

A Study of Ghost Stories from Taiwan and San Francisco

By
Wolfram Eberhard

University of California, Berkeley

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Chinese ghost stories are definitely patterned, and they fall into a number of "types" (see W. Eberhard, *Typen*, Nos. 112-224). Some Chinese, however, often do not regard them as "stories" but rather as true events. Others of the Chinese include ghost stories under the category of "stories" (*ku-shih* 故事) which comprises folktales (*min-chien ku-shih* 民間故事), occasionally myths (*shen-hua* 神話), and very often renderings of folk novels, theater plays, essays and even anecdotes.

It has often been stated that the folktale in China is essentially dead—killed by an overwhelming mass of literature. This statement can mean that any tale which one can hear in China is nothing but the retelling of a story which has already been printed. But it can also mean that the treasure of Chinese tales is a fixed and closed treasure and that it contains only old stories. No new stories are created any more. In this study we are interested in this second point. Our hypothesis is as follows: If ghost stories today are still told as true events, even though they fall into a number of well-known types of tales, we can say that there is still a real belief in ghosts, and that at least this group of tales is still very much alive even in a rapidly modernizing society. If these stories are still alive, we also should expect few negative feelings toward the telling of such stories. If there is a change in the attitude toward such tales, we should be able to find individual differences. For instance, older persons may tell ghost stories as true events, while young people may tell them as stories. Even the personality of the teller of ghost stories should have some influence upon the way a story is told.

These questions can be studied by sociological survey methods. As a part of the "Chinese Family Life Study Project," we interviewed all juvenile delinquents who had police records, lived in the Ku-t'ing

district of the city of Taipei in 1968, belonged to the Min-nan ethnic group, and were between 13 and 17 years of age. We also interviewed their parents, and their siblings if they were in the same age bracket. We undertook the same approach in San Francisco with all known juvenile delinquents in Chinatown who fulfilled the same conditions. The San Francisco interviews were collected in 1967.

By asking Chinese-Americans to tell a ghost story, we also wanted to study a second hypothesis: if in the ghost stories told among Chinese-Americans the ghost is a Chinese ghost, the storyteller is basically still Chinese; if the ghost is a ghost who lives in San Francisco but is Chinese in shape or character, the storyteller is more assimilated; and if the ghost is an American ghost, or if we receive a typically American ghost story, the assimilation of the storyteller is already far advanced.

At the time of the interview, the interviewees were also asked to tell a dream and a joke. We hoped to find similar traits of modernization and ethnic assimilation in both the dreams and the jokes. Jokes seemed to be especially promising for a study of assimilation, as they are often very closely tied to the language and the culture. (Dreams and jokes will be analyzed in separate papers.¹ The problem of juvenile delinquents, their parents and their environment, is a completely independent study in which we hope to use some of the insights gained in these preliminary research efforts.)

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With the assistance of the authorities we found 30 juvenile delinquents in the Ku-t'ing district of Taipei—i.e., juveniles who had been picked up several times by the police. Together with their families, we received 104 interviews from them.² In San Francisco, we found 36 juvenile delinquents in the same age group, all males. (This group plus their families is labeled Group "D.") Together with their families, we got 103 interviews from this group (Table 1). In addition, in San

1. A comparison of Taiwanese and San Francisco Chinese-American dreams will be published in my *Moral and Social Values of the Chinese* (Taipei, 1971). Here, I want to express my thanks to the Institute of International Studies, University of California, Berkeley, which financed the research, and to Professor K. Abbott, who was the director of the field work in San Francisco and in Taipei. All data are collected in the Chinese language and preserved at the University of California at Berkeley.

2. The ghost stories and all other data were written down and not tape recorded, because the interviewees objected to recordings, but were quite willing to dictate the stories. The interviewers were male and female college students, with training in interviewing and often with considerable training in sociology. Each member of a family was interviewed separately and by different interviewers.

Francisco we asked two other groups to tell us ghost stories: a group called "N," consisting of boys in the same school class as the delinquent boys and, therefore, representing the "normal" type of young boy, and a group of boys and girls nominated by the Chinese community as "extraordinary children" (called "O"). From the N group, we received 83 interviews, and from the O group, we received 96 interviews. Thus our San Francisco sample consists of a total of 282 interviews. We should keep in mind that we have no information about the life history of the parents of the juvenile delinquents; therefore, neither the parents nor the siblings of these juvenile delinquents should be regarded as delinquents a priori. In fact, the whole problem of delinquency will not be studied here, and the three San Francisco samples should be regarded as three samples which will in general be taken together as one.

When we began the Taipei interviews, we noticed that the interviewees liked to tell ghost stories, while they were generally more reluctant to tell a joke or a dream. On the other hand, this sample of juvenile delinquents and their families in Taipei was more hesitant to answer even general questions than had been two other samples of Minnan people in the same district whom we had interviewed for another project. The persons who did not tell a ghost story were in general the least cooperative, and they refused to tell jokes and dreams as well (7 out of 8 fathers and sons; 2 out of 6 mothers). Similarly, the "D" group in San Francisco was in general more reserved than the other two groups. Both in Taipei and in San Francisco parents refused to tell a ghost story more often than their children (Table 1), but the general rate of refusal was much higher in San Francisco than in Taipei.

It was surprising to see that about two-thirds of all interviewees in Taipei either had had their own experience with ghosts or thought that the story they reported was true or might be true (Table 2). About one-third of the ghost stories told by the older generation were reported as real, from their own experience. Only one girl reported that her story had happened to her—perhaps the chances of getting involved with ghosts become higher with advancing age—but most of the young people either regarded the story they told as true or at least possible. Yet, in general, the younger generation accepted the truth of ghost stories less often than did their parents. This is definitely also true in San Francisco, although two young boys had had their personal experiences with ghosts there. In San Francisco the percentage of parents who had met with ghosts is much lower than in Taipei.

When we look at the three sub-groups in San Francisco (Table 3), we see that the "D" group is perhaps more skeptical than the others. They had fewer experiences with ghosts and believed less often in stories, but they were more unsure than the others about whether or not

Table 1. Who Tells Ghost Stories to the Interviewer?

	Taiwan		San Francisco	
	Total Interviews	Refusals	Total Interviews	Refusals
Fathers	22	5 (23%)	85	32 (38%)
Mothers	29	6 (21%)	95	44 (46%)
Sons	39	3 (8%)	88	25 (28%)
Daughters	14	—	14	3 (21%)
	104	14 (13%)	282	104 (36.9%)

Table 2 Who Believes in Ghost Stories? (in percent)

	Taiwan				San Francisco			
	F (n=17)	M (n=23)	S (n=36)	D (n=14)	F (n=50)	M (n=49)	S (n=31)	D (n=5)
My own experience	41	26	—	7	32	18	7	—
True	29	26	36	50	12	29	20	60
I am not sure	12	17	20	14	10	20	16	—
Story true, no ghost	6	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Not true	12	26	39	29	42	33	55	40
No information	—	4	6	—	4	—	3	—

Table 3. Which Group in San Francisco Believes the Most in Ghosts? (in percent)

	D(n=46)	N(n=38)	O(n=51)	Total(n=135)
Own experience	20	11	28	20
True	11	26	28	21
Not sure	24	13	8	15
Not true	42	47	37	41
No information	4	3	—	2

the stories could still perhaps be true.

