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CREATING MYTH IN THE REGIONS
The Cult of Fangfeng in Upland Zhejiang, China

Anne E. McLaren *

This study investigates one of China's most prominent mythical narratives, the story of Great Yu, renowned for his curbing of the flooded waterways in deep antiquity. Classical records claim that Fangfeng, the tutelary spirit of a mountainous territory in Zhejiang, was executed by Great Yu at the time of the establishment of China's first ruling dynasty, the Xia. Villagers in Fangfeng's former kingdom seek to exonerate their ancestral leader by inserting him as a flood hero into the mythic tradition surrounding Great Yu. The broader issue at stake is the justice of Great Yu's execution of Fangfeng, and, by implication, the role of the ruler as ultimate law maker. This study draws on historical and ethnological evidence to investigate the role of public sentiment, regional tensions, and notions of governance, in the construction of temple traditions and mythical stories in Chinese regional culture.

Keywords: *Chinese flood myth, Chinese temple traditions, Great Yu, Fangfeng, governance in China, Chinese regional culture*

Abbreviations

FFZH	*Fangfengshi ziliao huibian* 防风氏资料汇编 (Compilation of Sources on Fangfengshi)
FFZHZ	*Fangfengshi ziliao huibian* (*zengdingben*) 防风氏资料汇编（增订本）(Compilation of Sources on Fangfengshi, Expanded Edition)
JWZ	*Jiatai Wuxing zhi* 嘉泰吳興志 (Jiatai Era 1201–1204 CE Record of Wuxing)
SJ	*Shiji* 史記 (Records of the Historian)
WKZ	*Wukang xian zhi* 武康縣志 (County Records of Wukang)

The lower Yangzi delta region is known for its vast network of rivers, lakes, and waterways. The interaction between the rivers flowing east to the sea and the surging ocean tides, together with the seasonal monsoonal rains, led to frequent

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inundations of low-lying fields and village settlements. One of the most consequential floods took place over 4,000 years ago in the Yuhang 余杭 region in Zhejiang province. Riverine floods and sea incursions were a major factor in the collapse of a "lost" civilization known today as Liangzhu 良渚 culture. China's most famous flood control hero, Great Yu (Da Yu 大禹) is commemorated at a huge temple complex at Kuaiji 會稽 (also spelled Guiji) in Shaoxing 紹興, Zhejiang province. According to classic works, Da Yu curbed China's rampaging river systems and won over borderland populations. It is claimed that he established China's first dynasty (the Xia 夏, traditional dates ca. 2020–1600 BCE), setting up a system of hereditary rulership that continued, with periodic interruptions, until 1911.[1] Today Yu is regarded by Western scholars as a mythological figure developed by the ancients to extend the continuity of Chinese civilization and to provide a justification for kingly rule.[2] The existence of the Xia dynasty itself has not been confirmed in current archaeological evidence.[3] However, Great Yu has been embraced by the contemporary Chinese state as a vibrant symbol of Chinese nationalism. His emergence in primordial times is seen to confirm the existence of a continuous Chinese polity, one that has successfully blended a multi-ethnic empire into a single nation.[4] Today the freshly renovated Great Yu temple and tomb complex in Shaoxing is a grand and imposing site, favored by patriotic Chinese and global tourists.

This study will focus on a flood-control hero who is commemorated today by village communities in Deqing 德清 county, Zhejiang province. Few tourists visiting the Great Yu site in Shaoxing would consider visiting the Temple to Fangfeng 防風 (literally, Warding off the Wind), located about a hundred kilometers away in the foothills of the Feng 封 and Yu 嵎 mountains, at Erdu 二都 village, Sanhe 三合 township. According to tradition, a huge giant called Fangfeng was executed by Great Yu when he arrived late to an assembly of all the local divinities (or regional overlords). As a tribal leader, he is identified with the Hundred Yue (*baiyue* 百越) people who resided south of the Yangzi River in ancient times.[5] Chinese scholars of Fangfeng typically regard the legend of Fangfeng as a reflection of the conquest by the Huaxia 華夏, the proto-Chinese, of ethnic groups on the borderlands. Some additionally claim that Fangfeng was a historical figure who belonged to Liangzhu culture, which collapsed around the same time as the putative beginning of the Xia dynasty.[6] Liangzhu culture derives its name from the region of Liangzhu, which is located in Yuhang, a short distance to the south of the traditional kingdom of

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[1] Allan 1981, pp. 55–76; Mathieu 1992; Birrell 1997, pp. 241–254; Lewis 2006, pp. 37–48, 50–51. Note: Traditional character script is provided for all classical sources cited. In other cases, the script used in the relevant source is cited.

[2] Nylan 2001, pp. 158–160. China's first historic dynasty, the Shang 商 (ca. 1600–1045 BCE), may have invented these legends, see Allan 1984.

[3] Liu – Chen 2012, pp. 10–11, p. 259.

[4] McNeal 2012, p. 684; Chen Zhiqin 2015.

[5] Two conferences on Fangfeng held in the early 1990s arrived at a consensus that Fangfeng was the prime ancestor of the Baiyue people, see Dong Chuping 1996, p. 58.

[6] Liangzhu civilization lasted from around 3300 to approximately 2000 BCE, Liu – Chen 2012, pp. 236–242. For a representative view that places Fangfeng in Liangzhu culture and the early Xia, see the study by archaeologist Zhao Ye 2007, pp. 218–221; see also Zhong Weijin 2006 and studies by Jiang Linchang 江林昌, Zhang Changgong 张长工, Lu Wenbao 陆文宝, Liu Chenghuai 刘城淮 and Lü Hongnian 吕洪年 in Zhong Weijin 1996.

Fangfeng. The late twentieth century saw large-scale excavations of the Liangzhu site and the uncovering of a sophisticated civilization with spectacular jade artifacts. It was around this time that the oral tradition about Fangfeng came to public notice.

Chinese scholarship on Fangfeng follows the "historiographical approach" of Chinese archaeological scholarship, which links evidence from ancient sites to the sage kings and early dynasties as described in classic texts.[7] The underlying premise of this approach is that the material conveyed in classic texts, which date no earlier than the mid first millennium BCE, relate in some way to historical reality in the preceding two millennia. The focus of this study is instead on what can be known from classic works, histories, gazetteers, and anthologies of transmitted stories about the development of the oral and ritual tradition of Fangfeng from the first millennium BCE to the early twenty-first century CE. As discussed here, the textual record surrounding Fangfeng projects notions of a vanquished hero together with resistance to the portrayal of Fangfeng as a criminal in the mythic tradition of Great Yu. In these records we can discern the struggle by ritual masters, regional literati, and local populations to gain recognition for their own deity, and the limitations of state attempts to standardize religious activity in the regions.[8] We also catch glimpses of the storytelling at work in the creation of Fangfeng the divinity, as local enthusiasts seek to exonerate their deity and legitimize the temple cult to Fangfeng. The attempts by local parties to insert Fangfeng in a more favorable way in the canonical myth of Great Yu, together with the promotion of him as a registered ancestral deity, reflect the constant negotiations involved in attempts by borderlands to integrate into imperial agendas.[9]

The cult to Fangfeng is one of many cultural phenomena that have only come to scholarly notice in the late twentieth century, when the state promoted the selective preservation of China's pre-contemporary culture. In the 1980s folklorists came across villagers in northern Zhejiang who could recite stories about Fangfeng that lauded their hero as a prodigious controller of floods. There was considerable excitement about this discovery, which was immediately regarded as an example of an unexplored mythic tradition (*shenhua* 神話). A couple of conferences on Fangfeng were held in the early 1990s; a flood of publications followed.[10]

The term *shenhua* itself is non-traditional; it was borrowed from the Japanese translation of the English word "myth" and is redolent of Western Graeco-Roman traditions.[11] Chinese scholarship generally distinguishes between *shenhua* (myths), which are seen to relate to the origin of mankind and the activities of

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[7] For a critique of this approach see Liu – Chen 2012, pp. 256–258.

[8] The extent to which the Chinese state managed to standardize religious practices has been much debated, see Watson 1985 for a seminal publication. On the "illusory" nature of the state's attempt to standardize religious activity see Szonyi 1997. For a reappraisal of Watson's thesis concerning religious standardization and the perceived "cultural integration" of late imperial China, see discussion in Sutton 2007 and other articles in the special issue of *Modern China* 33 (2007).

[9] Katz argues that cults to popular deities formed a significant component of the public sphere between state and society, see Katz 1995, p. 7.

[10] See compendiums of historical sources and related studies *FFZH*, *FFZHZ*, also Zhong Weijin 1996 and Dong Chuping 1996.

[11] McNeal 2012, p. 680. Myths are traditional narratives that deal with matters of "collective importance" and "serve to define particular groups," Lewis 2006, p. 1.

powerful supernatural figures, and *minjian chuanshuo* 民間傳說 (legends), which are understood to be stories relating to historical events transmitted in the oral tradition.[12] Chinese mythic material is not contained in sustained narrative forms, as one finds in the European classical tradition. Rather it appears in brief anecdotes described as "fragmentary" and "dispersed" by Western scholars.[13] In the early twentieth century, Chinese historians separated stories of the sage-kings with supernatural powers from rulers whose activities could be confirmed in archaeological records, delegating the former to mythic status.[14] It was at this time that the story of Great Yu, the first ruler of the Xia and supreme controller of floods in antiquity, became recognized as one of the founding myths of Chinese civilization.

