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# TEXT AND ITS CULTURAL INTERPRETATION

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## CONCERNING “RECORDS OF SEARCHING FOR SPIRITS” OF GAN BAO\*

“Sou shen ji” (“搜神記”, literally translated as “Records of Searching for Spirits”, but more known as “In Search of the Supernatural”) is a famous work, in many respects an indicative, borderline, very popular and influential when it comes to the impact on the development of Chinese prose with a plot [1]. Modern philological works employ the term *soushenji* rather often (for instance, 搜神體, “*soushenji*-like”), used in regards to a number of collections, emerging later and inheriting the manner of “Sou shen ji” for its model. The author of this collection is a Jin high official, historian, man of letters and erudite person named Gan Bao (干寶, 280?—336) [2]. The offspring of a noble family that became poor, Gan Bao, having shown great thirst for knowledge from his youth, made a court career by climbing up the service ladder from the head of the district to the senior court historiographer carrying the title of Guannei-hou. The biographic data of Gan Bao that we have does not hold many details: it is known that he was distinguished in suppressing the revolt in 311—315 (for which he was granted a title) and later appointed to serve at the court. In 325, however, since his family was in need of funds, he solicited an office in the province and became the ruler of Shi An County (today it is known as the city of Guilin in Guangxi), and in 335 Gan Bao was appointed to join the imperial retinue [3]. It is also known that he was the author of a certain number of works (the majority of which has not survived) — “Jin Ji” (晉紀, “The Chronicle of Jin [Dynasty]”), a historical work in twenty *juans*, covering fifty three years of the Jin rule from the moment of its foundation in 265; a commentary to “Yi jing” in ten *juans* and 20 other works (indicated in the Jin and Tang histories); as well as “Sou shen ji” [4]. According to Li Jian-guo, Gan Bao began working on this collection pretty much at the same time as he did on “Jin Ji” and he laboured at it, with some breaks in between, practically until the day he died [5].

The official biography of Gan Bao in the Jin Dynasty history (*juan* 82) speaks of “Sou shen ji” in thirty *juans*; the bibliographical division of “Sui shu” (*juan* 33) it speaks of the same: “Records of Searching for Spirits”, thirty *juans*, authored by Gan Bao”; the same information is repeated in the old and new Tang Dynasty history (*juans* 46 and 59 correspondingly). When it, however, comes to the Song bibliographies — both official and private ones — this book is not included: apparently, from the 12th century on, the copies of “Sou shen ji” have been lost [6].

This situation remained the aforementioned status until about the 16th century, when a Ming scholar, poet, historian and literature theorist named Hu Ying-lin (胡應麟, 1551—1602), the owner of one of the richest private libraries of the time, restored the text of “Sou shen ji” [7]. Hu Ying-lin wrote:

Yao Shu-xiang was looking through the list of books, kept in my house, and having seen “Records of Searching for Spirits”, exclaimed with amazement: “Indeed, you have this book?!” To which I responded thus: “These are nothing more than extracts from ‘The Garden of the Law’, ‘His August Review’, ‘Literature’, ‘The Beginning of the Teaching’ and ‘Books Collection’. [Such books] are not mined for in precious baskets or stone chests dug out in the secret mountain corners! Generally speaking, all newly acquired rare books are of this kind [8].

It evidently follows from this quote that as much as he could, Hu Ying-lin completely restored the lost text of “Sou shen ji” from other sources he had access to (this work was supposedly finished sometime between 1589 and 1594). Certainly this was not the original collection contained in thirty *juans* — at the end of the day, Hu Ying-lin managed to reconstruct only twenty of them. But the main thing was done: the text of “Sou shen ji”

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\* The study was made possible by the support of the Russian Scientific Foundation for Research in Humanities, project No. 10-04-00121a “History of the Chinese Prose with a Plot, 1st—10th Centuries AD”.

was now actively circulated, which is testified to by many possessory records, kept in xylographic editions. One of the first who wrote something similar to a preface was a Ming scribe Shen Shi-long (沈士龍, the end of the 16th century — the first half of the 17th century); the earliest known xylographic edition of “Sou shen ji” — also a Ming one — was made by a man of letters and bibliophile named Hu Zhen-heng (胡震亨, 1569—1645) in the book series titled “Mi ce hui han” (“秘冊匯函”, “Box of Collected Rare Books”), which barely survived at all. The edition was made according to the reconstruction of Hu Ying-lun, to whom we owe the opportunity to read “Sou shen ji” today [9]. Another edition was undertaken on the basis of the xylography of Hu Zhen-heng by another famous Ming scribe, textualist and publisher Mao Jin (毛晉, 1599—1659) — as a part of the book series “Jin dai mi shu” (“津逮秘書”, “Rare Books of the One, Who Reached the Crossing”). The time of the Ming Dynasty rule was indeed a renaissance of sorts for “Sou shen ji” — all subsequent Qing reissues of this collection were made according to the Ming xylographies: for instance, the text of the Qing anthology “Xue jin tao yuan” (“學津討原”, “The Source of Initial Science”), compiled by Zhang Hai-peng (張海鵬, 1755—1816) and printed in 1802—1804. Modern and critical texts of the work of Gan Bao are also based on these xylographies, the most authoritative of which until recently was the edition made by the patriarch of Chinese textology Wang Shao-ying (汪紹楹) [10]. (A collection also titled “Sou shen ji”, which has only eight *juans* and is not related to the work of Gan Bao in any way, needs to be mentioned [11]). The edition of Wang Shao-ying has 464 fragments, combined into twenty untitled *juans* (and then 34 newly discovered fragments are given in the appendix) [12].

It has been the custom to assume that the interest of Gan Bao for the inconceivable and marvellous was caused by two particular circumstances. First of all is the story of the death and subsequent resurrection of Gan Bao's father's housemaid. His mother was jealous of her and finally killed her. And secondly, the incident with Gan Bao's older brother, who died but then came back from the dead, telling others what he had seen on the other side of life. At least, these cases come from the official biography of Gan Bao in “Jin shu”:

...Bao's father had a favourite housemaid, and his mother was very jealous of her on behalf of her husband. When his father died, mother pushed his housemaid alive into [his] burial vault. The older brother of Bao was too young and could not prevent her from doing it. Ten years passed, and [Bao's] mother passed away. The burial vault was unsealed [so they could bury the mother next to the father. — *I. A.*], and all of a sudden the housemaid is sitting on top of the coffin as if alive! They got her out and a few days later [the maidservant] came back to life. This is what she shared: the father [of Bao] always gave her of his drink and food, and was kind and merciful just as he was in life. The family [of Bao] began discussing this [case] and thought nothing bad of it. After all, being under the ground [the maidservant] did not suffer any. Then she was given in

marriage, and [the woman] gave birth to a son. And then the older brother of Bao was taken severely ill — his breath was interrupted, but for several days [his body] would not become numb. Then he came back to his senses and told of spirits and demons existing between heaven and earth — he saw them as though he was dreaming for he did not know that he had died! That is why Bao began collecting ancient and new [stories] of the wonders of spirits, extraordinary people and transformations [of werewolves], having titled [the book] “Records of Searching for Spirits” in thirty *juans*.

Being a man, who believed in the other world, heavenly signs and predestination of man's destiny, Gan Bao thus collected evidences of the existence of spirits, werewolves and other supernatural entities and attempted to create an exhaustive collection of data on them.

...Regarding that, which I have collected, I cannot bear full responsibility for what I borrowed from somebody else's records of old. When it comes to the events I discovered myself in our day and age, I would like not to have taunts and jeers for absurdities and mistakes transferred upon the wise men of old and experts of the past. For what was written and passed down by them is sufficient to assert that the way of spirits is not a deception at all.

Everything, shared by hundreds of authors, cannot be read in full; everything, perceived by one's hearing and sight, cannot be recorded in full. What I have searched out and discovered will, perhaps, suffice for one thing only — to tell of what occurs in eight parts of the world and form insignificant opinions about it. Yes, only that!

I will be happy if virtuous men, seeking to fathom the very roots of events, find here what to entertain their minds with, what to linger their gaze upon — and not to turn away with contempt [13].

Gan Bao wrote in the forward to “Sou shen ji”. It is clear from this text that he followed the usual path of compilers of the *xiaoshuo* collections: he drew material from ancient works and works of predecessors, and he also wrote down contemporary stories (including folk lore and legends), which he heard personally. Li Jian-guo assesses the number of the borrowings from the predecessors' books to be about one half of “Sou shen ji”; Gan Bao subjected some of them to editing and treatment, in one way or another [14].