The young tellers do not really believe that the ghost stories which they have read in books or heard in school are true. It is important to note, however, that there is the belief that every ghost story *could* in principle be true.

Ghost stories can be learned from books or from the radio, from people other than relatives and from family members (Table 4). We find friends and neighbors to be the most important sources. This group

Table 4. From Whom Does One Learn Ghost Stories?

	Taiwan					San Francisco				
	F	M	S	D	Total (n=83)	F	M	S	D	Total (n=135)
Own experience	7	6	—	1	14(17%)	16	9	2	—	27(20%)
Books, radio	2	—	6	—	8(10%)	3	2	2	—	7(5%)
Non-relatives					52(63%)					65(48%)
Friends	1	10	6	3	20(24%)	6	11	11	3	31(23%)
Fellow Students	—	—	9	6	15(18%)	1	2	—	—	3(2%)
Neighbors	5	5	3	1	14(17%)	16	7	—	—	23(17%)
Teachers	1	—	1	1	3(4%)	—	—	6	2	8(6%)
Family members					9(11%)					30(34%)
Father	—	—	2	—	2(2%)	1	—	1	—	2(2%)
Mother	1	—	2	1	4(5%)	1	3	3	—	7(5%)
Uncle, aunt	—	—	1	—	1(1%)	1	1	3	—	5(4%)
Other membes	—	1	1	—	2(2%)	3	11	2	—	16(12%)
Folk belief	—	—	—	—	—	2	2	—	—	4(3%)
Don't remember	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1	—	2(2%)

Table 5. To Whom Does One Tell Ghost Stories?

	Taiwan					San Francisco				
	F	M	S	D	Total	F	M	S	D	Total
Never tell, rarely tell	5	6	8	—	19 (23%)	13	9	2	—	24 (19%)
Non-relatives					45 (54%)					77 (61%)
Friends	1	3	3	1	8	9	15	15	2	41
Fellow Students	1	—	10	6	17	2	2	2	1	7
Neighbors, anybody	—	3	1	1	5	10	7	4	—	21
When everybody tells	4	—	5	1	10	4	2	—	—	6
When asked	3	—	2	—	5	—	—	1	1	2
Family					20 (24%)					27 (21%)
Family group	2	—	3	1	6	4	3	1	1	9
Parents	1	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—
Mother	—	1	—	—	1	—	2	—	—	2
Sister	—	—	—	2	2	—	—	1	—	1
Brother	—	—	—	1	1	—	1	3	—	4
Children	1	8	—	—	9	1	6	—	—	7
Wife, Husband	—	—	—	—	—	3	—	—	—	3
TOTAL					84					127

Note: Cases with no information are left out. If several answers were given, only the first answer was coded.

of "neighbors" includes all acquaintances not included in the other groups—even servants; the group of "fellow students" also includes co-workers. Our data give us the impression that in the emigrant community of San Francisco, ghost stories are not as often told as they are in Taipei, and are most often told within the family circle. Among "other family members" we find quite a variety of people, including brothers, sisters and mothers-in-law, but very rarely including grandparents. On the other hand, there is not much difference between the two communities on the question of to whom one tells or would tell a ghost story (Table 5). The favorite group is the group of friends or acquaintances. Some of the interviewees who said they never told stories (except to the interviewer upon his request) mentioned specifically that they would not tell such stories to children, while others remarked that they might tell ghost stories to children or siblings to warn them of dangers they might be faced with. In addition to being composed of the "D," "N," and "O" groups, our San Francisco samples had still another characteristic (Table 6): the interviewees could answer the questions either in the English language or in one of the two main Cantonese dialects spoken in town, the Sam-yap (so-called "third dialect") or the Se-yap (so-called "fourth dialect"). We could, therefore, try to test whether this added characteristic had an influence upon the kind of ghost story told. As already mentioned, in San Francisco we expected to receive—in addition to refusals (Table 7)—persons who would tell stories which are non-Chinese, heard from non-Chinese sources, read in English language books, or seen in movies or TV; we also expected stories whose actors are non-Chinese (Table 8). As expected, the general trend was that the older generation preferred Chinese, while the younger generation preferred English (see Tables 7-10). It was, perhaps, also to be expected that Chinese speakers would be more reluctant to answer questions concerning ghost stories than English speakers (Table 7). But Table 8 shows clearly that non-Chinese stories are told predominantly by the youth in English. Conversely, ghost stories which took place in China, i.e., stories in which the ghost lived in China, are told predominantly by the older people, and much more often in Chinese than in English (Table 10). We might also say that the "extraordinary" families (O), who supposedly are families with a wider outlook on life and, therefore, known to the community as special families, tell non-Chinese stories more often than the others, while in general, the differences between the three sub-groups (O, N, D) are not important.

A comparison of Tables 8 and 10 shows, however, that the younger generation, more acculturated to American society, tells non-Chinese stories more often. Table 9 gives the intermediate picture: older people tell only slightly more often than their children ghost stories in which the

Table 6. General Characteristics of San Franciscans

	N	Percent of Total
Fathers	85	30.1
Mothers	95	33.7
Sons	88	31.2
Daughters	14	4.9
TOTAL	282	99.9
Extraordinary	96	34.0
Normal	83	29.4
Delinquent	103	36.5
TOTAL	282	99.9
Use English	138	48.9
Third dialect	55	20.6
Fourth dialect	89	31.6
TOTAL	282	100.1

Table 7. San Franciscans Who Do Not Tell Ghost Stories

	Group			Language			Total
	0	N	D	E	3	4	
Fathers	8	9	15	10	8	14	32(38%)
Mothers	11	16	17	7	17	20	44(46%)
Sons	3	8	14	21	4	—	25(28%)
Daughters	3	—	—	2	1	—	3(21%)
	25(26%)	33(39%)	46(45%)	40(29%)	30(55%)	34(38%)	104(36.9%)

Note: In Tables 7-10 the percentages in the horizontal rows refer to the total number of 0, N, D, E, 3, 4, etc.: the percentages in the last column refer to the total sample (fathers, mothers, sons, daughters).