In the case of China, stories about disastrous floods have long been a forum to debate issues of vital concern, such as: "the lessons of history, the decline of civilization, standards of moral behaviour, social control, and political order."[15] According to Mark Lewis, China's flood myths reflect notions of "the ruler, the lineage, the household, and even the human body."[16] Myths about sage kings such as Great Yu also provided a model for how to win over foreign tribes by moral transformation, in this way shaping early notions of ethnic identity.[17] The formative period of the Fangfeng legend was the fifth century BCE to the sixth century CE, an era when the region south of the Yangzi was often dominated by "independent or semi-independent kingdoms."[18] In records of this era, the giant figure of Fangfeng, a defeated leader of his people, loomed as an alien and potentially menacing figure. In later centuries, regional officials and literati sought to largely efface the demonic nature of Fangfeng and portray him instead as an ancestral ruler and custodian of a mountainous kingdom. Over two millennia, his story became part of a broader discourse about how to win over a conquered people and set up just laws to govern the state. Controversy about the justice of Fangfeng's punishment reverberated in both elite circles and village communities in the imperial era and beyond. Attempts to exonerate the hero included storytelling about Fangfeng's assistance to Great Yu in controlling the floods. When this oral tradition began is unknown, but it was prevalent at the very end of the imperial era in various regions of Zhejiang.

Fangfeng has been mentioned sparingly in studies of the Great Yu myth by Western scholars.[19] To my knowledge there is no work in a Western language on the development of a temple ritual and oral tradition surrounding this figure.[20] One of the challenges in studying Chinese temple traditions is the difficulty in

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12 For a textbook definition see Bi Xun 2009, pp. 74–116.

13 Birrell 1997, p. 219; Lewis 2006, p. 28.

14 Birrell 1993, p.13; McNeal 2012, p. 681.

15 Birrell 1997, p. 255.

16 Lewis 2006, p. 1.

17 Lewis 2006, pp. 43–48. On myth and ethnicity see Hinsch 2004, p. 82, Brindley 2015, p. 35 and McNeal 2015, p. 443, p. 450.

18 Brindley 2015, p. 36. On uprisings in the south during the Han era (206 BCE – 220 CE) see Brindley 2015, p. 221.

19 For example, Birrell 1993, pp. 149–150; Lewis 2006, pp. 45–46; Milburn 2006, pp. 31–40.

20 Studies of temple traditions in Zhejiang and the eastern provinces include Katz 1995, Dean 2003, Zhu Haibang 2008, and Hamashima Atsutoshi 2008.

distinguishing popular perceptions of religious experience from those of the elite whose records provide our main sources for the study of popular religion.[21] The case of Fangfeng is of particular interest because the temple cult and surrounding oral traditions appear to promote a somewhat resistant interpretation of a canonical figure sanctioned at the highest level of the imperial state.[22] In his reappraisal of the role of ritual practice in the "cultural integration" debate, Donald S. Sutton points to "the inventive side of cultures, envisaging new cultural expressions emerging from local sites of competition and conflict."[23] This study too investigates the "inventive" side of a regional cult, in this case arising from competition with a state-sponsored cult, and demonstrates how regional populations can defy orthodoxy to assert local identities and interests. In the case of the temple cult to Fangfeng, regional officials and literati may well sympathize with the "common cultural discourse"[24] of temple devotees and the local population while also seeking to make the tradition more acceptable to state authorities. In addition, this study of Fangfeng adds to our knowledge of the way that living mythic traditions are still being renewed and recreated in many areas of China.[25] Recent studies show that it is not always easy to revive traditions that have managed to survive the vicissitudes of the twentieth century. For example, contemporary transmitters might have to reshape the tradition as veneration of one's ancestors (deemed acceptable by the current government) rather than as propitiation of a powerful spiritual being (regarded as feudal superstition by the state).[26] Story making is created by a tumult of competing local voices, with different individuals attempting to provide a more convincing narrative to please the audience.[27] In some cases, state authorities take over as "custodians" of the tradition, to the detriment of ongoing transmission by locals.[28] In this way, ritual activities can become "arenas for the active negotiation of the forces of modernity."[29] These factors are also relevant to the renewal of the temple tradition of Fangfeng, who remained a controversial figure even into the contemporary

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[21] Information on the religious experience of the illiterate is very limited before the Southern Song (1127–1279), Ebrey – Gregory 1993, p. x. In his study of demonic cults, Von Glahn (2004, p. 18) seeks to differentiate "the culture imposed on the plebian classes" from "the vernacular culture that they themselves produce." Chittick (2020, p. 14) calls for more study of vernacular traditions (oral and performative) to better understand regional tensions.

[22] According to the *Wu Yue Chunqiu*, Yu's son, Qi 啟, set up sacrifices to Yu in the Yue 越 region (modern day Zhejiang province), *Spring and Autumn Annals of Wu and Yue*, pp. 157–158. It is recorded that in 210 BCE the first emperor of the Qin went to Kuaiji to venerate Yu, see *SJ*, *j.* 6, vol. 1, "Qin Shihuang benji" 秦始皇本紀, p. 260. For sacrificial rites to Yu by later Chinese emperors and kings, see Shen Jianzhong 2005, pp. 64–85. On the contemporary reconstruction of the Shaoxing Great Yu ceremonies, see Chen Zhiqin 2015. My use of "cult" is here synonymous with "temple tradition" and carries no pejorative connotation. As Dean (2003, p. 340) points out, Chinese temple cults can be compared with veneration of the saints in the Christian tradition.

[23] Sutton 2007, p. 8.

[24] Ebrey – Gregory 1993, p. xiv.

[25] On the contemporary myth of sage king, Shun, in Zhejiang and elsewhere see McNeal 2015; on Yao and Shun in Hongtong 洪洞, Shanxi province, see You Ziying 2019. On the mythic tradition of brother-sister marriage in Huaiyang county, Henan province, see Yang Lihui 2011. For an overview of contemporary mythmaking in China see Yang – An 2011.

[26] You Ziying 2019, p. 137.

[27] Yang Lihui 2011.

[28] Chen Zhiqin 2015.

[29] Dean 2003, p. 342.

period. The many manifestations of Fangfeng discussed here shed light on the relationship between center and periphery, the mainstream and the "barbaric," orthodox written culture and the chaotic but creative world of myth making in the oral and ritual tradition.

This study will begin with an investigation of the historical record, which provides evidence of legends about Fangfeng dating back to the fifth century BCE and a temple tradition dating back to the third century CE. I will then proceed to the contemporary reconstruction of this tradition in upland Zhejiang in ritual and storytelling. There is little evidence of Fangfeng as a controller of floods in historical writings, however, one can discern an ongoing argument as to whether Great Yu did the right thing in executing Fangfeng. Officials and literati in the pre-modern era were divided on the issue of whether Fangfeng was a surly rebel who deserved his fate or a regional ruler who was subjected to excessive punishment. The ongoing debate about Fangfeng's "criminality" can also be seen in the murals made in recent decades in the Great Yu temple complex in Shaoxing and in the Temple to Fangfeng in Deqing. The visual style is very similar but the content is markedly different. In the Shaoxing Great Yu complex, Fangfeng appears as a primitive, criminal figure who is executed in bloody fashion as a striking symbol of Yu's imperial power (see Figure 1).

In the Temple to Fangfeng, he appears as a champion of his people who has mastered the correct technique of flood control (see Figure 2). The story-cycle of Fangfeng collected in the 1980s is just as subversive as the temple murals would suggest. It refutes the suggestion of any wrongdoing on the part of the local hero and offers an affront to the contemporary reconstruction of Great Yu as the good and just first ruler of China.

FIGURE 1: Fangfeng as a criminal (lower left, wild hair, torso bare, hands tied behind his back) at the Shaoxing Temple to Great Yu. Photo by Anne McLaren, 5 June 2011, Shaoxing.

FIGURE 2: Fangfeng as a hero fighting the floods, Deqing Temple, Photo by Anne McLaren, 4 June 2011.

FANGFENG AS MOUNTAIN SPIRIT AND TERRITORIAL LEADER

Throughout the imperial era, Fangfeng appears in various guises. In some sources he is portrayed as prodigious and alien, a giant whose vast size intimidated even Great Yu. He is venerated as the mountain spirit and ruler of a kingdom belonging to the Yue people. The second portrayal is as a subversive territorial leader who was justly executed by Great Yu to serve the greater cause of political unity. A third image of Fangfeng emerges in the first millennium CE, where he appears as the tutelary deity who deserved (and sometimes obtained) state recognition and formal sacrifices.

The earliest record concerning Fangfeng depicts him in the first guise, as a mountain spirit. The *Guoyu* 國語 (5th c. BCE) recounts that when the kingdom of Wu 吳 defeated the neighboring state of Yue 越 in 494 BCE, troops in Mt. Kuaiji 會稽 came across a massive bone the length of a chariot. Subsequently the King of Wu (Fuchai

夫差, r. 495–473 BCE) sent emissaries to question Confucius about why it was that "no one will obey my commands" (*wu yi wu ming* 無以吾命). At the welcoming banquet, Confucius is additionally questioned about the huge bone. In his response, Confucius identifies the bone with Fangfeng, who, he declares, was executed by Yu at the time of an earlier conquest of Kuaiji. He subtly responds to the first question by relating what amounts to a parable about the correct way to handle defiant regional leaders.

