: "When Shi became a commander in Sui region, the soldiers-spirits helped him to win all the battles each time he came across the robbers" (TPGJ, 322.12).

If any harm is done to a grave the dead spirit can take revenge. When the robbers dug out the grave of a Wang and ransacked it, the dead spirit emerged and treated them to some wine. On drinking that wine the robbers couldn't get rid of the wine traces on their lips. The spirit told about those traces to the guards and the robbers were caught (TPGJ, 317.5).

The dead spirit can revenge for the disbelief in its existence. That is why the result of the disbelief in *gui* is often sad. However the dead spirit can come to an obstinate person and try to talk him round. The head of the province of Zong Dai spoke out against sacrificing and claimed that the dead spirits did not exist. Nobody could shatter his belief. One day a scribe in poor clothes came to Dai and tried to dissuade him again, but Dai persisted in his opinion. In anger the scribe confessed he was *gui* himself and disappeared. The next day Dai died (TPGJ, 317.7). In the next episode a *gui* came as a guest to another disbeliever and said: "Since old times all sages have been handing down the stories about the dead spirits, only you don't believe!", — and he turned into an ugly *gui* again. After that conversation the man fell ill and died one year later (TPGJ, 319.5). The hero of another story Zhang Xi-wang laughed at *gui* and refused to deposition his remains saying the following: "I didn't believe in such things even in childhood!" After a month the dead spirit killed him with an arrow (TPGJ, 329).

Thus TPGJ materials allow us to conclude that the main characteristic of the dead spirits in common Chinese consciousness is the ability to come back to living people in the dreams or in the reality, in visible or invisible form, to their native places, to their relatives or friends. When coming to the living people in a visible form, the dead spirit shows up with his ordinary appearance, clothes and food preferences.

The dead spirit can come back for two general reasons. Firstly, it comes back worried about the state of affairs at home, i. e. about the relatives' destiny and health driven by a desire to help and teach them, about property condition driven by the intention to put everything back to order and punish the unjust, etc. Secondly, the spirit comes back to the world of the living to tell that his or her body has not been buried properly. For

example, the spirit can ask for the interment if the body hasn't been buried for a particular reason or has been buried in the wrong season or in an unfortunate place. The spirit can also be asking to repair the grave or make sacrifices there, etc. There is a separate group of stories describing relations between a living man and a deceased woman, where the latter is not playing any evil role. In Song times an evil image of harmful *guis* in *xiaoshuo* prose gave its place to another type of *gui* that didn't cause harm just by the fact of its appearance. Presumably during that time the bookish scriptural variant of low Chinese mythology was being formed. Genetically this variant dates back to verbal folk sources, but it starts to split off little by little mainly due to complexity of Chinese grammar.

When coming back *guis* are normally worried about family and household issues, while the dead spirits contact strangers being anxious about the way they had been buried. Dead spirits can be attracted by talents or even virtues of a living person. If a person possesses high moral and makes progress on the way to acquiring virtue, he or she is protected against an evil dead spirit, i. e., *gui* stands away from such people. The soul of a dead person would use every possibility to communicate with wise people including treating them to wine and discussing the vital subjects driven by the desire to acquire additional knowledge. Showing deep respect the deceased would eagerly join such people's company inviting them to versify and compose impromptu poems together.

Thus the spirit of a dead woman can be attracted by the talents and virtues of a living man, but her main interest is the desire to enter into intimate relations with him for a short or for a long time period. These relations can be breaking off and renewing again. Often the spirit of a deceased maiden is longing for a sexual relation with a man driven not only by her own will, but also by the power of the dark nature. The spirit of a dead woman possesses an ability to take male life energy that has

a bright source (*yang*). With the help of this energy she can double her magic power and have more stable human appearance. The living man begins to feel bad as a result of this relationship. Due to the leak of living energy a long contact with a spirit can lead to a severe disease or even death. On realizing the reason of prostration himself or with somebody's help, the man usually breaks or at least tries to stop such relationship. However, sometimes he is unable to do that captivated by the beauty of his beloved. In their turn the dead spirits develop warm feelings to their partners expressing their attachment by giving presents to the beloved, writing poems, laughing with joy and crying out of grief. That is why most of the spirits panic on seeing their beloved wasting way. This process can be stopped only by timely separation, since independently of the maiden *gui*'s wish every sexual act causes the loss of energy on the part of man. She is unable to control this process.

For this particular reason maiden *guis* often leave their lovers or even cure them. They try to explain that being generated by *yin* nature, they inevitably do harm to all the living. Besides according to the laws of the other world it is punishable and often the spirit of dead woman is punished for doing harm even if done unintentionally.

The material under study poses a number of very important questions that require further research. One of the main questions is the problem of studying typological differences between Chinese, Russian and European notion of the other world, the supernatural and the wonderful. The present investigation allowed us to formulate the main characteristic feature to the Chinese notion of the dead spirit, which is syncreticity that is mainly expressed in the translation of the Chinese word *gui* into the Russian language [2]. According to the context it can be translated into English as “devil”, “demon”, “evil

spirit”, “spirit”, “ghost”, “werewolf” [3], etc. *Gui* has more functions than each of the given concepts and the notion of *gui* doesn't fully correspond to any of the abovementioned equivalents. In Russian and European traditions the functions performed by *gui* are distributed among several other characters of the supernatural world with more specific functions. Thus there are all reasons to conclude that Chinese dead spirits have syncretic character. Presumably there is a number of reasons standing behind this syncreticity, which poses the next questions to be solved by the researchers in future.

Notes

1. Hereinafter the first digit stands for the number of *juan* in “Tai-ping guang ji” (TPGJ) and the second digit — for the number of story in *juan*.

2. Syncreticity is caused by the fact that *gui* performs multiple functions at once still being able to have different appearances. According to TPGJ one can divide *guis* into three general groups. The first group includes the dead spirits that come in the appearance of human beings (a giant or a dwarf), but with an unusual feature: face features, a tail, paws of a tiger, etc. The second group includes the spirits that come in the form of an animal sometimes even with elements of a human body. The third group includes the spirits that come in human shape. The spirits of the dead women are usually unearthly beautiful. In Chinese texts these characters are marked by the hieroglyph *gui*.

3. The theme of werewolves in Russian and Chinese traditions should undergo special research. It should be noted that in Russian tradition a werewolf is “a person who turned into an animal or a thing with the help of magic power; evil spirits that acquire a certain shape” (*Slovar' sovremennogo russkogo iazyka* (The Dictionary of Modern Literary Russian Language) (Moscow—Leningrad, 1959), viii, p. 339), “a person who turned into a wolf or another animal (sometimes into a bush or a stone) with the help of a witch or with his own magic powers” (V. I. Dahl, *Tolkovyĭ slovar' zhivogo velikoruskogo iazyka* (The Defining Dictionary of the Living Russian Language) (St. Petersburg, 1981), i, p. 611), while in Chinese tradition a werewolf is an animal (usually a fox), the spirit of the departed, an old thing.

I l l u s t r a t i o n s

Front cover:

Plate 1. Sacrifice at a home altar of ancestors before a wedding ceremony. Watercolour on pith, 33×21 cm. China, 19th century. MAE RAS, No. 311-1-12 (7e). Photo by S. Shapiro. Courtesy of the Museum.

Back cover:

Plate 2. Offering incense to the spirits. Watercolour on paper, 31×23 cm. Beijing, Zhou Pei-chun's workshop, end of the 19th century. MAE RAS, No. 861-3-100-81. Photo by S. Shapiro. Courtesy of the Museum.