Table 8. San Franciscans Who Tell Non-Chinese Stories

	Group			Language			Total
	O	N	D	E	3	4	
Fathers	2	1	—	2	—	1	3(4%)
Mothers	1	—	1	1	1	—	2(2%)
Sons	12	11	9	30	1	1	32(36%)
Daughters	5	—	1	6	—	—	6(63%)
	20(21%)	12(14%)	11(11%)	39(28%)	2(3%)	2(2%)	43(15.3%)

Table 9. Ghost Stories Which Took Place in American-Chinese Society

	Group				Language		Total
	O	N	D	E	3	4	
Fathers	5	4	4	9	—	4	13(15%)
Mothers	6	2	6	9	—	5	14(14%)
Sons	3	3	12	17	1	—	18(21%)
Daughter	3	—	—	3	—	—	3(21%)
	17(18%)	9(11%)	22(4%)	38(28%)	1(2%)	9(10%)	48(12.1%%)

Table 10. Ghost Stories Which Took Place in China

	Group				Language		Total
	O	N	D	E	3	4	
Fathers	14	9	14	5	7	25	37(44%)
Mothers	14	12	9	6	10	19	35(37%)
Sons	4	8	1	8	5	—	13(15%)
Daughters	2	—	—	2	—	—	2(14%)
	34(35%)	29(35%)	24(23%)	21(15%)	22(40%)	44(50%)	87(30.8%)

ghost lived within the Chinese community in San Francisco or elsewhere in the United States. At the same time, these parents more often used English as the medium for interviewing than those parents who told stories about ghosts in China. As hypothesized, the ghost stories can be seen as a rough test of acculturation.

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As soon as we look into the stories, one observation can immediately be made: the stories which supposedly are "true" fall into the same categories as the other tales which are considered untrue, in exactly the same way as the Chinese ghost stories we know from the literature. It seems that this field of folk narrative is still alive. New ghost stories may spring up every day, in Taiwan as well as in San Francisco, and what is reported as a "true" happening has exactly the same form as a ghost story in the literature or in folklore collections, or as an "untrue" ghost story. One can well imagine that at some time in the future no one will believe in ghost stories, which then will be told like any folktale, merely as entertainment. In that event—which probably will occur earlier in San Francisco than in Taiwan—there will gradually be fewer

ghost stories; names of places and persons will tend to disappear, and the great variety of these stories will be condensed into a number of more typified, standardized stories—perhaps more beautiful artistically. I have already encountered this phenomenon in my work on the *Typen chinesischer Volksmärchen*, and therefore in that book assigned some presumably “true” stories to the “types” to which they belonged according to their motifs.

First, I shall discuss the Taiwanese ghost stories. A few of them occur in almost identical form more than once in this collection. Most of them are independent of one another, although they fall into a number of “patterns.” Only one ghost story was told in Taiwan as many as ten times. It seems to be known to very many people, perhaps because it was reported as “true” in the newspapers. Here is a representative text:

In the Hsin-sheng theater (in Taipei) there is a ghost. There once was a woman who came to see the movies. She went to the toilet and looked into the mirror. Just when she was combing her hair, there was suddenly a female (voice) saying to her: “Do not comb your hair. Even if you keep combing, you will not look better than I do.” When the woman turned her head around to see her, she saw nothing. When she turned back to the mirror, she suddenly saw a woman who was terribly burned all over. She was much afraid and ran away. When she was home, she got sick.

(Told by a boy.)

Six boys, one girl, two mothers, and one father told this story, and only one father, one boy, and one girl regarded the story as untrue. The background to this story is that the building which houses the present movie theater replaces another building that had contained a restaurant, a movie theater, and a taxi dance bar. When it burned down in 1964, many people burned to death, including some dance girls. According to popular belief, these beautiful girls suffered an unfair fate and therefore their souls could not find peace, and remained in the building after it was rebuilt and reopened in 1967. The resulting ghost story, which appeared in newsprint in 1967, prevented some people from visiting the movie theater. As long as the belief persists that the soul of a person who died untimely, and could not receive a normal burial remains at the place of death, similar stories can spring up at any time. In this case, the belief is the core of the story, and the details are the shell. We are, therefore, not too astonished to find this story also in our San Francisco sample in three versions, all told in English as an event that had happened in that city, which had been told to the interviewee by a friend. One text, told by a boy, goes like this:

There was this girl at a movie; she went to the bathroom to comb her

hair and there was another girl combing her hair, through the reflection of the mirror looking at her. She was looking right at her. When she turned around, she wasn't there. And that's it.

In the third version, told by a man, the hero is a man who sees a strange face in the bathroom mirror in a playhouse.

Thirty of our ghost stories have an even simpler core: *a person meets a ghost*. The result of this meeting—a chance meeting—may simply be astonishment or fear, or the person meeting the ghost may be shocked into illness or even death. This is not the fault of the ghost; the human was just so frightened that his soul was damaged or left his body. There are some sub-types of ghost stories in our sample. Here are a few examples:

Formerly, I heard there was a man on a mountain who one day in the evening wanted to collect grass to feed the cow. When that man collected grass, he saw a girl standing nearby. Because he was curious, he went closer to look at her, but when he came close, the girl was invisible.

(Told by a boy as a true story.)

Similar in type is the following “personal experience” of a man:

One day I was returning from Shih-lin to Taipei in business affairs. Halfway, I passed by the foot of Mount Yüan. There was a girl. It was during the summer, at about 7:00 or 8:00 o'clock in the evening. She was about thirty years old, wore an old-fashioned dress: black blouse, black skirt, a pair of wooden sandals, and both her hands were on her knees. When I looked at her she did not dare to lift her head to look at me. Then it occurred to me that this girl might have had trouble at home and therefore was sitting here. Then I looked again at her, and the more I looked, the stranger it was. I was hardly more than ten feet away from her. Therefore I could see her very clearly. She was at the roadside. I looked again straight on, and again I saw her; but then, not half a second later, she was no longer there. Then I thought she might have been a ghost. And, in great fear, I quickly rode my cycle to Mount Yüan and did not dare to turn my head and look.

Mount Yüan is a hill at the river in Taipei, the site of the Grand Hotel. The area is a famous dating place for the modern youth. The “girl” was dressed like a simple, lower-class girl from the time of the Japanese occupation; probably this is the reason that the reporter was finally convinced that she was a ghost. In stories told by men, the environment where one meets ghosts is usually rural and especially near water, and these ghosts are often female. Adult women more often meet ghosts in their own homes, and these ghosts are frequently dead mothers. But many married women tell stories in which the main actors are men

who meet ghosts. Here is a story, told by a girl as a "true" story, experienced by her own mother, which had taken place at a river, and where the ghost was male:

Once, on my way home after school, I saw a river. There was a man without a hat, driving cattle. When I came close he jumped into the river and never came up. This was strange. Perhaps it was a water ghost.