> "I have heard that in olden times Yu called an assembly of divinities (*shen* 神) at Mt Kuaiji. Master Fangfeng[30] arrived late. Yu had him executed and his corpse displayed to the multitudes. A single joint was so huge it filled a chariot, that's why it is so big!"
>
> The guest said: "May I ask what were these divinities custodians of?"
>
> Confucius replied: "With regard to those mountains and rivers that have the supernatural power to order and govern all under Heaven, these custodians are termed divinities, while those who preside over the altars of earth and grain are known as dukes and marquesses. Both are subordinate to the king."
>
> The envoy asked further: "What was Fangfeng custodian of?"
>
> Confucius replied: "He was the lord of the Wangmang 汪芒 clan and custodian of the mountains of Feng and Yu. He came from the clan of Qi. In the time of Yu 虞 [that is, sage-king Shun 舜], and during the Xia and Shang [ca. 1600–1045 BCE] dynasties, [his descendants] were known as the Wangmang clan. At the time of the Zhou dynasty [11th c. – 771 BCE], they were known as the Chang Di 長狄. In the present day they are called 'giants.'" [31]

Fangfeng is framed here within a story about King Fuchai of Wu attempting to impose his commands on the conquered Yue people. The seizure of Kuaiji was the beginning of fierce warfare between Wu and Yue, which ultimately concluded with the suicide of King Fuchai in 473 BCE and the ascendancy of King Goujian 勾踐 of Yue as overlord of Central Plain kingdoms. Confucius declares that Fangfeng is a divinity in charge of the Feng and Yu mountains.[32] His role is distinct from that of the lords who tend to the rituals of state. Both are obliged to obey the ruler. The implication here is that the proper way to handle conquered tribal leaders (or menacing spirits) is to give them appointments in their own domain.[33] It is further

[30] The affix *shi* 氏 generally refers to a line of descent or a clan. When applied to an individual, it is a term of respect. Mythical figures such as Fu Xi 伏羲 and Shennong 神農 sometimes appear with the affix *shi*. I have translated *shi* as "Master" when referring to Fangfeng and as "clan" when referring to the Wangmang line of descent.

[31] 丘聞之：昔禹致群神于會稽之山，防風氏後至，禹殺而戮之，其骨節專車。此為大矣。客曰：敢問誰守為神？仲尼曰：山川之靈，足以紀綱天下者，其守為神；社稷之守者，為公侯。皆屬于王者。客曰：防風何守也？仲尼曰：汪芒氏之君也，守封、嵎之山者也，為漆姓。在虞、夏、商為汪芒氏，于周為長狄，今為大人. See *Guoyu*, *j.* 5, "Lu yu xia" 魯語下, 2.18, p. 213; *FFZH*, p. 3.

[32] Mountain spirits were considered dangerous but gradually became subsumed into the Chinese supernatural bureaucracy, see Kleeman 1994. Stories about Confucius encountering objects from far off lands served to integrate distant territories into the Chinese world, see Milburn 2006, p. 24.

[33] On the obligations of the sovereign to carry out appropriate rituals to the *shen* of mountains and rivers see Winslett 2014, pp. 963–965.

claimed in this story that Fangfeng's descendants were members of a northern tribal people known in antiquity as the Chang Di. It is believed that one branch of the Chang Di controlled the territory of Souman 鄋瞞 in present day central Shandong province.[34] This anecdote attributed to Confucius is recorded in the Lu 魯 state section of the *Guoyu*. The state of Lu was the home state of Confucius and had its capital in Qufu 曲阜, Shandong province, not far from the traditional land of the Souman. In the time of Confucius, the people of Lu would have surely recalled the period of intense battle between the Central Plain states and the nomadic Chang Di in the early Chunqiu 春秋 period (770–476). They would also recall that it was the state of Lu that ultimately captured Souman leader, Qiaoru 僑如, and decapitated him in 616 BCE.[35] After the defeat of the Chang Di, the descendants of the defeated people became known simply as Daren 大人 or giants. This additional elaboration is not extraneous detail; it links the execution of Fangfeng in deep antiquity with much more recent events, specifically, the conquest of Fangfeng's distant descendants and the beheading of their leader. The implication is that, over the course of three dynasties, Fangfeng's people remained a threat to the Central Plain kingdoms. Moreover, Fangfeng's massive stature indicates that he is an exceptional individual who should be treated with respect.[36] Indeed, Confucius himself was claimed to be very tall, with a protuberance on his forehead.[37] The sudden appearance of the huge bone of Fangfeng at the capture of Kuaiji thus signalled grievance at his untimely death and was an omen of future disaster for the King of Wu.[38]

A century later, Sima Qian (ca. 145–87 BCE), in his "Biography of Confucius," followed the story found in the *Guoyu*, where Yu convened an assembly of divinities (*shen* 神).[39] Sima Qian reports that Goujian, now claimed to be a descendant of Xia ruler Shaokang 少康, continued the sacrificial rituals to Yu in the Feng and Yu Mountains.[40] It is said that Shaokang adopted southern customs considered barbarous in the north such as tattoos and sheared hair.[41] In this way, Sima Qian linked

[34] Dong Chuping 1996, p. 21.

[35] See *Zuozhuan*, "Wengong" 文公 11.5 in: *Zuo Tradition*, pp. 522–523. Also *SJ*, "Lu Zhougong shijia" 魯周公世家, *j.* 33, vol. 2, p. 1535. Dong Chuping has speculated that stories about Fangfeng originated amongst the Chang Di of the Souman kingdom and spread to the Zhejiang region when the remnant population migrated southwards. See Dong Chuping 1996, p. 21. If so, then this shift of the legend to the south must have taken place before the composition of this story in the *Guoyu*, as Fangfeng's bone is claimed to be found in Kuaiji in the state of Yue. James Robson has demonstrated that "sacrality" could sometimes move from one mountain to another, particularly by imperial fiat. See Robson 2009, pp. 57–89.

[36] For ancient records and illustrations of Daren see Strassberg 2002, pp. 206–207. On physical attributes and signs of greatness see Milburn 2007.

[37] See Nylan – Wilson 2010, pp. 92–93.

[38] Texts like the *Zuozhuan* and *Guoyu* typically included remonstrances to the ruler involving predictions that often turn out to be correct. This is explicable as the result of editing by later hands after the event concerned, see Schaberg 1997, pp. 136–137.

[39] *SJ*, *j.* 67, vol. 2, pp. 1912–1913.

[40] *SJ*, *j.* 41, vol. 2, p. 1739.

[41] On these bodily markers of Yue ethnicity see Brindley 2015, Chapter 6.

conquered kingdoms with the Huaxia polity while also demonstrating northern accommodation to southern norms.[42]

In other records, the assembled leaders convened by Yu are not divinities but princes or feudal lords (*zhuhou* 諸侯). In the *Zuozhuan* 左傳 (4th c. BCE), advisors to a regional king caution him against launching an attack on a neighboring kingdom. They declare that of all the princes who gave homage to Yu, very few remain in the present. There is no mention of Fangfeng in this account.

> [The advisors] replied, "When Yu gathered the princes together at Mount Tu, ten thousand domains came with jade and silk. What remains of those today amounts to no more than a few score. This is all because the great have not fostered the small and the small have not served the great."[43]

The *Guoyu* and *Zuozhuan* are generally regarded as companion volumes with relatively few discrepancies,[44] which makes the divergence here somewhat surprising. However, in early Chinese historiography, the same figure can appear as historical in one account and as mythological in another account, a process known as euhemerization.[45] Birrell additionally observes that "mythic narratives were deployed by writers of different persuasions to illustrate this or that point of view."[46] In this case, the story of Yu's seeming triumph over the known world is used to warn against hubris in the conduct of state affairs. Given this context, the execution of Fangfeng is an extraneous detail.

Later commentators such as Han Feizi 韓非子 (280–233 BCE), the famous Legalist thinker, also regarded Fangfeng as one of the feudal lords. In the account below, he retells the story of Yu's execution of Fangfeng in line with a bureaucratic model of military primacy.

> In former days, [sage-king] Shun 舜 sent officials to divert the vast flood waters. One official accomplished some flood control before the command arrived and Shun had him executed. The feudal lords gave homage to Yu on top of Mt Kuaiji. Fangfeng arrived late and Yu had him beheaded. From this we can see that the one who acted before the order was given was executed; and the one who responded late to an order was beheaded. One could conclude that what the ancients valued most was compliance with commands.[47]

Zhao Ye 趙曄 (*fl.* 60–80 CE), a native of Kuaiji, also makes it plain that Fangfeng was guilty of an offense of lèse majesté. The issue at stake was the demonstration of Yu's absolute dominance over the regional leaders:

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[42] Goujian and other southern rulers bolstered their legitimacy through claimed descent from the Xia dynasty, see Brindley 2015, pp. 135, 246; Hinsch 2004, p. 91; Milburn 2010, p. 223; McNeal 2012, p. 687.

[43] 對曰：禹合諸侯於涂山，執玉帛者萬國。今其存者，無數十焉，唯大不字小，小不事大. See *Zuozhuan*, "Aigong qinian" 哀公七年 in: *Zuo Tradition*, pp. 1874–1875.

[44] Schaberg 2001, p. 6.

[45] Boltz 1981, pp. 141–142.

[46] Birrell 1993, p. 18.

[47] 昔者，舜使吏決鴻水，先令有功，而舜殺之；禹朝諸侯之君會稽之上，防風之君後至，而禹斬之。以此觀之，先令者殺，後令者斬，則古者必 [先]貴如令矣. See *Han Feizi* "Shixie" 飾邪, p. 176. *FFZH*, p. 65.