Over the years Gan Bao put together an impressive collection of amazing stories, and although his collection has not come down to us in its original form, the reconstructions at hand restore the original aspect of “Sou shen ji” to the best of their abilities. The sixth *juan* begins with the following text:

Everything strange and amazing — is obviously a manifestation of an energy and a spirit in objects. The spirit within is dismayed and confused, whereas the object without undergoes metamorphosis. The form and the soul, the spirit and the material find their realization inside as well as outside. They find their origins in the five elements and penetrate five possibilities of men. And since the elements are dissipated and thickened, lifted and lowered,

their metamorphoses set all ten thousand occurrences in motion. When one goes into the very heart of the matter of fortunes and misfortunes, then the limits of the occurrences should always be considered [15].

Modern Chinese scholars rightly believe that the cited fragment is a sort of a preface to the corresponding section of the collection, and thus the material in “Sou shen ji” was originally organized thematically. The thematic organization was observed in the reconstruction of the text, and no *juans* were referred to in any way [16]. L. N. Men'shikov, who translated “Sou shen ji” into Russian language and dealt with the old edition of the text, characterized the theme content of all twenty *juans* thus: the first *juan* mostly speaks of hermits, immortals, miracle makers and of the fellowship of mortals and deities; the second one — of those, who fought with the devilry, mainly Daoists; the third — of soothsayers, seers, astrologers, and healers; the fourth deals with the spirits of mountains, rivers and forests; the fifth speaks of the altars of spirits and their origins; the sixth and seventh chapters speak of signs of different types with their explanations; the eight chapter — of divination and predictions on the basis of signs; the ninth — of strange

creatures and of what their manifestation means to the world; the tenth — of prophetic dreams; the eleventh — of odd cases and respectful children, of spouses loyal to the grave and inseparable friends; the twelfth — of werewolves and evil spirits; the thirteenth speaks of unusual mountains and rivers and strange creatures, dwelling there; the fourteenth — of animals that act like rational beings; the fifteenth relates to resurrections; the sixteenth chapter speaks of appearances of the deceased and of relationships between people and souls of the dead; the seventeenth — of crafty designs of werewolves; the eighteenth — of werewolves in their widest extent: foxes, dogs, old objects, spirits of trees and waters, etc.; the nineteenth chapter — of wereanimals: snakes, caimans, fish, mice; the twentieth chapters speak of animals, thankful for mercy done by people, or revenging themselves for the evil done [17]. This conventional description alone gives the general overview about the content of “Sou shen ji”. It is a collection that is filled with magic, supernatural and peculiar, and about Gan Bao — like about *gui zhi dong hu* (“鬼之董狐”, “Dong Hu of Souls of the Dead”), according to the statement of Jin scholar Liu Yan (劉惔, the 4th century) [18].

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By and large the content of “Sou shen ji” may be divided into several theme groups, related to the supernatural.

(i) Stories of the Daoist magic, possessing the art of the holy and the immortal and the wonder workers. Among those are the following characters of the old as Chisong-zi (赤松子) or Ningfeng-zi (寧封子) (and the stories of similar characters, as a rule, are borrowed by Gan Bao from “Lie xian zhuan” of Liu Xiang), but then there are much later characters of the rule of the Han and even Jin Dynasties — Liu Gen (劉根, 1st century), Wang Qiao (王喬, 1st century), Ji Z-xun (蘄子訓, 3rd century), Zuo Si (左慈, 156?—289?), Yu Ji (于吉, ?—196), Jie Yan (介琰, late 2nd and early 3rd centuries), Xu Guang (徐光, 3rd century), Ge Xuan (葛玄, 164—244), Wu Meng (吳猛, 3rd century) and others. A usual story of this kind would look something like this:

Ge Xuan, or Xiao-xian (孝先), as he was also named, received the “Book of Immortality from the Vermilion Molten Nine Times” from Zuo Yuan-fang. He made a feast and told his guests of the art of transformation he had achieved.

“If you, sir, have achieved this art and chiselled it to perfection, then show us something particularly funny,” — said the guests.

“Maybe you want to define what exactly you want to see,” — objected Xuan.

At that moment he spit food out of his mouth, and it turned into a many-thousand swarm of large bees, which were gathering around the guests, but none stung anyone. Some time later Xuan opened his mouth and the bees flew into it; Xuan chewed them and then swallowed — that was the same food he had been eating. Then he began pointing

with his finger at frogs, swallows, sparrows, making them thus dance and do so rhythmically, just like people would.

In winter he could offer fresh pumpkins and joboba, and in summer he could make ice and snow. At one time he brought several dozen coins and ordered people to throw them into the well. Then he placed some vessel on the edge of the well, called out loudly and the coins jumped out of the well one after another. Or at another time he was treating guests with wine — and nobody passed the cup from person to another. It would come to a stop before a man and until it was empty the cup would not move.

One day Xuan was sitting in the tent with the sovereign Wu. Local residents, who prayed for rain, showed up.

“Common people want the rain to fall, — said the sovereign. — Can the matter be aided or the wished for be granted?”

“It's easy to obtain rain!” — said Xuan.

He wrote down the invocation right away and placed it on the altar table. The earth and the sky was immediately enveloped in darkness and rain flooded like a river.

“But there must be fish in the water,” — said the sovereign.

Xuan wrote down another invocation and hundreds of fish appeared in the water, and people were ordered to cook them [19].

The change in the character of the stories cannot be ignored. Let us pay attention to the overall tone in comparison with, let's say, “Lie xian zhuan” (“列仙傳”, “Collected Biographies of Immortals”) of Liu Xiang (劉向, 79 BC — AD 8): if the stories from the latter collection show such abilities as, for instance, moving around by riding the wind as typical features of the characters, then by comparison Gan Bao's characters display “applied” miracles, which Daoist magi can per-

form. The spectrum of these miracles is rather broad, which undoubtedly needs to be understood in the light of the flowering of the Daoist teaching and the growth of the number of stories about those, who achieved great success in Daoist practices. These stories were spread by adepts of Daoism.

(ii) Stories of how various spirits and deities interact with the world of humans, and in particular how they answer prayers and invocations addressed to them.

Liu Chi-fu (劉赤父) saw a dream where Jiang-hou called on him to take up the office of the senior office manager. He could hardly wait for the next day to arrive, and then he headed to the temple of Jiang, where he set forth his request:

“My mother is old, and I, her son, am weak and small. Our affairs are difficult beyond any measure. I'm begging you to forgive my impudence, but there is a man in Guiji, named Wei Guo (魏過), endowed with multiple talents and skilled in ministering to spirits. I'm asking if Guo could be taken in my stead”.

He hit his forehead so hard that blood came out. There was an answer from the temple:

“Have you decided to argue with me to the very end? And you're nominating some Wei Guo in your place!”

Chi-fu was persisting in his request, but the spirit would not take no for an answer. When they finally found him, Chi-fu was already dead [20].

Among the deities that appear in “Sou shen ji” there are the following spirits: the spirit of the Eastern Sea, Donghai-jun (東海君), the lake spirit of Qinghong-jun (青洪君), the Daoist deity Zhou Gong-ming (趙公明), the immortal virgin Du Lan-xiang (杜蘭香), the spirit of the fireplace Zao-shen (灶神) and others; stories about some of them moved to “Sou shen ji” from earlier collections, and some are of later origins. There are many spirits in particular, whose temples were not built by order of official authorities, but were rather erected by common people, when local cults blossomed out in the post-Han period, occurring everywhere and in diverse forms, and the invocation of spirits for all kinds of reasons became rather widespread [21].

Among the stories of this kind, of special interests are those that speak of the bonds between deities and men — for instance, in cases of recompensing people for their virtuous and good deeds.

During the Han times there was certain Dong Yong (董永), from Qiancheng. His mother passed away rather early in life, so he lived with his father. Giving all his energies to their portion of the land, he carried over his father in a cart and followed him by feet. The father died, and there was no money for the son to bury him. So Yong sold himself into slavery, so that he could use this money to perform a proper burial ceremony. Having learned of his wise move, the master gave him ten thousand coins and sent him home. Having completed the three-year mourning term, Yong decided to return to the master and pay him back for his good deed by means of slave labour. On his way back to the master he met a woman, who told him thus: “I want to become your wife”.

And so she went along with him.

“The money was given to you with no return expected or imposed”, — said the master to Yong.

“Thanks to your mercy I was able to complete the mourning term and bury my father properly, — objected Yong. — Although I, Yong, am an insignificant man, but now I want to work hard sparing no effort, so that I could pay you back for your goodness”.

“And what can your wife do?” — asked the master.

“She can weave”, — answered Yong.

“OK, have it your way, — agreed the master. — Let your wife weave one hundred pieces of silk for me”.