Here is a story of the same type, but with a more serious ending, told by a boy who learned it from his uncle, who had said that this had taken place on the Mainland of China:

Once, in the evening, a man who was walking along had the feeling that someone was following him. This man was young and strong. He was astonished: "How come, so late in the evening? There are people walking?" Full of curiosity, he turned around to see and saw a human head, but no feet. He was deadly afraid, ran home, and when he was home, he got sick.

Another story, also from the Hsin-sheng theater, was reported twice by young people—a girl and a boy. The girl thought it was not true; the boy, whose story follows, thought it to be true and had heard it from his mother:

A teacher from X went with his girl friend to the Hsin-sheng theater, to see a movie. In the midst of the performance, he saw standing in front of them a girl with a modern hairdo, taking away his view. So he stretched out his hand to make her sit down. What do you know: you see with your eyes that there is a human being, but when you feel, you feel nothing. He was stiff with fear and fainted.

Two other stories of this kind clearly indicate that the ghosts are dead people. Both stories are "real events" which took place on Pa-tê road in Taipei, one told by a woman, the other by her daughter. This is one of the few cases in which two members of the family of their own choice told the same story, without the interviewer suggesting a title. Both texts follow.

The mother's story:

Most recently, on Pa-tê road, close to the Ta-an Junior High School, many people have seen ghosts. One day I and my husband went out with the dog. We saw a man on the road in the evening at 8:00 o'clock. He was sitting at the roadside, looking toward the school. I could not see his face. When he returned, I was a bit afraid. And really: on a tomb there was a man of eight feet size, standing. He did not move at all. I called my husband to look. He also saw him. We lowered our heads and did not dare

to look further, but went home.

The daughter's story:

I lived on Pa-tê road. I was probably in the fourth grade, and there, near the Ta-an Middle School, all was still rice fields. Very few street lights. At the time, it was probably in the evening, after midnight. Not far from our house. We brought rocks home. I stood there and filled the rocks in, and my older sister brought them into the house. At that time, my sister had just left and I stood there, waiting. I was alone there. I had nothing to do, so I looked all around. Suddenly, I looked back and I saw, not far from me, in the air, a ball-shaped thing with a fire at its tail, but not like the fire-crackers. It was like a man's head, but eyes and nose were not clear. After a second, it was invisible. At that time, I was still small, and I was not much afraid. And I did not talk about it. Nearby there are tombs of the Kuanghsü period (i.e., before 1909). I do not know whether these were ghosts or not, but it was not like a fire-cracker. I think it was a kind of will-of-the-wisp.

In these thirty stories *the ghost is merely seen*, and there is no interaction between ghost and man in the ten versions about the fire in the movie theater. However, in most other stories, *ghost and men do interact*, and this can have different reasons. In six stories, the ghost unprovokedly attacks the man. In most cases in the literature, in which this type is well known, the ghost is a walking corpse (revenant), believed to be malicious by nature and unable to recognize even his closest relatives, since only the personal soul, not the body-soul, has personality and human feelings. As an example, I cite a story (which clearly belongs to *Typen* no. 113, as do two more stories in this group), told by a woman who had heard it in a village when she was very young. She thought that formerly this story might have been true, but "today it cannot be true":

Once there was a river, where many people died. Everyone knew that if one wanted to cross it there was always a ghost in the shape of a beautiful girl. Many people did not dare to cross it, but one man said: "I am not afraid." So he alone, with a rope, went to the river. A pretty girl stood there and said, "Brother, I do not dare to cross the river. Could you be so nice and carry me over?" The man said, "Fine," and he took her on his back and tied her up. In the place where the water was deep the girl tried to push him into the river. Then she took her very long tongue and licked licked the man's neck, and then his whole body. It was like ice. Then she asked the man to turn his head and to look at her. The man knew better and did not look behind. So he carried her to the other side. There she changed into a coffin board. So the man used the rope and tied the board and burned it. From then on there was no longer a ghost in the river.

Five stories are about persons who committed *suicide* by hanging, or who drowned. In popular belief, their souls remain close to the place of the accident, as in the story of the movie theater, and can be saved only if they can find a replacement for themselves. Thus, they try to cause another person's death. Only one of the five stories has the full story in which this attempt by the ghost is foiled by a courageous man.³

Formerly there was a pork-butcher. One day, when it was not yet morning, he went to the countryside to slaughter pigs. He came to a place where he saw a girl leaning against a pole. The butcher was quite astonished. "What is this girl doing?" So he went into her direction and came to a house. He saw the girl who called, "Quickly!" and went into the house through a window. The butcher felt that this was not appropriate. So he knocked at the gate of the house and asked the owner, "Is it possible that a girl came to you?" The owner said, "No." The butcher said he had seen that a person had entered through the window. The owner said that this was his daughter-in-law's room. The butcher wanted him to go and look. They heard people speaking and crying, saying, "Quickly, quickly, do not cry, quickly." It was as if a person had come into the room. The owner opened the door and looked. His daughter-in-law was crying and had a rope to hang herself on the beam. She made ready to hang herself. Fortunately, she was saved in time.

We can assume that in this story the ghost—a dead person looking for a replacement—had nothing against the daughter-in-law, probably had no connection with her at all, but was attracted by the worries and death wish of the girl.

In a set of five closely related stories, the ghost is also an aggressive revenant and has nothing against the men with whom he interacts. But the men gambled, which many Chinese regard as a sin, and their *sinful behavior may have attracted the ghost*. But perhaps this interpretation goes too far, and the story just describes a night of horror. Here is one text, told by a boy:

Once there were some military policemen guarding from noon time on a man who had been killed—a middle-aged man. They had nothing to do, so they played gambling games. They played until midnight. Behind the back of one of the men there appeared several men without heads. One of the soldiers who noted them went out to the toilet, and the remaining soldiers also soon went out, one after the other, until the last one was left. He wondered why the others had all gone to the toilet and nobody had come back. When he turned his head, he got a shock and started running, but the ghosts followed him. They followed him to a forest. Suddenly the

3. Told by a girl, who commented upon the story: "Many people say that ghosts of hanged people look for a replacement. Probably this was the case here too."

sun came up. The ghosts, in confusion, believing the trees to be the man, clawed them with their nails. Then they melted away.