> Yu spent three years assessing his officials' administrative merits, and in five years the governmental situation was settled. He toured all over the world and then returned to the great Yue region. Ascending Mount Mao, Yu received homage from the many ministers from the four directions and ordered the lords from the central plain to meet there. Fangfeng was late for the meeting; Yu then executed Fangfeng and showed this to the public, demonstrating that the world under heaven completely belonged to him.[48]

In another account, however, the execution of Fangfeng is regarded as evidence that the reign of Yu was excessively harsh. In this account from the third century CE, Guo Huai 郭淮 (died 255 CE), an official of the state of Wei, was unable to arrive on time for the enthronement of the emperor due to illness. The latter reminds him of what happened to Fangfeng when he arrived late for a similar weighty occasion. Guo Huai makes the case that good governance requires the exercise of virtue rather than harsh punishment. In Guo's view, the execution of Fangfeng demonstrates the defects of governance during the Xia dynasty. The new ruler of the Wei, Guo declares, will surely govern in accordance with the enlightened rule of the five sage-kings who preceded the Xia dynasty:

> Guo replied [to the Emperor]: "I have been told that the Five Emperors relied in the first place on virtue to instruct and guide the people. When government degenerated under the Xia, they began to use penal codes. But now we live in a time like that of the wise sages Tang and Yu [Shun], so I know I can avoid the execution suffered by Fangfeng."[49]

Fortunately for Guo Huai, the new emperor was persuaded by this argument and rewarded him with a new appointment and title.

In the anecdote above, Guo Huai is drawing on an ancient controversy about the introduction of penal codes during the Xia dynasty. It was believed that laws known as "The Codes of Yu" (*Yu xing* 禹刑) were set up during the Xia. For example, Jin 晉 Minister Shuxiang 叔向 (*fl.* 528 BCE) argued that it was only when the state fell into disorder due to poor governance that the Xia established a penal code. Shuxiang deplored the casting of the penal code in bronze during his own era.[50] The issue at stake is whether moral persuasion rather than a penal code was the most effective way to preserve public order. The debate about the correct way to deal with Fangfeng thus has deep roots in the Chinese philosophy of governance.

The early records of the story of Fangfeng present an intriguing tale of a mountain god or regional overlord who arrives late to a convocation of regional leaders and is executed by the conqueror. We are not told why he arrived late or why the punishment was so harsh. However, Fangfeng's extreme height is the sign of an

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[48] 三載考功，五年政定，周行天下，歸還大越。登茅山，以朝四方群臣，觀示中州諸侯，防風後至，斬以示眾，示天下悉屬禹也. See *Wu Yue Chunqiu* 6.6 text and translation in *Spring and Autumn Annals of Wu and Yue*, pp. 155–156.

[49] 淮對曰：臣聞五帝先教導民以德，夏后政衰，始用刑闢。今臣遭唐虞之世，是以自知免於防風之誅也. See *Sanguozhi*, vol. 3, *j.* 26, p. 734.

[50] This debate is found in the *Zuozhuan*; see translation and discussion in Li Wai-yee 2007, pp. 363–364.

extraordinary individual. Some commentators consider Yu's action was necessary; however, there was already a counter argument that Fangfeng met with arbitrary justice not befitting sagely governance. There was also a sense that Fangfeng was the leader of a foreign kingdom whose submission to Great Yu remained contingent. We will now turn to accounts that point to the existence of an aggrieved spirit whose actions are disturbing the region. In the Chinese tradition, those who die with a grievance need to be propitiated in case they become a malicious ghost, preying on the living.

In a compendium of transmitted stories from the third century CE, it is claimed that, after Yu's enthronement, two dragons descended to the court, an ominous sign. Yu travelled all around the empire to find the cause of the trouble. As he passed by the site of Fangfeng's kingdom, the spirits of two officers of Fangfeng became enraged at the memory of the execution and fired arrows at Yu. There was a sudden storm and the two dragons ascended to the heavens. The two ministers became afraid and pierced their hearts with blades until they died. Yu took pity on them and removed the blades, tending to the wounds with the herbs of immortality. They became known as the Pierced-Chest People (Chuanxiong min 穿胸民, also known as Guanxiong min 貫胸民).[51] In this account of an oral tradition, Yu seeks to heal the wounds of conquest in Fangfeng's former kingdom, implying a form of exoneration for his aggrieved spirit. As we discuss later, the issue of exoneration was to become a key aspect of the temple cult to Fangfeng. In later accounts we see that Fangfeng's ghost continues to haunt Kuaiji.

> In Kuaiji commandery a huge ghost makes a frequent appearance. He is several *zhang* tall; his waist is the size of several score arm spans. He wears a high-crowned hat and is garbed in black. When the commandery is [carrying out rites to divine] good and bad fortune, he displays a countenance of either worry or joy at the Thunder Gate. The Xie family is tasked with the duty of reporting whether his countenance is worried or joyful.[52]

A member of this family called Xie Daoxin 謝道欣 ventured to the graveyard at night to conduct mourning rites for his parents. He sees a tall ghost with a huge head emerging from a pond. The apparition is lurching as if drunk, propped up by smaller ghosts on both sides. It is further related that in the very same year, a man called Sun En 孫恩 (died 402 CE) led an uprising that caused widespread devastation in eastern China.[53] The terrified people of Kuaji decided that the ghost must be the very same Fangfeng who was invited to the meeting of feudal lords by Yu at Kuaiji.[54] In this portrayal of Fangfeng, we see him once again as a baleful apparition associated with a resistant southern population.

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[51] Zhang Hua 張華 (232–300), *Bowuzhi*, 博物志, *j*. 2, *FFZH*, p. 9. Transl. Birrell 1993, p. 246 and Milburn 2006, p. 38.

[52] 會稽郡常有大鬼，長數丈，腰大數十圍，高冠玄服。郡將吉凶，先於雷門示憂喜之兆。謝氏一族憂喜必告. See *Taiping guangji*, *j*. 323, "Gui ba" 鬼八, "Xie Daoxin" 謝道欣; *FFZH*, pp. 11–12. The Thunder Gate was one of the gates allowing entry to the walled-in township of Kuaiji. A large drum known for its thunderous sound hung from the gate.

[53] Sun En led a Daoist-inspired uprising against the state that attracted peasants fleeing conscription, see Miyakawa 1979.

[54] *Taiping guangji*, *j*. 323, "Gui ba" 鬼八, "Xie Daoxin" 謝道欣, *FFZH*, p. 12.

The Temple Veneration of Fangfeng

In the early centuries of the common era, temples were built to venerate notable individuals who had died a violent death, including defeated generals of the past.[55] In the late third century CE, Wukang County District Magistrate He Xun 賀循 (260–319 CE) built a temple to Fangfeng after his ghost appeared at the county seat.[56] This is the first known example of official recognition of what may well have been an established cult in the Zhejiang region. He Xun was noted for his efforts to channel waterways to provide for irrigation and transport by boat. He compiled the *Kuaiji ji* 會稽記 (Records of Kuaiji), which contains mention of the Execution Pond (Xingtang 刑塘), the traditional site of Fangfeng's execution.

> The Execution Pond is located 15 *li* north of the county seat. Old texts cite He Xun's *Records* [*of Kuaiji*] as follows: "Fangfeng shi was three *zhang* [10 meters] tall, the executioner could not reach up to him and so built tall banks to form a pond in order to get close to him. This is why it is called 'Execution Pond'."[57]

This indicates a thriving oral tradition regarding the gruesome death of Fangfeng. A compilation of stories of the strange attributed to Ren Fang 任昉 (460–508), but which is likely to contain additions by other writers, contains the following report on rituals to Fangfeng. In this case it appears to be a customary practice of the Yue people rather than an official cult recognized by the state. The reference to Fangfeng temple occurs first in an item about a female ghost called *guigu shen* 鬼姑神, who is described as having the head of a tiger, the feet of a dragon, python eyes (large round eyes) and eyebrows joined together. Then follows a comment: "In the present Wuyue region there is a temple to Fangfeng with an unadorned statue of this figure. It has a head like a dragon, ears like an ox, eyebrows joined together, and only one eye."[58]

The subsequent item identifies Fangfeng:

> In former days, when Yu held a meeting at Tushan, people from the numerous kingdoms came bearing tribute of jade and silk. Fangfeng arrived late and Yu executed him. He was three *zhang* tall; one bone was the length of a chariot. Now in the southlands there are people called Fangfengshi who are his descendants. They are all huge. It is the custom in Yue to offer sacrifices to the spirit of Fangfeng and to perform Fangfeng ancient music. They cut bamboo to the length of three *chi* [one meter] and blow through it, making a howling sound. Three men unbind their hair and dance to the music.[59]

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[55] Stein 1979, p. 59, pp. 66–67; Von Glahn 2004, pp. 63–64.

[56] *JWZ*, vol. 3, *j.* 13, 17a, cited *FFZH*, p. 32. The ghost is described as huge, with knees dangling to the ground.

[57] 刑塘在縣北一十五里，舊經引賀循[會稽]記云：防風氏身長三丈，刑者不及，乃築高塘臨之，故曰刑塘. See *Jiatai Kuaiji zhi*, *j.* 10, p. 312; *FFZH*, p. 21.

[58] 今吳越間防風廟，土木作其形、龍首牛耳，連眉一目. See *Shuyi ji*, *shang juan*, item 3, p. 1320b; *FFZH*, pp. 10–11.

[59] 昔禹會塗山，執玉帛者萬國。防風氏後至，禹誅之，其長三丈，其骨頭專車。今南中民有姓防風氏，即其後也，皆長大. 越俗，祭防風神，奏防風古樂，截竹三尺，吹之如嗥，三人披髮而舞. See *Shuyi ji*, *shang juan*, item 4, p. 1320b; *FFZH*, p. 10.