So, Yong's wife began weaving in the house of the master and within ten days she completed the task set before her. Having gone out at the gate, she told Yong:

“I am a heavenly weaver. Knowing of your respect for your father, the Celestial Ruler commanded me to help you return the debt”.

As soon as she said that she disappeared into thin air. Where she went to is unknown [22].

The given version of the story of the heavenly weaver and an earthly man is rather rare: the virgin comes down from heaven, but not according to her own will, not because she had fallen in love with him, but by order of the Celestial Ruler. Hou Zhong-yi observes that this story clearly demonstrates not only the importance of sons respecting their parents, but it also demonstrates the idea of a good deed not going unnoticed: magic skills of the heavenly weaver made it possible for Dong Yong to pay his debt in a matter of only ten days [23].

(iii) Stories (insignificant in size, as a rule) were of various marvellous creatures endowed with magic attributes, of objects and places as well as of extraordinary events. This is perhaps the most archaic and least valuable collection of materials within “Sou shen ji” — a great majority of these stories are borrowed from preceding texts, are present in works of other authors, are in keeping with the preceding tradition and are of little interest in terms of the development of prose with a plot.

There are human sharks beyond the South Sea. In water they live like fish, but they do not abandon spinning and weaving. When they cry, their eyes are capable of shedding pearls [24].

In the same division there are mountains, caves, wells, springs, possessing certain magic attributes and properties; extraordinary omens and prophetic dreams; as well as odd (but not so much) plants and animals:

A hedgehog has many needles, which do not make it possible for him to get over a poplar log or a willow log [25].

(iv) There are stories of love relationships between a man and a soul of a deceased beloved, the beginning of which was initiated in “Lie yi zhuan”. Such stories are rather lengthy. For instance, the story of Zi-yü (紫玉), the younger daughter of ruler of Wu and her love for a young man named Han Zhong (韓重) does not just include the text itself, but it adds a rather long poem, which Zi-yü, who had died and came out of the grave, is

reading to her beloved. The marriage was forbidden by her father and that resulted in the girl's death. The distressed young man wants to commit suicide, but Zi-yü “made a feast, and for three days and nights they did what a husband and wife were supposed to do”. At parting Zi-yü gave Han Zhong a pearl, which he presented when he came to her father. The ruler of Wu thought that the young man had dug up the grave of his daughter, but he was visited by Zi-yü:

At one time a student named Han Zhong sought your daughter's hand in marriage, — said she.— But the great *wang* did not consent, having thus discredited your name, and did not allow me to meet my duty. That was why I died”. When Zhong returned, he heard that your Yü had passed away. Having reached out for the oblatinal money, he came to the grave in order to mourn for me. Having taken pity upon his misfortunes, she met with him and gave him the pearl. He did not unseal the grave; therefore there is no need to punish him.

The wife of *wang* heard the name of her daughter and came out to embrace her, but Yü was there only in the form of vapour [26].

This is a love drama filled with emotions, and the image of Zi-yü is very much alive — she dies in the name of feelings, secretly meets with Han Zhong in the name of feelings, and helps him in the name of feelings.... —

writes Li Jian-guo [27]. It is hard not to agree with him; and it is true, in comparison with the prose of collections examined earlier that this story (and other similar ones) from “Sou shen ji” looks like a rather complete work with convincing drama and images — the development of the genre is obvious [28].

Stories about coming back to life from the dead need to be grouped and looked at separately — thirteen stories of this subject matter are lumped together in the fifteenth *juan* of “Sou shen ji”. Oftentimes these stories are related within the subject matter of love and separation, which serves as the reason for the death of one of the characters.

Under Jin, during the rule of the Emperor Wu-di, there was a young man and a young girl in the district of Hejian who gave themselves up to secret pleasures and promised to get married. Soon the young man went off to war and didn't come back for many years. The family wanted to give her in marriage to some other guy, but she did not want to. Then she was compelled by her father and mother, and she didn't have anything else to do but to submit. And then she was taken ill and died.

The young man came back from the frontier campaigns and asked where she was. The family told him exactly what happened. He came to her grave, wanting to mourn the woman he loved, express his grief, but he could not restrain himself. He dug out the grave, opened the coffin... and the girl came back to life. Immediately he carried her home, fed her for a few days and she became just like she used to be.

Later on, her husband heard about it. He came over and demanded his wife be returned. But the other man did not give her away.

“Your wife passed away long ago, — said he. — Has anyone in the Tianxia heard of a dead man coming back to life? And yet heavens sent down this reward, and this is not your wife”.

Thus, the dispute arose between them, and it could not be resolved in any district or county. When the case was passed on to the court, the imperial librarian Wang Dao submitted the report, which ran thus:

“The unprecedented purity and sincerity moved Heaven and Earth, and that is why the deceased had come back to life. It is an extraordinary case and cannot be resolved by employing ordinary means. Therefore I hereby request that the women be given to the one, who unsealed the grave”.

And the imperial court followed the advice given [29].

There is a very interesting incident that follows this story. It is about a certain Jia Ou (賈偶) who was mistakenly summoned to the administration of the deceased souls at Taishan (i. e. he died by mistake), but then, having sorted things out, he was released. But in the kingdom of the dead, Jia met a girl who was there for the same reason. The girl rejected with indignation the proposition of intimacy, but then, when Jia rose back to life and found the girl — she too returned from the dead — they were happily married (XV, 361). This story is remarkable on account of being one of the early records in *xiaoshuo* of the motif about coming back from the dead as a result of the error committed by the bureaucratic apparatus of the other world; this motif will be in great demand in accordance with the subsequent artistic tradition.

Stories related to various manifestations of spirits and respectful attitude for these spirits pertain to another subdivision. The main examples of the idea that “the way of spirits is not a deception at all” are concentrated in this group. Here is a rather familiar story that can be shared as a typical example of this type of stories:

Ruan Zhan, or Qian-li according to his other name, was a strong adherent of the view that rejected the existence of spirits, and nothing could shake his view. In disputes he always maintained that it was sufficient to examine what was in the shadows and what was in the light in order to grasp the truthfulness of his views.

So, there came around a certain man, who understood the meanings of names. So he visited Zhan. Having exchanged the usual introductory words of weather, they began talking about the meanings of names. The guest turned out to be rather skilled in disputes, so Zhan conversed with him for a long time. When they finally reached the topic of spirits and demons, their conversation was becoming rather pointed. Then the guest leaned toward the host, made a face and said:

“We have been visited with legends of spirits and demons from the wise men of the past and of today. How is it that you alone keep saying that there is no such thing? But your most humble servant is none other than a spirit!”

Immediately he changed his appearance and then disappeared into thin air in a blink of an eye. Zhan was left to sit in silence, confused in his thoughts and perplexed.

About a year passed. He was taken ill and passed away [30].

A number of similar stories should also be put together in the same category, including stories about Zong (Song) Ding-bo and how he sold a *gui* ghost and about the deceased son of Jiang Ji and others that were borrowed from “Lie yi zhuan”.

(v) Stories telling of various werewolves, focused mostly in the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth *juans* of “Sou shen ji”. Werewolves described in these stories are not heterogeneous in either their substance or their relation to man. The most archaic layer of perception concerning werewolves is embodied in the stories that describe them as beings that are undoubtedly harmful, that harass people and cause them trouble for no reason whatsoever.

Nian Yan (田琰), the resident of Beiping, in mourning for his mother, lived in the shelter of branches. But then once in the night he came into the bedroom where his wife was. She was extremely surprised, saying:

“You are in mourning for your mother now, and we'd be better off without pleasures”.

But Yan did not take heed and became intimate with her.

After a short while Yan came by her room again, but only for a minute and without saying a word to her. The wife was very surprised at his silence and reproached him for what had happened before. Yan realized that a werewolf had come to her. In the evening to come he took off his ragged mourning clothes but did not yet manage to fall asleep. At that moment he saw a white dog run into the shelter, took his rags and turned into a man. Then he dressed himself and entered the house. Yan followed him and discovered that the dog was about to climb into his wife's bed. He killed the dog right away.

His wife could not stand it and passed away [31].

Not all werewolves in “Sou shen ji”, however, are like that — some of them do not harm people in any way but rather aspire to have fellowship with them.

In the district of Wuxi of the Wujun region there is a large pond, which is referred to as Shanghu. Ding Chu, a pond servant, made the round of the pond each time after it rained hard. One day in spring after abundant rains Chu got out of his house and was on his round around the pond. The sun was setting. Having looked over, he noticed a woman dressed in dark green from head to toe, and she was holding an umbrella over her head, also dark green. She cried out to him:

“Wait for me, groundskeeper Chu!”

At first Chu had mercy on her and wanted to stop, but had his doubts:

“I did not see anything like it before: a woman appears from out of nowhere and walks shading herself from the rain. Perhaps it's a she-demon”.