In another group of stories the ghosts are related to the living people, which leads to certain *obligations or claims*. In three stories, the ghost takes revenge for an injustice which he had suffered when still living. The following story is a good example:⁴

Once there was a rich man who lived together with his parents, his brother, and his sisters. His father willed that upon the parents' death the property be divided into two parts, one for each brother, since the family had so much land. One day the brothers went swimming together, and when the younger brother had been swimming halfway, he had cramps and called his brother to help him. But the older brother not only did not come, but swam home and soon the younger brother drowned. He (the older) was very happy because all the property would be his own. Some twenty years later he had a son and a daughter. One day the daughter disappeared and it was rumored that she had drowned. The son also died. The man was very sad and called a shaman. Later he heard the shaman say, "It may be that in a previous generation a bad act was committed, and there are the bad consequences." In that night he dreamed of his drowned brother, who suddenly was clear before his eyes, and said that he wanted to take his life. At that the rich man fainted because of fear. That night, however, all remained calm. Next morning, the dead brother appeared again and kicked him so that he fainted, and then killed him. This story tells us that bad acts have bad consequences; good acts have good consequences.

The injustice may also have been an act of which the living person is not aware, such as in the following "true" story:⁵

The friend of one of my co-students bought a wig. They fixed it up prettily at the hairdresser's, and when she came out on the street, everybody who saw this pretty hair admired her. Suddenly a person shouted, "Miss, Miss!", but when she turned her head, nobody was there, nobody was shouting, people were just passing by. She thought it must have been an error, but again a person called, "Miss, Miss, give me back my hair!" She was so afraid that she jumped, and immediately took her wig and threw it into the street. Then she went to the hairdresser and asked whose hair it was. Finally, she found out that it was the hair of a dead person.

Occasionally, however, the ghost is *grateful for a good deed* toward

4. Told by a boy, who said he had heard the story at home. It was a Fukien story. He remarked, "I think it cannot be true; perhaps it came from his psyche."

5. Told by a girl who had heard it from another student, and thought it was a true story: "My co-student said she has seen it with her own eyes, because she was together with that friend. She saw herself how her friend cried out."

him, as in this story of a foundling:

A girl was crying in the street, and a wealthy, good-hearted lady took her home, played with her, and was very nice to her. One day, she noticed suddenly that the adopted child was staring at her, and it said, "Mrs. Li, thank you very much. You have been nice to my child." The lady told this to her husband. Her husband said to that ghost: "If you are honest, then let us see you." And really, in the evening a woman in a blue dress came to thank husband and wife. They took some fruit and sacrificed it, and then the woman disappeared.

The woman who told this story, which she had heard from friends in a village, regarded it as true.⁶

Most of the *sexual ghost stories* also fall into this category, i.e., stories in which it is usually a man who establishes sexual relations with a woman who later turns out to be a ghost. This type of story is common in collections like the *Strange Stories*, and many variations are possible. Such an event may lead to the death of the living partner, but also—though rarely—the dead partner's revival, and to a happy ending. We have only three such stories in our collection, and here I shall record one, which supposedly had its origin just outside Taipei City:⁷

I heard that a man and a woman had a long friendship. The man later left to become a soldier, and the woman died of a disease. When the man returned from the service, he wrote a letter to the girl, asking her to go to the movies with him. They walked in the street together, but whenever he was with the girl, her hand was very cold and she always wore a grey dress. Every time he dated her it was after midnight, deep in the night. Finally the man decided to marry her. So he sent someone to her family to discuss the matter. The girl's father said, "The girl has been dead already for a year. . ." So one night the man followed her home and discovered that she went into a tomb. Later, the girl's father hired people to dig out her tomb. They found that her body had not decayed, and they burned some silver-paper⁸ for her. From then on she did not appear any more.

In the next group of stories it is assumed that *ghosts have needs* that can be fulfilled only with the assistance of living persons. In two stories the ghosts need food, which they either steal or buy with

6. It is understood that the soul of the dead mother entered her little daughter's body and spoke from within her.

7. Told by a woman, who heard it from a friend. She had some doubts about the truth of the story.

8. Silver paper is burned in sacrifices to the dead, while gold paper is burned in sacrifices to the deities (Liu Chi-wan, *Great Propitiatory Rites*, p. 130 and *Taiwan Feng-wu*, Vol. 11, No. 2 (1961), p. 12).

sacrificial paper money. Four other stories in this group concern marriage and birth. Three of these were said to have been true events. The full text of these three stories follows:

(1) There was a woman who one day fainted and died, but she did not really die. She was the wife of a rich man. Not long after she had fainted, people buried her. When she died she had a child in her womb. So she gave birth to the child in the tomb. At night she came out of the tomb and bought cookies which she gave to the child to eat. She bought very many every day, and the shopkeeper noticed that this woman paid for the cookies with real money, but that at night the money changed into ghost money. He wondered, and so this shopkeeper decided to follow her, since he had found out that this woman was a neighbor's wife who was already dead. So that day, when the shopkeeper followed her, he came to the tomb and there she suddenly disappeared. He told this to the woman's husband. The husband did not believe (him), but then he, too, went to the tomb, and he took away that baby. Later, the woman returned to life, too.⁹

(2) One night, very late, a woman came to a hairdresser's, knocked at the door, and asked him to give her a permanent wave. Because of the money, he consented to help her and give her the treatment. The man asked, "Lady, why do you come at such a late hour?" She answered, "There was so much wind, and because early in the morning I want to get married. I could come only now, at night." When the work was finished, the girl gave him many small bills. The hairdresser was very happy, and put the money into the drawer. Next morning, when he opened the drawer, he saw only some sheets of silver paper money, no (real) money.¹⁰

(3) In a village there was once an only midwife. One night, around midnight, suddenly a man knocked at the door, saying that his wife was about to give birth. He asked her to come quickly to help his wife. The midwife went with him and they walked a long time to a house. She helped the wife and, when all was finished, the man gave the midwife much money. Before going home, she wanted to wash her hands, but the man said they did not have a drop of water in the house for washing her hands. So the midwife wiped her hands at the door and then went home. The next day she saw that there was no money in her purse, but only seven or eight sheets of silver paper. She was quite surprised and started going to that

9. Told by a woman, who heard it from a friend. She said, "Probably this story is true, its character indicates that it might be true." Yet this is clearly a variant of *Typen* no. 115. Ghost money is the same as the silver money mentioned elsewhere. There are two kinds of sacrificial money in use now: brown paper with a trace of silver leaf or gold leaf pasted on it, or "money" printed somewhat like the currently used bills. Here, perhaps, the shopkeeper mistook ghost bills for real bills. It is interesting to see that the husband was interested only in the baby, not in his wife. *Typen* no. 115 tells also that only the baby was saved or taken from the womb of the dead mother, not that the mother was revived.

10. Told by a girl, who had heard it from a servant. It occurred supposedly in a village near Chang-hua. The modern setting is interesting.

house. But after walking a long time she came to a tomb nearby, and when she looked well, there was blood on the tombstone.¹¹

In four other stories *the ghost is a relative* who comes back to visit her family,¹² and in another story the ghost is not a relative, but a co-student who comes back to see her classmates. Such relatives or co-students do not cause any harm.