Many modern scholars believe the unusual statue in the temple depicts Fangfeng himself, but it is also possible that the statue represents a warrior-like companion of Fangfeng.[60] Some further claim that the dragon head and ox ears relate to the totems of Fangfeng's kingdom. Dragons (*long* 龍) in the Chinese tradition resemble water creatures like snakes and alligators.[61] The joined eyebrows encircling the single eye are said to be characteristic of the mythical kraken *jiaolong* 蛟龍, whose appearance is a harbinger of dangerous floods.[62] Unbound hair is associated with a lack of civilized restraint.[63] The wild dance appears to be a rite of spirit possession.[64] The three men could represent Fangfeng and his two main companions.

In this anecdote, the monstrous-looking statue, the howling music, and the wild dancing are seen to belong to a primitive borderland community. As the centuries progressed, regional officials and rulers distanced themselves from the demonic aspects of the cult, preferring instead to adopt Fangfeng as the ancestral spirit of the territory. They elided or ignored bizarre aspects that (one can assume) were transmitted in the oral and ritual tradition and recorded in accounts of strange events. The cult to Fangfeng reached a new height in the tenth century CE, a time that saw the breakup of the great Tang dynasty (618–907). In the Lower Yangzi Delta, an independent state known as the Wuyue 吳越 kingdom emerged. Qian Liu 錢鏐 (852–932 CE), a man of humble origins who rose to prominence as regional commander at the time of the collapse of the Tang, visited Fangfeng temple to pray for success in his military campaign. When he became ruler of the Wuyue kingdom, with his capital in Hangzhou, he returned to rebuild the temple on the urging of one of his supporters, Lu Renzhang 陸仁璋 (*fl.* 909 CE). In 931 CE Qian Liu commissioned a stele to record his gratitude to the deity. This stele is the only historical artifact that remains today in Fangfeng Temple. In his inscription, Qian awards him the title of King of Efficacious Virtue (Lingde Wang 靈德王). He is said to be the equal of other ancestral spirits who have pacified the country, pursued the cause of kingship, and brought benefit to the people.[65] The deity is presented as the appointed ruler of the region in ancient times, just as Qian Liu is now the legitimate ruler of an independent kingdom. He is never termed "Fangfeng" and there is no reference to his humiliating execution by Great Yu. Nor is there mention of the deity's management of the waterways.

> In this land there is a Temple to the King of Efficacious Virtue at Feng 風 Mountain. Originally this area was a subordinate region [beyond the capital], now it is under the jurisdiction of the imperial domain [Hangzhou]. On examining the historical records, we see that this temple was located at Feng Mountain in Wukang 武康 county. According to the *Shiji*, in ancient times there was a lord called Master Wangwang (Wangwang

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[60] Jin Ronghua 2012.

[61] On dragon lore see Thorbjarnarson – Wang 2010, pp. 49–72.

[62] Fang Xiang 1996, p. 116.

[63] Lewis 2006, p. 89.

[64] In 1984 an Erdu villager performed a Fangfeng dance at the invitation of the Culture Bureau, *FFZH*, p. 138. A contemporary story relates the origin of the dance (see Appendix 1, Story 24). This dance is described as a dance of revenge for the death of Fangfeng. Participants bear spears and fireworks, let their hair hang loose, wail in mourning, and move their arms and feet in a frenzy. See *FFZH*, p. 233.

[65] Included in *WKZ*, *j.* 10, pp. 583–585; *FFZH*, pp. 24–29.

> shi 汪罔氏) whose fiefdom was in the Feng Yu Mountain area.[66] Nowadays this belongs to the Wuxing 吳興 region of Wukang county. It is difficult to ascertain the origin of the temple because it was so long ago. There are numerous maps and archives about the establishment of the temple but the content is contradictory. The only [solid record] is the inscribed stone tablet that states that the roof and pillars were rebuilt during the reign of the Tang [Emperor] Xianzong 憲宗 in the *yuanhe* reign period [806–820 CE]. The tablet testifying to this remains in the present day; there is no need to repeat this. Here it is recorded that the intention in rebuilding the temple is to bestow on him the reverence due a divinity.[67]

The inscription goes on to describe the expansion and refurbishing of the temple and the seasonal rites. Blood sacrifices were offered to the god, a characteristic of the kind of cults found at popular level.[68] The inscription ends with an invocation to the deity to forever protect the army and people, to ensure good harvests, and to ward off disaster. In this way, Qian Liu canonized the ancestral spirit of the region in an attempt to legitimize his rule.[69]

The Wuyue kingdom was short-lived. After its fall in 978 CE, the region was incorporated into the territory of the Song dynasty. The Song era (960–1279) was marked by greater commercialization and an expansion of the local gods recognized by the imperial government.[70] During this period, the cult of Fangfeng expanded beyond the traditional mountain kingdom to urban areas. Shrines and temples to Fangfeng could now be found in numerous sites in Wukang and Yuhang.[71] The renewed cult focused on the huge stature of the divinity and his supernatural power. Shen Kuo 沈括 (1031–1095) reports this story about the finding of a rotten pestle used for pounding silk in soil near Kuaiji. Someone passing by declared this was a "supernatural object" (*lingwu* 靈物), saying, "I have heard that Fangfeng was three *zhang* tall and that his bones filled a chariot. This is the shin bone of Fangfeng" (吾聞防風氏身長三丈，骨節專車。此防風氏脛骨也). The villagers were delighted and built a temple to venerate the bone, calling it "Shin Bone Temple" (*jingmiao* 脛廟).[72] Another Fangfeng temple dating back to the twelfth century was located at Qingmu 清穆, a short distance from the county seat at Wukang.[73] It remained into the mid-twentieth century, when it was destroyed during the 1950s land reform movement.[74] The Southern Song capital of Lin'an 臨安 (Hangzhou) also had a temple to

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66 This title appears as Wangmangshi 汪芒 or 茫氏 in other sources.

67 其有風山靈德王廟，本係屬城，近歸畿甸. 考諸舊記，即先是武康縣風山。又按《史記》云：「汪罔氏之君，守封禺之山」。今屬吳興武康縣。稽立廟之初，則年華渺邈，詳圖牒之說，則詞理異同。唯有元和年再搆簷楹，則存碑記.彼既已具敘述，此固不複殫論，聊書制置之由，直述旌崇之意. See *WKZ*, *j.* 10, p. 584; *FFZH*, p. 24.

68 Stein 1979, pp. 55–57.

69 For an earlier example of the adoption of a local god by a regional ruler in Jiangnan see Chittick 2020, pp. 12–13.

70 Hansen 1990.

71 Hansen 1990, pp. 109–110, 185, 193.

72 Shen Kuo, *Mengxi bitan* 夢溪筆談, *j.* 5, cited in *FFZH*, p. 66.

73 *JWZ*, *j.* 13 Cimiao 祠廟, Wukangxian 武康縣; cited in *FFZH*, pp. 32–33.

74 *FFZH*, p. 33.

Fangfeng.[75] Remains of this temple too could be observed in the Jianqiao 筧橋 region of Hangzhou in the late twentieth century.[76]

The following source from the mid-twelfth century offers insight into how Fangfeng was regarded by both officialdom, temple custodians, and the local populace in the early years of the Southern Song (1127–1279). An official called Zhang Jie 章傑 (*jinshi* 1124) travelled to the Feng and Yu mountains and came across Fangfeng temple. He composed a lengthy ode to the temple in 188 lines consisting mostly of a dialogue between himself and the spirit medium at the temple.[77] In this ode we see the poet debating the justification for the execution of Fangfeng, an execution that appears to challenge orthodox notions of the appropriate pacification of vanquished populations. Through the mouth of the temple custodian we hear stories that were probably transmitted in the oral tradition at that time, particularly the idea that the hero was obstructed by floods in making his way to the convocation. The ode is remarkable for its attempt to accommodate the contradictions between orthodox opinion and popular sentiment.

Zhang reports that the temple itself was imposing, like a kingly residence (*miao mao mou wang ju* 廟貌侔王居). However, he is surprised to see the scanty remains of sacrificial rice in the altar vessels. The scene looks desolate and the deity is not depicted as a giant: "The figure in the statue is not huge and imposing / How can this befit one whose [giant] bone filled a chariot" (像設匪豐碩，胡能肖專車?).[78] He observes two wives, one on each side of the deity, and seated to his right, five warriors wearing armour and helmets and wielding lances and spears. Behind them is an assembly of demons (*zhonggui* 眾鬼), their heads held high, staring fiercely. This sparks the curiosity of the poet. The people here are surely "a remnant population" (*yimin* 遺民), that is, survivors of a vanquished kingdom who remain loyal to their ancestral rulers. He sees a figure wearing black robes described here as a *yinwu* 淫巫, a pejorative term used for a spirit medium who is not part of a registered ritual tradition.[79] He questions the medium, who responds "in words high flown and preposterous" (其辭誕以迂). The medium recounts that the Xia Emperor [Yu] curbed the marshy waters, divided up the territory, and set up laws and regulations. At a meeting on Kuaiji Mountain he rewarded those who submitted to him with official rank and accepted their tribute. "[At that time] it was like waves of immense blue sea / Flowing ceaselessly everywhere" (如波朝沧溟，混混川流俱). Fangfeng alone "came late because it was difficult to advance" (後至行趑趄). The ruler made a great display of anger and ordered his execution with the fearsome axe of state. Thereupon the Yue kingdom set up eternal sacrifices in honor of Fangfeng. Subsequently the Wu and Yue kingdoms were enveloped in violence. From a

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[75] According to Wu Zimu 吳自牧 (*fl.* ca.1274), *Mengliang lu* 夢粱錄, *j.* 14 Gu shenci 古神祠, see *Dongjing Menghualu*, *j.* 14, p. 250.