So Chu quickened his pace. He glanced back, and the woman was also making haste after him. Chu quickened his pace even more. Having gone rather far following a winding path, he glanced back again, and the woman threw herself into the pond with her clothes and umbrella flying off in different directions. He looked attentively — this is a big blue sea otter, whereas the dress and the umbrella are nothing but leaves of the lotus.

When such an otter takes up human form, usually it turns into a pretty girl [32].

In “Sou shen ji” werewolves that aspire to have fellowship with people as a rule take on the form of a beautiful woman, which is sharply contrasted with their natural appearance, not so beautiful (for instance, that of a turtle or, as in the case above, of an otter). It is beyond any doubt that foxes are of particular interest when it comes to wereanimals. Gan Bao included many a story of werefoxes into his collection, which later became very popular. For instance the classic story of A-zi (阿紫), a fox that bewitched Wang Ling-xiao (王靈孝) with a love spell and made love with him in an abandoned crypt, as a result of which practically forfeited his human dignity; “this is why wereanimals of this kind usually refer to themselves as A-zi” (XVIII, 425). Or take, for instance, a famous story of the sagacious man named Zhang Hua, who exposed an old werefox, appearing before him in the form of a young exquisite man and setting to discuss knowledgeably the literary classics: “If he is illuminated with the fire of a millennial tree, he will appear before you in his true form” (XVIII, 421). A classic example of the successful extermination of a werefox is a story of Song Da-xian (宋大賢), echoing the story of Liu Bo-yi from “Lie yi zhuan”:

There is a post office in the western suburb of Nanyang. People should not stay there, or else there will be trouble.

A man named Song Da-xian from this city had strengthened himself with the help of the True Path spent a night once in the additional floor above the office. At night he was sitting and playing the *guqin*, not worrying about his weapon. The night fell, a demon appeared. Having come up the stairs he attempted to start a conversation with Da-xian. His eyes were fixed, his teeth were gnashing, and he looked disgustingly loathsome. But Da-xian, as if nothing had happened, continued playing his *guqin*, and the demon left. Then, having stolen a dead human from the market, came back and said, speaking to Da-xian:

“Can you fall sleep for at least a moment?”

And threw the head down at the feet of Da-xian.

“Excellent! — exclaimed Da-xian. — This night I lay down, but could not find anything to use as a pillow. This is very much to the point!”

The demon left again. After a while he came back again and suggested:

“Do you want to armwrestle?”

“Wonderful!” — agreed Da-xian.

As soon as he said that, the demon was right next to him. But Da-xian grabbed him across the waist, and apparently he grabbed him so strongly that the demon cried in terror:

“I’m dying!”

And Da-xian killed him. The next morning he examined it — my, that is an old dog fox! Since that time there were no more temptations of this kind at the post office [33].

Just as it is in “Lie yi zhuan” (as well as in many subsequent *xiaoshuo* collections), a resolute, brave and virtuous (primarily in the Confucian meaning of the word) man always gains the upper hand over wereanimals with evil intentions, whereas a mediocre and weak man easily falls victim to their crafty designs. Besides personal valour and fearlessness “Sou shen ji” mentions at least two more ways of squaring accounts with an evil wereanimal. First, one needs to force it to take on its natural form (it can be achieved with the help of hounds, whom wereanimals are afraid of; with the help of an ancient mirror, in which wereanimals are reflected in their authentic form. There are also some rare methods of influence such as a millennial tree set on fire, and then the wereanimal runs for its life, which means that it can be tracked and then killed; second, a knowledgeable magus (Daoist) is capable of restraining and taming an unbridled wereanimal at any time with the help of his magic methods and tricks [34]. The conclusion is as follows: we are to be careful about wereanimals, but we are not to fear them. Such pieces of data help us track down the evolution of the attitude to wereanimals in public opinion in comparison with that of the Han rule, as well as note that in the post-Han period the function of taming the devilry (and wereanimals in particular) gradually becomes one of the main areas of the secular activity of the Daoist magic.

Wereanimals in “Sou shen ji” are multiform, and oftentimes taking the form of a man, they retain certain features related to their natural form: a golden wereanimal appears as a man in yellow clothes, whereas a silver one — as a man in white (XVII, 414); an old dog that is absolutely white but with a black head turns into a man wearing a white shirt and a black headband (XVIII, 343); a weregoat turns into a man with a long beard (XVIII, 431); and so on.

(vi) There are stories where various animals do good or evil for help or harm done (this is the twentieth *juan* of “Sou shen ji”). It is well understood that such stories have nothing in common with the Buddhist idea of retribution:

Fragments, making up “Sou shen ji”, differ greatly in their size: from very brief records of only several hieroglyphs long, dating back to the ancient texts (“Under Zhou Lie-wang, in the sixth year of his rule [370 BC — I. A.], a concubine of the sovereign, Lin Bi-yang, gave birth to two dragons”, VI, 109), to comprehensive stories, rich with details, descriptions and even poetic pieces, that might be five or six hundred hieroglyphs [37]. Complete fragments emerge in “Sou shen ji”, which are constructed not in accordance with the principle usual for *zhiguai*, where each record presents a narration of one particular event of extraordinary property, but rather it portrays a number of such episodes united under the same main character in the

One night Su Yi (蘇易), a woman from Luling, a skilled midwife, was suddenly taken away by a tiger. Having travelled for six or seven *li*, the tiger reached his den and on placing her carefully on the ground sat beside her protecting her. She saw a tigress who could not get through with her delivery: she was coiling and twisting, at death’s door. She was looking at the woman with much hope. Su Yi set to do what she did best and helped deliver three cubs. The delivery was successful. The tigress, having sat Yi onto her back and took her home. And then for a number of times she would bring fresh meat to Yi’s door [35].

Such are the stories of a sick dragon, healed by Daoist hermit Sun Deng of Wei (孫登, 220?—280) (XX, 449); of a grateful sparrow that granted four jasper bracelets to its rescuer (XX, 452); of ants delivering Dong Zhao-zhi (董昭之) from captivity in response to the rescue of the ant king (XX, 456), etc. But also for the evil done to them, animals revenge themselves:

In the district of Dongxing of Linchuan region one man went into the mountains, caught a baby monkey and brought it home. A mother monkey followed his footsteps and came after him. The man tied the young monkey to a tree in his yard and put it on display for people to see. Whenever the man appeared, the mother monkey would slap her own cheeks as though trying to beg the man to let her little one go, but no speech was given her. He, however, did not desire to let the young one go and then he struck it dead. The mother monkey screamed mournfully, threw herself down from the tree and died. The man cut her open and saw that all her insides were torn in little pieces.

A half a year had not yet passed and his whole family was struck with a plague wind, and his lineage ceased to exist [36].

Besides these theme groups in “Sou shen ji” there are also a number of ancient legends of mythological and historical nature. For instance, there is a legend of Pan-hu (盤瓠), a dog of three colours, a forefather of the man people (XIV, 341); or one of Han Ping (韓憑, 3rd century BC) and his beautiful wife, who were separated in life, but after they passed away great sophora trees grew on their graves, interweaving their branches, and a pair of love-birds nestled in their branches (XI, 294).

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movement. Many of the fragments of “Sou shen ji”, borrowed from earlier collections in the Gan Bao’s edition, greatly grew in size (sometimes growing to be twice the size) at the expense of far more detailed descriptions and addition of dialogues [38]. In comparison with the lengthy works of the earlier time period it is obvious that lengthy stories from “Sou shen ji” are not records made in accordance with the canons of hagiography any more, but rather they are quite artistic and complete works with a plot, which first appear in the collection of Gan Bao. This collection consolidated the form of the new genre once and for all, which began forming in “Lie yi zhuan”. The patriarch of modern Chinese philology Lin Chen (林辰, 1912—2003) em-

phasized the following circumstances related to “Sou shen ji” and the importance for the history of Chinese prose with a plot. Gan Bao visibly marked the place of *xiaoshuo* in the culture (“to tell of what occurs in eight parts of the world and form insignificant opinions about it”), and it can be considered as the foundation of the theory of the prose with a plot. Gan Bao made a new step in the area of compilation principles for *xiaoshuo* — he, breaking the preceding tradition of borrowing from older books, included a great number of contemporary stories into his collection, virtually raising the work of the compiler to a new level [39]. “Sou shen ji”, having called forth a great wave of imitation, is an important collection of diverse *xiaoshuo* about the marvellous. L. N. Men'shikov wrote:

“Records of Searching for Spirits” has remained in the annals [of Chinese literature] for good as the most universal comprehensive collection of fantastic content [40].