It would be tempting, and perhaps easy, to analyze these ghost stories psychologically. One would find all kinds of fears and complexes as the likely causes of these "fantasies." It may indeed be one of the functions of these stories to express fears and complexes and to alleviate guilt feelings. Another function might be for the teller to free himself from guilt in the eyes of the community. It must be emphasized that there is no difference, in this respect, between stories presumed to be "true" and stories understood to be fictitious. They are so common that they have already been represented in my "Types of Folktales". The unclear distinction between a true happening and a fictitious story can also be seen in a group of eight stories which were given to us as ghost stories, but are really not ghost stories. Thus, a man from a rural district near Tainan told the following story, presumably his own experience:

One night in the countryside, I took a lantern and went to the river to take a rest. I fished with small fishing-tackle. The legs of my pants got wet. When I went home at around one o'clock in the morning, because the legs of my pants were wet, they gave a sound like xxx.¹³ I felt as if a man was following me. I was afraid and walked faster, but the sounds followed me faster. Then I began to run because of fear. I ran as fast as I could, I ran for my life. I ran until I could run no more and I began to slow down. When I looked down at my self, I found that it was just the wet legs of my trousers which made these sounds.

Two other men told almost the same story. A few words would suffice to change this story into a real ghost story, even with a tragic end.

Then, there are two stories in which people are made to believe that *ghosts* are at work, while in reality living people *pretended* to be ghosts in order to achieve their own purposes. One of the stories¹⁴ is

11. Told by a man, who heard it from neighbors. Supposedly, it happened in a village. Another story in the collection is almost identical, told by a woman who did not regard it as true.

12. One of these stories supposedly happened again in Pa-tê in Taipei. We have already discussed other stories from this new quarter of the city which was built on a former burial site.

13. Here the sound is imitated.

14. Told by a boy.

very like a well known type of tale, but the teller claimed that he was its author. The other one, reported by a girl and told somewhat incoherently, may still serve as an example:

Formerly there was a good family that had a son and a daughter. The father was a big businessman, the wife a pianist. She went out to parties every day, and besides, the husband was never nice to her, so finally they separated. The mother took the son and left with him. Soon after, the businessman died, leaving much property. He had not liked his daughter. To help her take care of the house, he had hired a couple who lived in the house. This couple was very bad and wanted her wealth. So they told her that her mother had been put into a small room by her father, and they pointed it out to her. From then on, every night the girl would hear a very sad song. One day, suddenly a young man came to help her in the house. When he heard that story, he wanted to assist the girl. Now, this young man in reality was her brother. Her mother and brother came to see her, and she (the mother?) asked the brother to dress like a servant. That night the girl again heard the sad song. The girl now went with the young man to look. There was someone inside, making music. When he heard somebody coming and opened the door to look, he was not careful and fell down. In reality, that person with a mask was the servant whom they had hired. Later she lived together with her mother and brother, and the mother no longer went out to parties.

4

The stories told in San Francisco can be classified in a similar way. Reports that ghosts have been seen, but did not interact with humans are very common (thirty-five stories). Among these, two stories are common. In one, a "ghost-fire" is seen:

In the village I've seen hillside graveyards, where there was a ball of very colorful fire that could be seen.¹⁵

All the eight stories of this type supposedly happened in China, of which three are reported as personal experiences. Perhaps three stories, which supposedly happened in San Francisco, are related to these. In these stories lights turn themselves on:

A lady, who lived on Pacific Avenue, had died and every night the lights in her house would go on and one can see shadows of her.¹⁶

In two other stories, the ghost appeared as something white in San Francisco:

15. Told by a father, in the 4th dialect (O sample).

First moved out here we lived in a flat. I swear I saw something white. When I was asleep, just woke me up. Didn't say anything. I was so afraid I pulled the sheet over me. But I still saw it. So I had the light open all night. Just that one time.¹⁷

The second common type, also represented by eight stories all of which took place in China, tells of crying ghosts:

I myself experienced this in Ling-nan (University). In the dormitory the freshmen must live downstairs. At that time, I do not know when, I suddenly heard a lot of noise. It felt very strange. Why was it so noisy? I went out, did not hear any noise at all. At that time I did not think of anything pertaining to spirits or ghosts. Back in the room, I heard them again. Then I began to be afraid. The next morning, I went to tell the others. They said that it happened every so often because during the Ch'ing dynasty there were soldiers fighting here. Many people died. Besides, those who were caught were executed there.¹⁸

In most of the other stories of this type, the ghost was just seen or its presence felt, but nothing happened.

The most common type of tale tells of an unprovoked attack by a ghost. The story about the person in the mirror has already been told. In four stories, the ghosts cause people to lose their way:

When I was little, my father went back to China. I heard him telling ghost stories. At night he went to the market, Ping Kwong Market. He had fun there till late at night. He returned around midnight or one a.m. But it was a distance of three or four miles. He walked four or five hours, still could not get home. He thought, perhaps a ghost got him lost. He thought that there was no reason for it. On the hill there was yellow feathery grass. He also had a pistol. He fired but there was no noise. He remembered that the yellow grass could break the charm of the ghosts. He stood with his two feet apart, used the yellow grass in between his feet to thrust it into the opening of his pistol, then he could fire the pistol. He then discovered that he had been walking around the same spot on the hill all the time. The grass died from his walking on it.¹⁹

In two other stories, people who had gone out to catch frogs had similar misfortune:

When they woke up, there was no frog in the basket, and they were still in the original place.

Another example of unprovoked attacks by a ghost:

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16. Told by a boy (D sample), in English.
 17. Told by a mother (O), in English.
 18. Told by a father (O), in 3rd dialect.
 19. Told by a father (O), in 4th dialect.

. . . . One blind man walked along the streets to sing at night. Ghost called him up to sing; they also prepared a snack for him to eat. They prepared earthworms for him to eat. He sang till dawn. Some farmers went to work early in the morning. They saw this blind man singing. They woke him up. Then he threw up all the earthworms.²⁰

Only two of these stories are reported as personal experiences, and they seem to have happened more often in China than in the United States. Usually, the events are not very serious when they happen in the United States—people just get frightened or annoyed. In some cases, however, death may be the consequence:

When I was very young, I remember one of the cooks in our restaurant told about "bei gwai jok" (letting a ghost catch him). He saw a shadow, it scared him, and he woke up. Another cook told me he saw a vision or had a dream about a woman in white at the foot of the bed. The cook passed away soon after that.²¹

In five stories, all from China, the old theme recurs of a person who had committed suicide and is looking for a "replacement." If the ghost can induce another person to die, it can be reborn and its suffering will end. This motif seems to underlie the following story:

When I was little, about twelve or fourteen, in Hong Kong, I really saw ghost. You know, many houses in Hong Kong have a little balcony. I was chatting with friends. Suddenly I heard someone call my name. I walked out to the balcony. There was a chair. I put my foot on the chair and the other foot was ready to jump out. My uncle saw me. He grasped me, slapped me, to wake me up. He asked why I would do this. I saw a little boy in white shirt and white pants down there. He put a ladder up and asked me to walk down. And at the same time, my mother was playing mah-jong in a friend's house. She felt her eyelids jumping; her heart was uncomfortable. When she was told about the happening, she said, "No wonder my eyelids were jumping and my heart was so very uncomfortable." Now, people call that the sixth sense. I believe that there are ghosts.²²

Ghosts often come to take revenge for an injustice which had been done them when they were alive, or even for a simple offense:

When little, when I was eleven years old, the piece of wood covering the wooden stove fell down several times. I said, "Dead old wood." A few days later, I got sick; sick for several months. Finally, I lost my hair and was near death. At night, the Buddha of the Stove (i.e., the kitchen god) gave a "messenger-dream": "From now on, don't talk this way."