[76] See report by Zhang Changgong 張長公, *FFZH*, pp. 91–93.

[77] See *WXZ*, *j.* 10, pp. 587–589 and *FFZH*, pp. 47–50. It is not known when this ode was written. Zhang Jie was a native of Pucheng 浦城, Fujian. In 1144 he served as Superintendent of the Chongdao 崇道 Daoist Temple at Taizhou 台州, Zhejiang, see *Jianyan yilai xinian yaolu*, *j.* 92, p. 85. It is likely that he made his trip to the temple of Fangfeng at this time.

[78] *WXZ*, *j.* 10, p. 588; *FFZH*, p. 47.

[79] The term *wu* can also be translated as "shaman" or "sorcerer." Here I follow Davis, on the prevalence of spirit mediums in this era, see Davis 2001, p. 2.

ravaged mountain came forth a huge bone, astonishing all who saw it. Counsel was sought from scholars and the event recorded in the history books.

The medium's report largely follows the earlier account in the *Guoyu* but seeks to mitigate Fangfeng's crime by pointing out that he met with difficulties on his journey. The period of bitter warfare after his death and the sudden exposure of the huge bone allude to a deeper problem. Fangfeng was clearly a remarkable man who came to a tragic end. The huge bone was a sign that he remained darkly potent. Was the execution carried out by Great Yu really justified? In the next section, the poet addresses this issue directly. He declares that if Fangfeng had indeed been obstructed by inundation on the roads and waterways (*chuantu huo yanzu* 川途或淹阻) then surely, so long as one acts with sincerity and is not subversive or duplicitous, the ruler should be magnanimous. The poet then cites examples where local satraps had been mollified with official posts and territory to win their loyalty. After the fall of the Qin dynasty, Zhao Tuo 趙佗 (240–137 BCE) set up an independent state called Nanyue 南越 in the southern borderlands. When Zhao Tuo was dilatory in submitting tribute to Liu Bang 劉邦, the first emperor of the Han (r. 202–195 BCE), the latter gave him a split tally indicating a lord-vassal relationship.[80] Another example was a nephew of Liu Bang, Liu Pi 劉濞 (215–154 BCE), appointed as the Prince of Wu, who claimed to be too ill to attend court. Instead of being outraged, the emperor bestowed on him a table to lean on, a walking stick (aids for the elderly), and the kingdom of Gou Wu 勾吳 (Gou Wu is an archaic name for the kingdom of Wu).[81] In a further example of imperial concessions to avoid war, the poet echoes the words of Mencius that it was only on a third failure to report to court that the ruler would send out his troops.[82] Fangfeng's late arrival was surely too slight a crime to warrant cutting off his head? In addition, once Yu had defeated the Miao tribes, he sought to diffuse peaceful governance throughout the state.

The poet then speculates on the probable reason for the execution of Fangfeng. He concludes that Fangfeng was essentially a barbarian leader amongst the northern giants, the Chang Di, who could not easily be won over to the imperial cause. From his mountain fortress, he eyed the capital region greedily, relying on his huge stature to give him an advantage. This is why the emperor decided to execute him when he arrived late. He recalls too that in later ages the Souman leader Qiaoru was beheaded and his people defeated. He declares that it is important to avoid grave calumny (*houwu* 厚誣) against the ancient rulers.

The condemnation of Fangfeng as subversive tribal rebel, expressed here in the voice of the poet as interlocutor, is undercut in the final section, where the spirit medium is given the last word. The latter observes that Great Yu's own father, Gun 鯀, was executed by Shun but then transformed into a bear (indicating that Gun was a supernatural being). Sacrifices to Gun did not cease simply because he was executed.[83] As for Fangfeng, although he offended the emperor (by coming

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[80] This was accepted by Zhao, see Brindley 2015, p. 196.

[81] For this episode see *SJ*, *j.* 106, vol. 3, pp. 2821–2823.

[82] *FFZH*, p. 48; *Mengzi jizhu*, "Gaozi xia" 告子下 7-2: 三不朝則六師移之.

[83] Ancient texts report that Gun was executed on Feather Mountain for faulty handling of the floods. He too was regarded as "a wronged spirit," Allan 1981, p. 64. The story of Gun could have been a model for the story of Fangfeng. Both were leaders of their people who sacrificed themselves so another could rule.

late), he did not resist the order of execution: "His hands bound, he submitted his body to the place of brambles and water / Not troubling to take up his dagger and halberd" (束手赴棘水 / 靡煩動戈戳). "Truly a kingdom was bestowed" (一國實被賜), thus preserving peace for his people. For this reason, his past favors will not be forgotten; he will be offered blood sacrifices in perpetuity.

Zhang Jie's ode ends with these words of the spirit medium. At the time of Zhang's visit, the temple had lost the status of registered cult that it had possessed in the time of Qian Liu, the King of Wuyue. Guardianship had fallen to spirit mediums, who elaborated the story of Fangfeng to the local population and visitors. Temple custodians attempted to excuse their deity by claiming he was held up by floods in travelling to Yu's convocation. The poet puts forward the orthodox view that Fangfeng was a defiant tribal leader, but he also constructs the poignant image of a self-sacrificing ruler who offers up his kingdom to serve the cause of unity and peace. Zhang Jie, like Guo Huai in an earlier era, is deeply concerned about imperial excess in the execution of justice. This issue was to remain a source of controversy in successive dynasties.

After centuries of invasion and occupation of China by northern peoples, the first Ming emperor (Zhu Yuanzhang 朱元璋, r. 1368–1398) set out a program to regulate the sacrificial ceremonies for regional deities and to rebuild their temples. The title of "king" awarded the deity by Qian Liu was removed and the older title, Fangfengshi, was reinstated, this time with the title of *shen* (deity). The Ming ritual calendar prescribed the annual ceremony to be held on the 25th of the 8th month.[84] Regional officials and literati celebrated the return of formal recognition of Fangfeng but some condemned "absurd" stories told about his ignominious death. Shen Bin 沈彬 (1411–1469), an official who was a native of Wukang, recalled how the first Ming emperor had called for sacrifices to be offered to the spirits of the mountains and waterways. Citing the earlier stele of Qian Liu, Shen claims that Fangfeng was a worthy sage and ruler in antiquity. People have remembered him through the ages and sought to repay his favors. Shen has questioned the elders of the village and believes that unworthy descendants concocted the absurd story of Yu executing Fangfeng that was later related to Confucius. He would like the court to approve formal sacrifices to wipe out the slander of the past but dares not make this request.[85]

Over the centuries, the ceremonies to local gods set up by the first Ming emperor were gradually discontinued. A court historian of the early Qing, Shen Pu 沈溥 (?–1674), a native of Jiaxing, complained that the temple to Fangfeng had been taken over by spirit mediums and fortune tellers:

> The temple is old; over the years it has fallen away and been revived numerous times. The deity has lost its home, with nothing to depend on; some treat the deity as if he were an evil demon. [The divinity] was improperly awarded the title "Efficacious Virtue" [by Qian Liu]; male and female spirit mediums have flagrantly taken over; they use prayers for blessings to delude the people.[86]

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[84] According to Shen Pu 沈溥, *WKZ*, *j.* 10, p. 586; *FFHZ*, p. 68.

[85] As recorded in a now lost stele erected in the temple by Shen Bin, cited in the *WKZ*, *j.* 10, p. 587; *FFHZ*, p. 67.

[86] 廟古，歷代興不一。神失宅，滅所依歸，或目厲鬼。僭封靈德，巫覡馮陵，以徼福淫民. See *FFZH*, pp. 68, citing the *Huzhou fuzhi* 湖州府志.

Shen Pu disputes the justice of decisions made in the Xia dynasty: "Fangfeng came late to the assembly of Yu and was beheaded to warn others. An era of violence continued for a long time" (防風後至，斬以示眾。暴世滋久).[87] He cites the familiar story about Confucius identifying the huge bone and declares that the sage believed Fangfeng was "without guilt" (*fei gu* 非辜). It was because the King of Heaven executed Fangfeng that later rulers killed without remission. Fangfeng's offence was outweighed by the numerous benefits he had brought to the region; for this reason, he deserves to be on the register of official sacrifices.

The debate about the justice of the execution of Fangfeng continued into the twentieth century, with ongoing rivalry between admirers of Great Yu based in the region of Shaoxing and Hangzhou and defenders of Fangfeng residing in upland Zhejiang. In 1935, Zhong Yulong 鍾毓龍 (1880–1970), a teacher from the Hangzhou region, published a novel titled "Explication of Myths of Antiquity" (*Shanggu shenhua yanyi* 上古神話演義). In this work, Zhong seeks to convert ancient history into mythology (in keeping with the trend of the era) and to reinforce the status of Yu as founder of a multi-ethnic empire to whom is owed absolute fealty. The final chapter of the novel deals with Yu's convocation of the feudal lords at Kuaiji and the execution of Fangfeng.[88] Fangfeng is portrayed as a giant from a "barbarian" kingdom who comes late, insults Great Yu, and threatens to kill him. With the aid of the deity of Kuaiji Mountain, Fangfeng is pushed into a pond with high banks and beheaded with a sword. His blood rushes forth in spurts, emitting a foul smell. After this display of imperial might, all the feudal lords are fearful of Yu.