It was from here that many consequent generations of Chinese scribes, aspiring to write about the supernatural, drew plots, storylines, motifs and inspiration [41]. With his collection of amazing stories Gan Bao summarized the experience of the literary tradition in the area of describing the supernatural — the experience accumulated by the time of Jin Dynasty. And he also laid the foundation of model standards for *zhiguai xiaoshuo* for at least several centuries to come, if not for longer, — and if we address the material of the Qing collections (1644—1911), then at the first reading we won't find any major differences in certain stories in relation to the content or to the form [42].

### Notes

1. Other titles — *Sou shen lu* (搜神錄, Records of Searching for Spirits), *Sou shen yi ji* (搜神異記, Records of the Strange in the Search for Spirits), *Sou shen zhuan ji* (搜神傳記, Records and Stories of Searching for Spirits).

2. For a long time there had been no clarity concerning the life years of Searching for literature, very diverse opinions were voiced. Thus, K. I. Golygina (1935—1999) maintains that Gan Bao “was born around 317” (K. I. Golygina, *Kitaiskaia proza na poroge srednevekov'ia* (Chinese Prose at the Turn of the Middle Ages) (Moscow, 1983), p. 10); Lionello Lanciotti cautiously limits himself to “the years of activity” (fl.): 317—323 (*Dictionary of Oriental Literatures: East Asia*, ed. by J. Prusek (Tokyo, 1978), p. 72); Rania Huntington reduces “fl.” to one particular date — 320 (*The Columbia History of Chinese Literature*, ed. by V. H. Mair (New York, 2001), p. 120); A. I. Kobzev indicates the dates of “ca. 286 — ca. 336” (*Dukhovnaia kul'tura Kitaia: enciklopediia* (Spiritual Culture of China: Encyclopaedia), ed. by M. L. Titorenko, ii: Mifologiya. Religiiia (Mythology. Religion) (Moscow, 2007), p. 573). A similar ambiguity reigns in Chinese works as well: Hou Zhong-yi (侯忠義, born in 1936) does not indicate any dates for the life of Gan Bao (Hou Zhong-yi, *Zhongguo wenyan xiaoshuo shigao* (中國文言小說史稿, The Draft History of the Chinese Prose with a Plot in Classical Language) (Beijing, 1990), i, p. 45); Wang Zhi-zhong (王枝忠, born in 1944) gives approximate dates of his life and death: 280—289 and 345—356 (Wang Zhi-zhong, *Han Wei Liuchao xiaoshuo shi* (漢魏六朝小說史, The History of Prose with a Plot of Han, Cao Wei and Six Dynasties) (Hangzhou, 1997), p. 80; idem, *Sou shen ji. Sou shen hou ji* (搜神記. 搜神後記, Records of Searching for Spirits. The Sequel to the “Records for Searching for Spirits”) (Shenyang, 1999), p. 1); Zheng Xian-chun (鄭憲春) maintains that “the life dates of Gan Bao are impossible to establish” (Zheng Xian-chun, *Zhongguo bijiwen shi* (中國筆記文史, The History of Chinese Literature) (Changsha, 2004), p. 141), and so on. Nevertheless, besides these general works, there are also specialized studies, which clarify this issue. Thus, in one particular article, devoted to the details of Gan Bao's life, Li Jian-guo (李劍國, born in 1943) determines on the basis of the analysis of a great number of historical sources that Gan Bao could have been born either in 276 or in 280, and died definitely in 336 (Li Jian-guo, “Gan Bao kao” (“干寶考”, “On Gan Bao”), *Wenxue yichan* II (2001), p. 24); whereas a Beijing philologist named Zhang Qing-min (張慶民, born in 1966) specifies the study of Li Jian-guo, reaching the conclusion that 280 could have likely been Gan Bao's year of birth (Zhang Qing-min, “Gan Bao shengping shiyi xinkao” (“干寶生平事跡新考” “New study of the evidence of life and activity of Gan Bao”), *Wenxue yichan* V (2009), p. 81). And although Professor Wang Jin-zhong (王盡忠, p. 1937) names the dates of 283—351 (Wang Jin-zhong, “Gan Bao shengping luekao” (“干寶生平略考”, “Brief search for the life journey of Gan Bao”), *Zhongzhou jingo* VI (2001), p. 13), the view of Li Jian-guo and Zhang Qing-min seems to be more convincing and well-grounded.

3. For more details on Gan Bao see his official biography in the 82th *juan* of the Jin Dynasty history, the aforementioned works of Li Jian-guo, Zhang Qing-min and Wang Jin-zhong (and particularly his fundamental work *Gan Bao yanjiu quanshu* (干寶研究全書, Complete Research Works of Gan Bao) (Zhengzhou, 2009), which I unfortunately did not have access to), as well as the forward of Li Jian-guo to the book: Gan Bao, *Xinji Sou shen ji* (新輯搜神記). Tao Qian (陶潛), *Xinji Sou shen hou ji* (新輯搜神後記) (New edition of “Records of Searching for Spirits” and “Further Records of Searching for Spirits”), ed. by and critical text Li Jian-guo (Beijing, 2008), i, pp. 2—36; and Chen Yao-dong, Chen Ci-qun (陳耀東, 陳思群), “Gan Bao jiguan kao” (“干寶籍貫考”, “Searching for where Gan Bao was from”), *Jiaxing xueyuan xuebao* II (2005); *Zhongguo wenyan xiaoshuojia pingzhu* (中國文言小說家評傳, Critical Biographies of the Authors of Prose with a Plot in Ancient Chinese Language), ed. by Xiao Xiang-kai (Zhengzhou, 2004), pp. 28—34; etc.

4. For more details about the works of Gan Bao see: Luo Qiang-wei (羅薔薇), “Gan Bao zhushu kao” (“干寶著述考” “Concerning the works of Gan Bao”), *Huazhong shifan daxue yanjiusheng xuebao* III (2011); Li Jian-guo, “Forward”, *Gan Bao, Xinji Sou shen ji*..., pp. 32—6.

5. *Ibid.*, pp. 40—6.

6. An exception is the mention of 30-*juan* *Sou shen ji* in the literary section of “Tong zhi” (“通志”, “General Review”) of the Song encyclopaedist Zheng Qiao (鄭樵, 1104—1162), but this section is not a description of library collection, containing particu-

lar books, but rather it is a compilation of corresponding bibliographic and literary descriptions of preceding historical works; most likely Zheng Qiao borrowed the information about *Sou shen ji* from *Sui shu*. Li Jian-guo also mentions *Sou shen zong ji* (搜神總記, Complete Records of Searching for Spirits) in ten *juans*, which are recorded about in the history of the Song Dynasty. It also says, however, that “the author is unknown”; it is possible that this work has nothing to do with the text of Gan Bao (Li Jian-guo, *Tangqian zhiguai xiaoshuo shi* (唐前志怪小說史, The History of Stories About the Marvellous) (Tianjin, 1984), p. 282). There is also information about the fact that a copy of 30-*juan Sou shen ji* was registered in Japan in 891 (see: Ma Xing-guo (馬興國), “‘Shi shuo xin yu’ zai Ribende liuchuan ji yingxiang” (“‘世說新語’在日本的流傳及影響”, “The spread and impact of ‘The New Account of the Stories in Circulation’”), *Dongbei shida xuebao* III (1989).

7. In his youth Hu Ying-lin travelled the lands that used to be a part of the ancient kingdoms of Yan, Wu, Qi, Lu, Zhao and Wei, hunting down old books, sometimes giving his last money for these books. As a result he collected 42,384 *juans* of various works.

8. Quoted in accordance with: Hou Zhong-yi, *Zhongguo wenyan xiaoshuo cankao ziliao* (中國文言小說參考資料, Research Materials about Chinese Xiaoshuo in Literary Language) (Beijing, 1985), p. 147. Yao Shu-xiang is a Ming scribe, who is also known as Yao Shi-lin (姚士麟, the 16th century), a good friend of Hu Ying-lin. He is particularly known for the fact that until he was 20 he had been absolutely illiterate, and then within three years he mastered the book knowledge. “The Garden of the Law” — *Fa yuan zhu lin* (法苑珠林, Pearl Forest from the Garden of the Law), a famous Buddhist work of one hundred *juans*, compiled by Dao-shi (道世, the 7th century), which included the stories of the marvellous from thirty collections (including *Sou shen ji*). “August Review” — a Song anthology *Tai ping yu lan* (太平御覽, Imperial Review of the Tai-ping Years). “Literature”, “Beginnings of the Teaching” and “Collection of Books” — collections of *Yi wen lei cong* (藝文類叢, Classified Collection of Literary Texts), *Chu xue ji* (初學記, Records of Beginnings of the Teaching) and *Bei tang shu chao* (北堂書鈔, Extracts from the Books of the Northern Hall). By the way, it needs to be noted that Hu Ying-lin had particular interest for the works of the marvellous, he collected books, containing the *yi* hieroglyph (異, “odd”) in the title, which later developed into the collection known as *Bai jia yi yuan* (百家異苑, The Garden of the Odd), and collected over one hundred poems that presumably had belonged to souls of the dead — which can only mean that it is no mere coincidence that he was greatly interested in Gan Bao.