20. Told by a father (D), in 4th dialect.

21. Told by a mother (D), in English. The event happened in Oregon.

22. Told by a father (O), in 3rd dialect.

After that, I gradually got well.²³

The most interesting story in this category occurs twice in our collection, and has a parallel in a Taiwanese folk ballad:

There was a person, who was a girl from a poor family. She was sold to be a prostitute. She had been going very steady with a man. The man cheated her by taking all her money. The girl then hanged herself and died. After her death, no one dared to stay in her room. One night, a peddler of needles and thread came to the house to beg for a place to stay overnight. The owner of the house told him that there was such and such a room. He said, "I am not afraid." So he went in to stay. It actually came about that a ghost came to disturb him: he heard noises but did not see anything. The peddler then asked her: "What did you have that was so unjust that you have come to disturb me?" She told him the cause and also asked him to take her to see the man. The peddler promised to take her there. The woman also said, "Do you have money? I still got some money hidden under the ground floor. Tomorrow, you take me there." He asked her, "How do I take you?" She said, "You take and buy some paper money for the dead; pass the hill and throw the paper money. As you walk, call the name 'Sout Kil'; then you can go." She also asked him to buy a paper umbrella and then they would go together. So they got to the man's store. He hung the paper umbrella on the door knob. The peddler then called the man's name. The female ghost then strangled him. Members of the man's family asked the peddler, "Why did you kill this man in this way?" The peddler then told them the cause, saying that the man cheated all the money of the woman. Now the money, he used to open this store, was all hers. Later, the peddler went to a place, where there was a girl who had just died. Her mother was crying. He walked over to see the girl, and the girl revived. The reason was that the girl who hanged herself to death borrowed the corpse and had her spirit returned into the corpse. Afterward the peddler married her.²⁴

The motif of the umbrella as vehicle for the soul occurs in both variants, and in the Taiwanese ballad. The prostitute, who had committed suicide, had to use the help of the peddler to get to the man who had caused her death, and later thanked him by putting her soul into the body of another dead person. Both storytellers said they had heard the story, one from her mother. The story reported was heard from the mother-in-law of the other woman who told the story. Yet, I feel that each may have as its source a literary story, similar to the Taiwanese folk ballad.

Only one of this revenge type of story is reported from San Francisco, but in three complete and one incomplete version. The best version is as follows:

23. Told by a father (D), in 4th dialect.

24. Told by a mother (N), in 4th dialect.

Down by Grant Street, between Pacific and Broadway, they say that a man was chopping meat in his apartment. There was only a janitor and him there. And then the man chopped off his fingers. He kept telling the janitor to look for a doctor, but the janitor didn't do it. The man died. Then the police came, took the body out. The janitor went back to work. He didn't feel good. He got scared and wanted to quit his job. This other guy came to take the job. This second guy said to the first guy that he didn't believe in ghosts and all that. Well, then later on when he was working at night, he saw fingers crawling out of the sink and he got scared. He ran out and called the police. When they got there, there wasn't anything there. Then next time the janitor saw them again and he phoned the police. They said they'll be there in 10 or 15 minutes. And the janitor watched the fingers coming toward him. The janitor said, "Before the police come I'll catch one of the fingers, so I'll have proof." Well, he went there and caught one and as he turned to go out, he felt 3 fingers strangling him. When the police got there they saw a finger in his hand and 3 on his throat. He was dead. And they couldn't figure out what happened.²⁵

The three other stories are quite similar, but one puts the event into a poultry shop²⁶ on Grant Avenue; another into a fish store in Chinatown.²⁷ The fragment²⁸ also takes place in Chinatown, but does not mention the death of the janitor.

The San Francisco collection has only two stories in which a ghost is helpful: a dead girl warns her father of a collapsing suspension bridge,²⁹ and a dead boy thanks a woman for sacrificing at his tomb by giving her luck in gambling.³⁰ Only three stories have to do with sex, and two of them are told as having been based on printed literature.³¹ This is the only other one that follows the traditional pattern of such stories very closely:

A guy married a girl and she died; so this guy married again. The first girl loved the guy so much, but he didn't realize it. But the first night when he went to bed with the second wife, the mosquito net top was shaking. He asked his second wife what was the matter, and she said she wasn't doing anything. He looked outside the bed and all he saw was a leg. He remembered his first wife had a mole on her leg, just like the leg he saw. Then he figured his first wife came back as a ghost.³²

One of the three stories in which dead persons have some need

25. Told by a boy (D), in English.

26. Told by a boy (D), in English.

27. Told by a boy (D), in English.

28. Attached to a full story, told by a boy (D), in English.

29. Told by a mother (O), in English.

30. Told by a father (D), in 4th dialect.

31. Told on the basis of a movie, which was based upon the *Liao-chai chih-i*, by a father (D), in 4th dialect.

which the living must fulfill is an interesting historical tale which I have not encountered in the same form in literary texts:

In the past Ts'ao Ts'ao and Kuan Kung were in a battle. Kuan Kung was defeated and beheaded. Since then, the headless corpse often appeared in the air and cried, "Return my head." Then a monk saw the situation and said, "How about the many you had killed in the battles of the past?" After than Kuan Kung's corpse never cried again.³²

The basic motif here is that of a Ming period story, in which a man who had lost his head asks an old woman whether he can live again. When she says that this is impossible he dies.³⁴ Another story of this type, for which I have not been able to find an exact literary parallel, also contains a number of well known tale-motifs:

A long time ago there was a poet who was very interested in writing poems. He also had profound knowledge. One time he came across a very difficult but valuable poem, but it needed one more sentence to be completed. (The poet) therefore was reading (the poem) all the time, at night, took it very seriously and even forgot his meals and sleep. Because of this, he got sick and died. What was the poem about? "North pole star. . ."—oh, I forget. From then on many people at times of rain and wind would hear his voice reading the poem and seeing his image. That happened many times. One time a very outstanding person heard this. He became very interested, and so he went to that farm. Again he heard the voice reading the poem. He then continued and finished the poem (for the dead). From then on, (people) did not hear that voice any more. . . .³⁵