These accounts from before 1949 point to the ongoing controversy about how to assess the character Fangfeng. Two main portrayals of the deity, one as a venerable ancestral spirit and the other as a baleful menacing figure, can be discerned in reports drawn from over two millennia. Temple custodians, the local populace, and some literati hold opinions that differ from the orthodox representation of Great Yu found in the classics. The latter groups express sympathy for the notion that Fangfeng was wrongly executed, claim that the execution reflects poorly on the laws of the Xia, and even call for the official exoneration of Fangfeng. The very same concern for exoneration is evident in the temple tradition to Fangfeng as revived in the late twentieth century. Below I discuss the temple restoration, oral tradition, and sacrificial rituals as assembled from interviews with local participants in the contemporary era.

The Fangfeng Temple Cult in the Contemporary Era

I visited the Temple of Fangfeng, Erdu village, on June 4, 2011 (see Figure 3). Along the way we drove past Zhejiang's largest wetlands, the Xiazhu 下渚 Lake area, where Fangfeng is believed to have diverted the flood water. On arrival we were met by a village elder, Shen Yongfa 沈永法 (born ca. 1929) who told us he was the retired village head. At the time of my visit the temple complex was undergoing considerable renovation. Shen explained that the only genuinely historical item that survived in the contemporary era was the stele commissioned by Qian Liu, which

[87] *FFZH*, p. 68.
[88] Chapter 160, in *FFZH*, pp. 240–246.

rested on a stone pedestal in the shape of a mythical tortoise-like creature known as a *bixi* 贔屓.[89] During the Cultural Revolution, the villagers hastily buried the stele to save it from destruction by Red Guards. It was recovered when the danger was over.[90] Everything else appeared to have been built in recent decades. The side walls of the main temple hall were decorated with colorful murals depicting the life of the deity. The Fangfeng of the murals is a disheveled, semi-naked, giant of a man, his lower parts covered in an animal pelt. The representation of Fangfeng in the murals bore no relation to the statue of Fangfeng in the central hall, where he appeared costumed like an emperor, his visage wise and beneficent.[91] Statues of his four companions and his wife lined the sides of the temple.

Shen explained that Fangfeng was the local deity (*shen*) of the land near the Feng and Yu mountains. Every year, on the 25th day of the eighth lunar month, the villagers carried out sacrificial rites in his honor in this temple. Funds for the rebuilding of the temple had been donated by the people of the village, with some additional assistance from the local government. Refurbishment had been gradual, in line with the donation of funds. I noted that a long list of donors and their donations had been inscribed on a wall panel within the main square. Shen gave me a leaflet containing a brief history of the temple with photos of the temple murals and an account of the Fangfeng story. According to the leaflet, the major rebuilding was completed in January 1997. Further expansion of the temple precinct and village area was undertaken in the twenty-first century, mostly to cater to the tourist industry. The discovery of a corpus of tales in oral circulation had given a fresh impetus to this temple tradition.

Fangfeng in the Oral Tradition

The claimed "mythic" status of the Fangfeng legend is based largely on the 33 stories collected by Chinese folklorists in the 1980s (see Appendix 1).[92] The interviewees were mostly men born between 1910 and 1940. Two were said to be illiterate and very few had graduated from the upper levels of high school. Of occupations identified, most were agricultural workers. A few were identified as teachers and managers of small businesses. There was one party cadre and one former performer of Shaoxing regional opera. The stories came from various regions in Zhejiang, particularly the upland region of Erdu and Hexiang. The analysis below excludes a story from Qingpu (near Shanghai, Story 28)[93] and tales that have no identified place of origin (stories 29, 31, 32).[94]

[89] According to legend, the *bixi* was strong enough to bear up mountains. Yu called on a *bixi* to assist him with flood control. It became a symbol of imperial power.

[90] See also Zhong Ming 1996, p. 29.

[91] In 1948 there was controversy within the community about whether to portray Fangfeng in imperial garb (as in previous times) or in line with an early record of Fangfeng as half-beast, half-human, see Zhong Ming 1996, p. 33.

[92] Stories 1–27 were included in the first edition of *FFZH*, pp. 181–237; a further six were included in the Expanded Edition *FFZHZ*, pp. 396–408.

[93] This story is about the origin of Dianshan 淀山 Lake.

[94] Story 29 relates the origin of mountains and landmarks with reference to the Fangfeng story; Story 31 deals with the origin of a rock formation used by Fangfeng in flood control; Story 32 describes a temple fair formerly held in Xiaofeng 孝丰 township in Huzhou, Zhejiang, where people dress up as giants and deities in honor of Fangfeng.

FIGURE 3: Fangfeng Temple, Deqing County. Photo by Anne McLaren, 4 June 2011.

Many tales deal with the best way to control floods, a well-known motif in the Great Yu myth. One technique is to block the waterways by building huge mountains, ramparts, or dykes, whereas the second method is to divert flood water to the ocean by building water channels. Only the latter leads to success (Stories 1, 3, 11, 12). Gun is punished for his mishandling of flood control (Stories 1, 6, 7, 9, 10). In Stories 6 and 7, Fangfeng learns from the errors of Gun not to block water but to divert it. The sage-king Yao (Story 1) or Great Yu (Story 3) appoints Fangfeng as ruler of his kingdom. Fangfeng assists Great Yu in flood control (Stories 2, 6, 13, 23). His efforts in diverting floods result in the formation of Lake Tai (Stories 2, 3, 5, 7, 20, 21). Fangfeng was a giant from the north who set up his own kingdom and introduced grain cultivation (Stories 3, 20, 21). He arrived late for Yu's convocation of local leaders because he had to deal with a kraken and floods (Stories 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 21, 30).

Some tales explain the etiology of particular sites. What is the reason for the name "Execution Pond" (Story 22)? Wangmang is said to refer to vast floodlands. Fangfeng was called Master Wangmang to prevent Yu from digging up his body (Stories 3, 21). The landmark known as Wangfeng ta 望風塔 was formed by Fangfeng's head and torso after decapitation by Yu (Story 6). Fatigued after his flood exploits, Fangfeng lies down and his body forms a steep cliff (Wangfeng yan 望風岩, Story 11). The Fangfeng Well (Fangfeng jing 防風井) can be probed to anticipate the coming of floods (Story 7). Story 19 narrates a tale about the stone pedestal holding up Qian Liu's stele.

A deeper issue is whether the execution of Fangfeng by Yu was justified. A small number agree that it was indeed justified because Fangfeng used the wrong method to control floods. These stories come from beyond the Sanhe region (Stories 10, 11, 12).[95] Fangfeng's loyalty to Yu as the supreme leader does not come into question in these stories.[96] On the contrary, the storytellers implicitly argue against notions of any insubordination by providing a good reason for Fangfeng's late arrival at the convocation. The most common justification is obstruction along the route due to floods, or Fangfeng's decision to throw himself into flood control for the benefit of his home region. Given the latter's diligence and accomplishments, Yu's decision to execute him stands out as arbitrary and unjust. Some stories dwell at length on the personal shortcomings of Yu. It is said that he is arrogant, has a bad temper, listens to slander, lacks judgement, or is jealous of a potential rival (Stories 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 22, 33). These tales associate arbitrary rule with Great Yu and the Xia dynasty.

Several stories dwell on the details of the execution. Yu orders soil to be built up around Fangfeng until it reaches his shoulders. In some stories he then personally takes a sword and beheads the giant (Stories 5, 8, 22 and 26). The miraculous white blood (or flood water) that spurts up from Fangfeng's decapitated torso provides spectacular evidence that Heaven regards the execution as unjust (Stories 5 and 8). People rescued by Fangfeng from floods mourn his death and complain to Yu. They perform a wild dance known as the Fangfeng Dance (Story 24). Fangfeng is exonerated, awarded titles, and annual rites are performed in his honor (Stories 5, 8, 22, 23, 24, 26). His ghost continues to return to the area (Stories 22 and 27). The majority of stories express the grievance of the populace at the injustice of the execution of Fangfeng.

The narrative told in the eight temple murals and the accompanying leaflet reflects the current "authoritative" interpretation of the Fangfeng story, as assembled by temple custodians, village elders, and local cadres. Relying on both the canonical tale of Yu and the local oral tradition, the murals portray the deity as a prodigious master of flood control who was wrongly executed by Yu but later exonerated. Fangfeng is depicted as holding a ploughshare *(musi* 木耜), a motif associated with Yu. He toils together with his four trusted companions, aided by supernatural agents, Mystic Turtle and Responding Dragon. We see Fangfeng trampling on Xiazhu Lake with one foot and with the other foot kicking the water in the direction of Lake Tai. When Fangfeng appeared, Great Yu is delighted to have the assistance of this prodigy, together with his 81 followers, as they divert the water of the Feng and Yu mountains west to Lake Tai and east towards the ocean. Once the floods were gone and wild beasts dispersed, the common people enjoy peace. The Great Yu then bestowed the mountains of Feng and Yu to Fangfeng as his kingdom. Fangfeng received an invitation to Yu's convocation, but along the way, he came across a kraken who was causing floods on the mountains. He helped the people to curb the floods and thus arrived late to Yu's celebratory banquet. When Fangfeng tried to excuse himself, Yu became extremely irate. The panel depicts Yu standing in a chariot drawn by a white elephant. Fangfeng, his hands tied, is in the chariot

[95] On "criminal" figures such as Gonggong 共工, Gun 鯀, and Chiyou 蚩尤, who block up the rivers instead of diverting them to the ocean or water systems, see Lewis 2006, pp. 55–78.

[96] In one story Fangfeng harangues Yu for various misdeeds (Story 9). Here he appears as a remonstrating minister, not as a rebel.