9. Hou Zhong-yi believed that the make-up for the given xylography apparently was very close to what the original was like, but it abounded in omissions as well as borrowings from other works (Hou Zhong-yi, *Zhongguo wenxian suoshuo shigao*, i, pp. 44—5). It was Lu Xūn (魯迅, 1881—1936) who noted that “much had been lost from ‘Records of Searching Spirits’ and that, which had survived, was a Ming reconstruction on the basis of other works, put together from other books about the marvellous, a half-authentic and half-inauthentic monument” (Lu Xūn (魯迅). *Zhongguo xiaoshuo shilüe* (中國小說史略, Essay of the History of Chinese Prose with a Plot) (Beijing, 2006), p. 316). Li Jian-guo looks into all deficiencies and peculiarities of this edition in great detail, see: “Forward”, *Gan Bao, Xinji Sou shen ji*..., pp. 62—80).

10. I said “until recently”, because the critical text of *Sou shen ji*, made ready by Li Jian-guo (*Gan Bao, Xinji Sou shen ji*...), was published in 2007 in Beijing; this is a shared edition as it combines *Sou shen ji* as well as the sequel to this collection, *Sou shen hou ji* (搜神後記, Subsequent Records of Searching for Spirits); the year of 2008 saw the release of the reprint. The text edited by Li Jian-guo is essentially different from the edition of Wang Shao-ying: in it Li Jian-guo made a substantiated attempt at reconstructing the original collection of *Sou shen ji* in thirty entitled *juans*; and, having entirely summarized the preceding experience of working on the Gan Bao collection and having brought into play all accessible sources, Li Jian-guo collected 504 fragments, claiming to be a part of *Sou shen ji*, determined which fragments were indeed parts of the original collections, and which made the cut by mistake, and also determined which order the fragments were supposed to be arranged in the original collection. As a result 343 fragments (where some of them are newly attributed and lacking in the Wang Shao-ying's edition) remained in his edition. (In appendix Li Jian-guo gives tables of fragment correspondence relating to the old and new edition of *Sou shen ji*, which visually demonstrate, which fragments were included into the text by mistake and are not included into the text of his edition, and which on the contrary are a part of the text; the appendix also gives texts of all fragments excluded by Li Jian-guo from his edition of *Sou shen ji*. Li Jian-guo gave over twenty years of his life to *Sou shen ji*; the work stages are reproduced in the monograph *Tangqian zhiguai xiaoshuo shi* (唐前志怪小說史, The History of Pre-Tang Stories about the Marvellous) of 1984 and in a number of subsequent publications (“Ershijuanben ‘Sou shen ji’ kao” (“二十卷本‘搜神記’考”, “Study of the copy of ‘Records of Searching for Spirits’ in twenty *juans*”), *Wenxian* IV (2000); idem, “Gan Bao kao”; idem, “Wang Shao-ying ‘Sou shen ji yi wen’ bianzheng” (“汪紹楹‘搜神記逸文’辨正”, “Corrections for ‘Lost Stories from ‘Records of Searching for Spirits’ by Wang Shao-ying”), *Gudian wenxue zhishi* IV (2005)). His edition of the new critical text of *Sou shen ji* in many ways was revolutionary and funded, but it had not yet fully entered the scientific circulation. Meanwhile, over the course of many years that the text of Wang Shao-ying was considered to be the most authoritative critical text, much of the scientific literature was based on it (by 2010 there are over 60 editions of various types, the publication of which began in the 30s of the 20th century). Therefore, in the given book I, having noted the importance of the work of Li Jian-guo, will be coming from the already established scientific tradition and the text of *Sou shen ji* of Wang Shao-ying's edition. The use of the edition of Li Jian-guo would require too many substantial distractions, which are hardly appropriate in this work.

11. This text came out in the Ming book series *Bai hai* (裨海, A Sea of Trifles), published in 1573—1620 by a textualist and bibliophile Shang Jun (商濬, the second half of the 16th century and the first half of the 17th century). In its content it fully matches *Sou shen ji* of twenty *juans*; and there is a distinct touch of Buddhist philosophy to it. Hu Ying-lin was not familiar with this text. The contrastive study of *Sou shen ji* of twenty *juans* and eight *juans* was first made in 1964 by Professor Fan Ning (范寧, 1916—1997) of Qinghua University Professor. He, having analyzed the text and historical evidences, concluded that *Sou shen ji* in eight *juans* did “not belong to Gan Bao, but in its essence it really is the collection, put together by somebody after the Tang and

Song Dynasties” (Fan Ning (范寧), “Guanyu ‘Sou shen ji’” (“關於‘搜神記’”, “Concerning ‘Records of Searching for Spirits’”), *Wenxue pinglun* I (1964), pp. 89—90). Currently this circumstance gives no rise to any doubts.

12. A critical text of Wang Shao-ying became the foundation for numerous editions of *Sou shen ji* in the PRC. An interesting Guizhou edition of 1991, which includes the original text, commentaries to it and translation of it into modern language (Gan Bao, *Sou shen ji quanyi* (搜神記全譯, Records of Searching for Spirits with the Complete Translation into Modern Language), commentary and transl. by Huang Di-ming) (Guiyang, 1991)); among the latter are editions in Chongqing and Shenyang of 2008, where both of which are packaged with the translation into modern language and artworks, letting alone editions of *Sou shen ji* as part of various anthologies: for instance, as part of two-volume *Zhongguo gudai shi da zhiguai xiaoshuo shangxi* (中國古代十大志怪小說賞析, Ten Great Ancient Chinese Collections of *Xiaoshuo* about the Marvellous, with Analysis), ed. by Ye Gui-gang, Wang Gui-yuan) (Beijing, 1992), i—ii), which includes 282 fragments from the collection. A complete translation of the collection of Gan Bao into Russian (the first complete translation into European languages) was made by L. N. Men'shikov: Gan Bao, *Zapiski o poiskakh dukhov (Sou shen ji)* (Records of Searching for Spirits (Sou shen ji)), translation from ancient Chinese, forward, footnotes and index / vocabulary by L. N. Men'shikov (St. Petersburg, 1994) (the translation was made in accordance with the edition of Wang Shao-ying); earlier some excerpts were published in the book entitled *Purpurnaiia iashma: kitaïskaia povestvovatel'naia proza I—VI vv.* (Purple Jasper: Chinese Narrative Prose, the 1st—4th centuries) (Moscow, 1980), pp. 133—83; *Klassicheskaia proza Dal'nego Vostoka* (Classical Prose of the Far East) (Moscow, 1975), pp. 37—40, under the title of “Zapisi o dukhakh” (“Records of the spirits”); translation for this text was made by L. N. Men'shikov according to the *Sou shen ji* text, made ready by Hu Huai-chen (胡懷琛, 1886—1938) and published in 1957 in Shanghai. Two stories translated by V. Panasiuk were published in the book of R. M. Mamaev, *Kitaïskaia literatura: khrestomatiia. Tom 1: Drevnost', srednevekove, novoe vremia* (Chinese Literature: Reading Book. Volume 1: Antiquity, Middle Ages, Modern Age) (Moscow, 1959), pp. 211—4; twenty two stories from *Sou shen ji*, translated by A. Tishkov and V. Panasiuk, were published as part of the book titled: *Rasskazy o neobychnom: sbornik dotanskih novell* (Stories of the Exceptional: a Collection of Pre-Tang Novella), transl. by A. Tishkov and V. Panasiuk. (Moscow, 1977), pp. 17—48 (“Rasskazy o iavlenii dukhov”, “Stories of apparitions of spirits”). Complete translation of *Sou shen ji* into English was published in 1996: *In Search of the Supernatural: The Written Record*, transl. by K. J. De Woskin, J. I. Crump (Stanford, 1996).