The San Francisco collection further contains a number of ghost stories in which the ghost visits his former family, or simply appears without causing any harm. To give one example only:

(My sister) and seven other friends picked up a little girl from the street corner, asked where she lived, brought her to the house—on a rainy day. Before they brought the little girl up, they knocked at the door and asked if they had a little girl. No—she does no live here. He said, his girl died 2 years ago in a car accident. (She) was about to bring the girl up, but she was gone.³⁶

Finally, there are three stories, all of which supposedly happened in China, in which people thought that ghosts were active; but, in reality,

32. Told by a father (D), in English.

33. Told by a mother (D), in 4th dialect. Kuan Kung, now God of War, was Kuan Yü, a hero of the early third century A.D.

34. *Yung-ch'uang Hsiao-p'in* 15, p. 12a.

35. Told by a boy (N), in 3rd dialect. He heard it from a maternal uncle.

living persons had made a joke by pretending to act as ghosts.³⁷

5

In general, the ghost stories collected in Taiwan are very similar to those collected from Chinese-Americans in San Francisco. We can summarize our results of this comparison in the following way:

- 1) "Ghost story" is a special concept. When people are asked to tell "folktales," they tend not to tell ghost stories. Thus, no collection of the folktales of an area can be complete unless one also asks specifically for ghost stories.
- 2) If one asks for ghost stories, one mostly gets stories in which ghosts play a main role, but also occasionally the content of a popular novel,³⁸ or a legend about helping deities,³⁹ or deities in need of help. In San Francisco we also got a story about feng-shui.⁴⁰
- 3) Most of the ghost stories we received fall into my *Typen* no. 112-114.⁴¹
- 4) The ghost stories can be divided into two main categories: (A) Stories in which a human meets a ghost, but no interaction takes place, and (B) Stories in which ghost and person interact. Here we have nine sub-categories:
 - B-1) Ghost attacks people without provocation from pure animal malice;
 - B-2) Ghost tries to cause the death of a human, because the ghost needs a substitute for its place as ghost;
 - B-3) Ghost attacks men who do forbidden things, such as gambling;
 - B-4) Ghost has a claim against humans and comes for restitution. These claims can result from acts of in-

36. Told by a boy (D), in English. It happened in San Francisco.

37. Two told by boys; one by a mother. The boys had either heard the story from a teacher, or had read it in a book.

38. A Taiwanese boy referred to the *Hsi-yu chi* as a book with ghost stories.

39. A Taiwanese boy told a story that belongs into *Typen* no. 28.

40. Told by a father (O), in 4th dialect. He puts the story into the T'ang period. A deer appeared—symbolizing high position in the bureaucracy—after the father of the hero had been buried in a lucky place. The story is quite garbled. The teller heard it in his village when he was young.

41. A very long Taiwanese story, told by a man, belongs to *Typen* no. 145, 1. Another one, told by a Taiwanese boy who thinks it may be a true story, belongs to *Typen* no. 100. Finally, we had one story in Taiwan about Confucius, told by a boy who doubted the existence of ghosts but had met some.

- justice voluntarily, or involuntarily, committed by the human;
- B-5) Ghost establishes a sexual relation with humans—in all our cases, the ghost is female;
- B-7) The ghost has a need which can be fulfilled only by cooperation with humans;
- B-8) The ghost visits its former family, or other people, causing no harm;
- B-9) Under the term “ghost stories” (kuei ku-shih), one receives only stories dealing with genuine ghosts, i.e., the spirits of dead persons, not stories dealing with other supernatural beings. The ghosts of persons who have been related to their contact are normally friendly and helpful. Sometimes, they even request some favors of the living relative. The ghosts of persons who have not been related to their contact are most often hostile and aggressive. It seems fair to conclude that this belief is connected with the difference in attitude of Chinese toward family members and outsiders, and also to the great amount of suppressed aggression in Chinese society.
- 5) There is no clear border between ghost stories and “natural” stories. People may tell the same story once as a story in which a ghost definitely acted and, at another time, as a story in which it had only been believed that a ghost was responsible, while actually the event had a perfectly natural explanation.
- 6) Any ghost story can occur as both a “story” and a “true story” and, when we ask about “ghost stories,” we get both kinds of stories. Many of the “true stories” seem to be of quite recent origin, and are told by the person(s) involved. Though it seems that Taiwanese more often believe in ghosts, such belief is still very much alive even in San Francisco; but young Chinese-Americans rarely tell about their own experiences with ghosts. This may be a function of age rather than a function of acculturation or culture-change.
- 7) The fact that many of the “true stories” exist in numerous variations means that storytelling is still alive both in present-day Taiwan and in Chinese-American circles. Precisely because ghost stories can be and often are considered as true, people tend to think of them as different from other “stories,” which are regarded as not even possibly true.
- 8) Ghost stories had most often been learned from persons to

whom the receiver was not related. Some responses to our questions indicated that there exist regular "ghost storytelling sessions," at which every participant is expected to contribute a story. On the conscious level, the function of ghost stories today seems to be entertainment, to wile away the evening leisure hours pleasantly and with some excitement. But two Taiwanese boys said they would tell ghost stories to frighten others and, from San Francisco, we have a report that ghost stories are also told to serve as a warning. However, several mothers indicated that they would not tell ghost stories to children, because they would be frightened.

6

The ghost stories of non-Chinese type, which we collected in San Francisco (see above), are of little interest as folkloristic material, but give some insight into the gradual Americanization of that community. One of the most important sources of these stories is youth camps, either a summer camp outside town, or a church camp nearby. The counsellors may tell stories about Egyptian mummies, or a "Lady in England," the "Lady in White," or two families in Russia (fifteen stories). Books, such as "The Body Snatchers," "The Pit and the Pendulum," "Strange Guest," "The Windago," or comic books—and even "Readers' Digest"—are another source (12 stories). Films and television, too, are sources of non-Chinese ghost stories.

There are also some stories (nine) which are heard from persons who were Mexicans, Spanish people from Mexico, a friend from the Philippines, a father who told about the South Pacific, or a relative who had lived in Mexico. The persons in such stories are not Chinese, and the stories themselves differ from Chinese stories. In general, one has the impression that these stories represent bits and pieces which the tellers picked up haphazardly, not as a part of a whole cultural complex. This impression is similar to that gained when studying the literature of the Chinese in Southeast Asia: they retain a simplified, but coherent treasury of Chinese popular literature, and know numerous books of English literature, of widely differing literary traditions, periods and cultures.