13. The translation follows the book: Gan Bao, *Zapiski o poiskakh dukhov*, p. 29.

14. Li Jian-guo, *Tangqian zhiguai xiaoshuo shi*, p. 292. Sichuan philologist Zhou Jun-xun (周俊勛, born in 1967) analyzed the sources of 286 fragments from *Sou shen ji* in Wang Shao-ying's edition and concluded that only 230 of them may be attributed to *Sou shen ji* with confidence, 43 more fragments — may also be attributed, taking into consideration the editing process, and the remaining 13 pieces do not belong to Gan Bao. See: Zhou Jun-xun, “Ershijuanben ‘Sou shen ji’ de goucheng ji zhengli” (“二十卷本‘搜神記’的構成及整理”, “The structure and organization of ‘Records of Searching for Spirits’, the copy of twenty *juans*”), *Xinan shifan daxue xuebao* III (2003); idem, “‘Sou shen ji’ (ershijuanben) yuliao goucheng ji jiazhi” (“‘搜神記’ (二十卷本) 語料構成及價值”, “Peculiarities and importance of the linguistic structure of the text of ‘Records of Searching for Spirits’ in twenty *juans*”), *Beijing keji daxue xuebao* III (2004).

15. The translation follows the book: Gan Bao, *Zapiski o poiskakh dukhov*, p. 146 (VI, 102). Two similar fragments have survived to our day: this one and the one that is placed in the beginning of the twelfth *juan*; the latter is rather extensive.

16. The table of contents of the Wang Shao-ying's edition has the titles of the stories, which are not present in the text itself. In the Li Jian-guo's edition the first twenty *juans* have meaningful titles: from the first to the third are titled “Shen hua” (“神化”, “The transformation of spirits”); from the fourth to the ninth are known as “Gan ying” (“感應”, “Prayers heard”); from the tenth to the fifteenth are titled “Yao guai” (“妖怪”, “The wonders of wereanimals”); whereas from the sixteenth to the twentieth are referred to as “Bian hua” (“變化”, “Transformations”). For the remaining *juans* Li Jian-guo made brief forewarnings: thus, the twenty first *juan*, he thinks, is supposed to be called “Fu sheng” (“復生”, “The return to life”); the twenty second — “Gui shi” (“鬼事”, “Stories of souls of the deceased”); the twenty third, twenty fifth and thirtieth (it has only four short fragments, the last one has not survived) are left without any comments; it is said of the twenty fourth one that myths and legends are grouped in it; the twenty sixth *juan* is devoted to the pacification of evil spirits by official people; there are amazing stories of geographical nature in the twenty seventh *juan*; the twenty eighth one speaks of various local miracles and wonders; and the twenty ninth, finally, relates the stories that have to do with the Buddhist payback for the mercy shown.

17. *Ibid.*, pp. 20—1.

18. Dong Hu (董狐, 7th century BC) is a legendary Jin historiographer of the Chunqiu period. He is believed to be the forefather of Chinese historic chronicles, as a literary phenomenon. In accordance with a legend he never twisted or distorted facts to please the ruler; there is even one set expression *dong hu zhi bi* (董狐直筆), which translates as “the right hand of Dong Hu”. In other words Liu Yan compares Gan Bao to Dong Hu in relation to the scope of the material and credibility of its exposition.

19. *Ibid.*, pp. 50—1 (I, 25). A propos, philosopher Ge Hong (葛洪, ca. 283—363), the author of the treatise entitled *Baopu-zi* (抱朴子, A Wise Man, Comprehending the Primordial Simplicity), who wrote the biography of his legendary forefather (it is contained in *Shen xian zhuan*, see for more details about this literary monument below), is a relative of Ge Xuan, Ge Xian-weng (葛仙翁, Immortal Elder Ge), a famous magus and hermit. In accordance with the legend, Ge Xuan achieved much success in mastering the art of the immortals, as a result of which he was raised to the heavens in the middle of the day. Zuo Yuan-fang is a Han magus Zuo Si who obtained immortality, he was also known as Yuan-fang (元放). “Book of Immortality from the Vermilion Molten Nine Times” (九丹液仙經) — nothing is really known for sure about this work. Sovereign Wu is apparently Sun Quan (孫權, 182—252, reigned from 222 to 252), the founder of the Wu kingdom at the time of the Three Kingdoms.

20. *Ibid.*, pp. 131—2 (V, 93). Jinag-hou — that is Jiang Xin (蔣歆, the 3rd century BC), who was the head of the guards in Moling (modern-day city of Nanjing) at the beginning of the rule of the Han Dynasty and died heroically in the skirmish with robbers. According to the legend roughly in the beginning of the 3rd century Jiang Xin was seen riding a white horse holding a white fan and accompanied by an impressive escort. A conclusion was made that Jiang Xin became immortal; there were temples constructed in his name and one mountain was even renamed after him.

21. For greater detail about the reflection of elements of lower folk religious views in *Sou shen ji* see: Cheng Qiang (程蔷), “‘Sou shen ji’ yu minjian zifa zongjiao” (“‘搜神記’ 與民間自發宗教”, “‘Records of Searching for Spirits’ and lower folk beliefs”), *Wenhua yanjiu* I (2004).

22. The translation follows the book: Gan Bao, *Zapiski o poiskakh dukhov*, pp. 54—5 (I, 28). Qiancheng is a Han district, situated in the modern-day province of Shandong. Heavenly Weaver — a spouse of Boötes, living on the other side of the Milky Way; according to the legend it is possible for them to meet only once a year: on the seventh day of the seventh moon. A legend of them is recorded in *Shi jing* and is frequently found in *xiaoshuo*. Li Jian-guo maintains that this story was borrowed by Gan Bao from the lost collection of Liu Xiang *Xiao zi zhuan* (孝子傳, Biographies of Respectful Sons) (Li Jian-guo, *Tangqian zhiguai xiaoshuo shi*, p. 296). Wuhan philologist Chen Wen-xin (陳文新, born in 1957) notes that deities of female sex (heavenly beings) were part of the Han prose with a plot, too (take, for instance, Xiwangmu); they, however, always dwelled in the spheres beyond the clouds, and only in the post-Han prose, and particularly in *Sou shen ji*, that descriptions of magic virgins condescending into the worldly life began to appear; if the Han prose describes only unearthly beauty of the celestial dwellers, *Sou shen ji* also shows their feelings (Chen Wen-xin (陳文新), *Wenyan xiaoshuo shenmei fazhan shi* (文言小說審美發展史, The History of Development of Aesthetics in the Prose with a Plot in Wenyan) (Wuhan, 2002), p. 103).

23. Hou Zhong-yi, *Zhongguo wenyan xiaoshuo shigao*, i, p. 53. The story of Dong Yong and the Heavenly Weaver was further developed: far more details and emotions of Dong for his deceased mother and so on were added to the subsequent versions, see *huaben* “Dong yong yu xian zhuan” (“董永遇仙傳”, “The story of how Dong Yong met a heavenly being”). There are ten similar fragments altogether in *Sou shen ji* — where *nüxian* (女仙, immortal virgins) appear. These are, first of all, simple heavenly beings; second of all, heavenly virgins, whose imagery go back to ancient legends; and finally there are women, who were just comparatively recently deified (after their demise), they are older contemporaries of Gan Bao, heroines of new folk legends. Among the typical features of these characters are, as a rule, freedom in choosing their own partner, perfect grasp of poetry and literary style, and children are never born to them in spite of the term of the intimacy with man. For greater details see: Yuan Ru-jie, Zhang Jing-tong (苑汝杰, 張金桐), “‘Sou shen ji’ zhongde nüxian wenhua” (“‘搜神記’ 中的女仙文化”, “The culture of immortal virgins in ‘Records of Searching for Spirits’”), *Guyuan shizhuan xuebao* II (2003); Zhang Geng-zhen (張更楨), “‘Sou shen ji’ zhongde nüshen, nüyao xiangxiang” (“‘搜神記’ 中的女神, 女鬼, 女妖形象”, “The imagery of immortal virgins, deceased virgins and wereanimal virgins in ‘Records of Searching for Spirits’”), *Hetian shifan zhuanke xuexiao xuebao* XXVIII (2009).

24. The translation follows the book: Gan Bao, *Zapiski o poiskakh dukhov*, p. 304 (XII, 311).

25. *Ibid.*, p. 317 (XIII, 335). Concerning animals in relation to *Sou shen ji* see an interesting work of Naking philologist Li Chuan-jiang (李傳江, born in 1976) of snakes in the collection of Gan Bao: Li Chuan-jiang, “Shixi ‘Sou shen ji’ zhongde she wenhua” (“試析 ‘搜神記’ 中的蛇文化”, “Attempt at analyzing the concept of snakes in ‘Records of Searching for Spirits’”), *Yancheng shifan xuexiao xuebao* III (2004).

26. The translation follows the book: Gan Bao, *Zapiski o poiskakh dukhov*, p. 381 (XVI, 394).

27. Li Jian-guo, *Tangqian zhiguai xiaoshuo shi*, p. 299.

28. For greater detail on the subject of the souls of the dead in *Sou shen ji* see: Jing Sheng-qi (景聖琪), “Yi yu ren jian: ‘Sou shen ji’ de gui wenyua” (“異域人間: ‘搜神記’ 的鬼文化”, “The world of the odd among people: souls of the deceased in ‘Records of Searching for Spirits’”), *Changjiang daxue xuebao* III (2008).

29. The translation follows the book: Gan Bao, *Zapiski o poiskakh dukhov*, pp. 341—2 (XV, 360). Wu-di — judging by the mention in the further narration of Wang Dao, there must be a mistake: it must be Hui-di (reigned from 290 to 306). Hejian — the administrative centre of this district was situated in the southeastern part of the Beixianxian district in the province of Hebei. Wang Dao (王導, 276—339) is a prominent dignitary, who was there at the very foundation of the Eastern Jin state; from 317 and to his death he was the first adviser under Emperor Yuan-di (reigned from 317 to 322), Emperor Ming-di (reigned from 322 to 325) and Emperor Cheng-di (reigned from 325 to 342). It was thanks to his recommendation that Gan Bao was enlisted into the court service. Wang Dao served in the imperial library under the Western Jin, at the time of the rule of Hui-di. An earlier version of the story about a young girl and a young man from Hejian can be found in the Jin Dynasty history with several differences being the name of the man, girl and the ruler (Wang Dao-ping (王道平), Tang Fu-yu (唐父喻), and under the rule of Qin Shi-huang, respectively).

30. *Ibid.*, p. 361 (XVI, 378). Ruan Zhan (阮瞻, 282—311, also known as Qian-li, 千里) is a famous representative of the philosophical movement of the third and fourth centuries — *xuan xue*, “the teaching of the concealed”, a neo-Taoism of sorts, which is a synthesis of proper Taoism and Confucianism with a touch of philosophy known as *ming jia*, “the school of names”. In spite of all this, he persistently developed the theory that said that spirits and souls of the deceased did not exist. And indeed he was not the only one: Ruan Zhan was completely supported by his older cousin Ruan Xiu (阮脩, 270—311).

31. *Ibid.*, pp. 432—3 (XVIII, 432). Beiping — a military district located in the Hebei province. “He lived in the shelter of branches” — at the time of mourning for close relatives, a reed shelter was erected nearby, where the son dwelled in absolute self-restraint and fasting.

32. *Ibid.*, pp. 435—6 (XVIII, 436). Wujun — a Han military district established in 129; it was located in the region of modern-day Suzhou of the Zhejiang province.

33. *Ibid.*, pp. 426—7 (XVIII, 426). Stories that also speak of the men of courage, who tamed the devilry: XI, 275; XVIII, 417; XVIII, 418; XVIII, 438; XVIII, 439; XIX, 442; and so on. A Sichuan specialist in the field of Pre-Tang prose, Yu Zuo-sheng (余作勝, born in 1972), names three sources of origin of such stories in *Sou shen ji*: legends of the common people, based on the belief in Taoist magi, who are capable of taming the devilry with the help of amulets; faith of common people in the idea that officials, being representatives of power and authority, are capable of exercising their authority in taming the devilry; and finally idle conversations of the representatives of educated circles of the ancient Chinese society, who were no strangers to scary stories of various kinds and gladly passed them on orally, and writers, like Gan Bao — wrote them down (Yu Zuo-sheng, “‘Sou shen ji’ jian-gyao chuguai gushi jiqi yingxiang” (“‘搜神記’ 降妖除怪故事及其影響”, “Stories of taming werewolves and driving out evil spirits from ‘Records of Searching for Spirits’, and their influence”), *Leshan shifan xueyuan xuebao* IV (2011), p. 24).

34. Examples of stories where magi and Taoists pacify the evil spirits: II, 32; III, 60; XIX, 444; and so on.

35. The translation follows the book: Gan Bao, *Zapiski o poiskakh dukhov*, p. 453 (XX, 450). Luling — the modern city of Jian in the province of Jiangxi.

36. *Ibid.*, p. 462 (XX, 460). Linchuan district — was located in the northeastern part of the modern district of Lichuanxian of the province of Jiangxi.

37. One of the most extensive fragments of *Sou shen ji* is a story of Humu Ban (胡母班) visiting the kingdom of the dead at Taishan (IV, 74).

38. The plot of “one thousand day old wine” can be taken as an example. It was mentioned in *Bo wu zhi* (博物志, Records of All Things) by Zhang Hua (張華, 232—300):

Once upon a time Liu Xuan-shi (劉玄石) was buying wine in one shop in Zhongshan [in Hebei. — *I. A.*] The shopkeeper sold him “one thousand day old wine”, but forgot to tell him of its properties. [Liu Xuan-shi] came back home heavily drunk and for a few days in a row he was lying in bed motionless. His family, not knowing [what the deal was], thought [Liu was] dead, prepared a coffin for him and buried him. One thousand days later the shopkeeper remembered that Xuan-shi had come for wine, and by now he was supposed to get sober. [He] went to see [Xuan-shi], but he was told that he had died three years ago and had been buried long ago. Then they dug out the coffin — [Xuan-shi] was just getting sober! People used to say: “Xuan-shi drank some wine and slept for one thousand days”.

(Zhang Hua (張華), *Bo wu zhi quanyi* (博物志全譯, Records of All Things with Complete Translation into Modern Language), transl. and commentaries by Zhu Hong-jie) (Guiyang, 1992), p. 228). And here is what it says in Gan Bao's rendition:

Di Xi (狄希), a distiller from the district of Zhongshan was skilful at making one thousand day wine. In the same district there was one man with the family name Liu and the first name Xuan-shi, who was quite a drinker. He went to ask for a drink, but Xi refused him a drink: “My wine has not fermented yet, I dare not give you drink”. “Even if it's not ready yet, — responded Shi. — You can give me at least one cup, can't you?” Hearing him say that, Xi gave in and let him try the wine. Having tried it, he demanded more: “Wonderful! Let me have some more!” “Leave now, — objected Xi. — You will come some other time, because this cup may be enough to put you to sleep for one thousand days”. Shi went away, all red as though blushing. Having just reached his house, he fell down as though he was dead. His family, having no doubt about his death, mourned for him and then buried him. Three years later Xi said to himself: “Xuan-shi must be getting sober. I need to go and check on him”. So he goes into the house of Shi and inquires: “Is Shi home?” “The term of wearing mourning clothing for Xuan-shi is almost through”, — he was informed by his family, all surprised. “My wine is really good, — Xi got frightened. — He, who becomes tipsy on account of, sleeps for one thousand days. Today it's time for him to wake up!” He commanded those of Shi's household to unseal the burial vault, break the coffin open and examine if it really is so. There were fumes rising up to the skies from the burial vault. When, following the advice of Xi, the vault was unsealed, they saw Xuan-shi yawn in a drawn-out fashion, and then he said: “Great! How drunk I was!” And then he asked. “Hey, Xi, what kind of stuff have you made? One cup was enough to get me tipsy — I have just woken up. See how high the sun is!” People that came to the burial place, began jeering at him. The wine fumes that was proceeding from Shi was so strong that it penetrated them and caused them to be drunk for three months.

(The translation follows the book: Gan Bao, *Zapiski o poiskakh dukhov*, pp. 449—50 (XIX, 447)). This story in the Zhang Hua's interpretation is fit into 92 hieroglyphs, whereas the Gan Bao's version is 240 hieroglyphs plus; even the translations shows the extent of the work, besides the introduction of the new character named Di Xi, that Gan Bao did with the original text.

39. Lin Chen (林辰), *Shenguai xiaoshuo shi* (神怪小說史, The History of Miracle Narrative) (Hanzhou, 1998), p. 131.

40. The translation follows the book: Gan Bao, *Zapiski o poiskakh dukhov*, pp. 18.

41. From younger contemporaries of Gan Bao and all the way to Pu Song-ling (蒲松齡, 1640—1715), who wrote: “When it comes to my talent I'm not like experienced Gan Bao, but I love searching for bodiless spirits badly, just like he does” (Pu Song-ling, *Strannye istorii iz kabineta neudachnika* (Liao Zhai zhi yi) (Odd Stories from the Office of the Loser (Liao Zhai zhi yi)), transl. previews, articles and commentaries by V. M. Alekseev; compilation, preparation of the text and the afterward by M. V. Bankovskaia (St. Petersburg, 2000), p. 469).

42. First of all it testifies to that amazingly viable principle of following ancient traditions, which is so characteristic for the Chinese culture as a whole. On the other hand, it was particularly the uninterrupted succession of the culture, supported by the state, that was the only thing that could make that state of affairs possible. Where in spite of all natural changes taking place in the language, oral as well as written, and in the everyday domestic culture, the influence of these processes on the canons of the genre, that had gained a foothold in the 3rd and 4th centuries, was minimal for centuries.