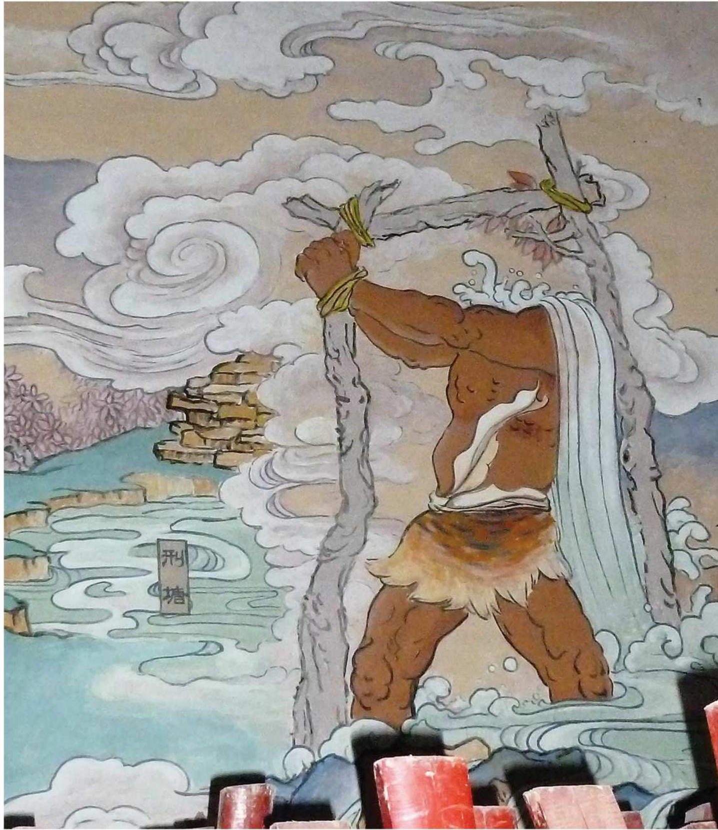

FIGURE 4: Decapitation of Fangfeng, Deqing Temple. Photo by Anne McLaren, 4 June 2011.

kneeling down before Yu. Standing below the chariot, one of the nobles calls on Yu to pardon Fangfeng, but to no avail. Taking up his great axe, Yu hacks off Fangfeng's head. The head falls down to the Execution Pond. To the consternation of the onlookers, what poured forth was not red blood but white flood water. Yu was amazed and the feudal lords criticized him, saying that Fangfeng had been unjustly put to death (see Figure 4). Fearing public unrest, Yu decides to rehabilitate Fangfeng. He builds a temple with a statue of Fangfeng and of his four companions, who are awarded princely titles. Great Yu personally takes part in the autumn rites on the 25th day of the 8th month. This was the beginning of the periodic rites to Fangfeng.

The Annual Rites in the Late Imperial and Republican Era

Our knowledge about how the annual temple sacrifices and festivities were performed before 1949 relies on verbal reports from senior villagers collected in the 1990s.[97] One

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[97] Zhong Ming 1996, pp. 34–42. See also the report of Ni Difei 倪迪飛, whose grandfather presided over the Fangfeng rites in the mid to late nineteenth century, *FFZHZ*, pp. 327–328.

of these, Tang Junshan 唐君山, additionally provided a manuscript with a brief outline of the ceremony.[98] These reports indicate that the commemoration of Fangfeng comprised a symbolic rite of execution involving the decapitation of a cock, followed by a sacrificial rite of exoneration, where Fangfeng was venerated as a deity. According to Shen Yongfa, "After Great Yu wrongly executed Fangfeng, using our present way of speaking, on the 24th day of the eighth month we used to proclaim the exoneration (*pingfan zhaoxue* 平反昭雪) of Fangfeng, and on the 25th day we would carry out formal sacrifices to Fangfeng. From that time on, the 25th day became the day to hold the rites throughout the ages."[99] This is a distinctive aspect of the Fangfeng temple cult, as the usual Chinese custom is to celebrate the birthday of the temple deity. In the case of Fangfeng, exoneration forms an important part of the received oral tradition and sacrificial rites but was never recognized by imperial state auspices.

According to senior villagers, the local gentry would set up six groups known as *she*, to carry out the ritual activities. One of these groups, the *hushengshe* 呼眚社, was in charge of the rite of execution. On the evening of the 22nd day, villagers dressed up as demons and proceeded through the streets holding pitchforks with dangling metal chains that rattled loudly as they walked. The intention was to announce the beginning of the Fangfeng festivities and to frighten away malevolent spirits. On the evening of the 23rd day, the *hushengshe* carried out the ritual of "burying the demon," which involved the ritual beheading of a cock and the shallow burial of its head on the side of a hill. The body of the cock was cooked and shared amongst the participants. The cock's head was retrieved on the day of exoneration and used for healing purposes.[100]

In the late imperial and Republican era, the magistrate or a local scholar would preside over the formal rites. According to Tang Junshan the procedure was as follows. Sacrificial offerings including meat were set out on the altar in front of the statue of Fangfeng in the main hall. The master of ceremonies called the temple to order, accompanied by the sound of bells, drums, and flutes, followed by a shot from a blunderbuss and a round of fireworks. The names of major participants were read out. Bearing incense, these participants knelt and kowtowed before the statue of the deity. Subsequently they proffered three rounds of sacrificial offerings. Next the master of ceremonies recited the invocation. Silk offerings were presented to the deity, followed by an offering of wine. The ceremony concluded to the sound of bells and drums.[101]

After the formal rites, the statues of the four companions to Fangfeng (*sidi xianggong* 四弟相公) were borne in procession around the temple and set up to observe local opera performed on the temple stage.[102] In transmitted legends, the four companions aid Fangfeng in his work of flood control. Banners proclaimed the conferring of the title of "King of Efficacious Virtue" (the name awarded by Qian Liu but removed by the Ming state).

In 1996 the temple commemoration of Fangfeng was revised after a hiatus of several decades. An estimated crowd of 1,600 people attended the festivities,

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98 *FFZH*, pp. 116–117.
99 Cited in Zhong Ming 1996, p. 34.
100 Zhong Ming 1996, pp. 34–36.
101 *FFZH*, pp. 116–117.
102 Zhong Ming 1996, p. 37.

which was hailed as an important heritage and commercial initiative. The following year, on the occasion of completion of reconstruction, the Yue Theatrical Troupe was invited to perform plays for three days for an even larger crowd.[103] In the past, village elders and temple custodians may well have transmitted texts to assist with the organization of the ceremony, as one finds in northern temple traditions.[104] However, the destruction of the temple during the Cultural Revolution was very thorough, and unfortunately no text from before 1949 has been discovered. In the contemporary invocation to the deity recited during the current ceremonies, Fangfeng is praised for his success in channelling the flood waters to Lake Tai and diverting the surging tides into rivers and streams. On his way to Yu's convocation, the hero confronted a kraken and toiled night and day to rid his land of floods. Yu quickly exonerated the lord and visited his territory to offer libations. The descendants of the Wu and Yue regions are now called upon to transmit the spirit of their ancestors to meet the needs of the current age, to vigorously strive to establish the homeland, and to work together on the great project of the rejuvenation of the Huaxia people.[105] This invocation, composed by local folklore scholar Zhong Weijin, reflects the story told in the temple murals and the received oral tradition. It toes a careful line between the regional sentiment that the local hero was unjustly treated by China's first emperor and the perceived need to project patriotic fervor for a China based on multiple ethnicities and regional identities.

Conclusion

The fact that this obscure village ritual tradition has survived for at least 1,700 years in a remote hilly location is a remarkable phenomenon. One can assume that Fangfeng retained a tenacious grip on the imagination of the local population throughout this period. Local residents believed in the efficacy (*ling* 靈) of Fangfeng. Shen Yongfa assured us that if you carried out the appropriate veneration then you would be repaid. The efforts of the local people to fund and rebuild their temple in spite of poverty, the vicissitudes of war, and the Maoist campaigns of the 1960s, speaks eloquently for the importance of this tradition in the eyes of the community. Families with the surname Wang 汪 believe that Fangfeng is their distant ancestor. Storytelling demonstrates an ongoing concern to protect the integrity and good reputation of their local hero in the face of the humiliating visual depiction of Fangfeng as a criminal in the Shaoxing temple down the road. The regional authorities are prepared to tolerate this situation (with all its seeming contradictions) as part of the complex re-emergence of contemporary myth-making that is allowing Chinese myth to hold its own on the global stage. Deqing cadres and entrepreneurs are happy to seek out commercial opportunities from the newly revived ritual tradition.

The importance of the newly found "myth" of Fangfeng as flood hero, and the temple tradition relating to the deity, relies on its claimed antiquity. In Chinese thinking, Fangfeng's association with Great Yu puts him in the age just before

[103] *FFZH*, p. 171.
[104] See Johnson 2009, 2022.
[105] *FFZH*, p. 251.

the establishment of the Xia dynasty, believed to have happened in the early second millennium BCE. Chinese scholars see in the execution of Fangfeng the struggle of the Huaxia people over other ethnic groups in the early years of the Xia dynasty.[106] In the historical record there are numerous references to Fangfeng himself but none that specifically refer to him as a flood hero. There are hints about floods that impeded him on his way to the convocation and occasional calls for his exoneration and for a restoration of official sacrifices. The annual rites in the late imperial era apparently celebrated Fangfeng's flood exploits, particularly through veneration of the four companions who aided him in this task. This leads to the question of when the story of Fangfeng as flood hero emerged. Did it appear very late in the imperial era or does it belong to an ancient but repressed local tradition?

One could conclude that the earliest formation of the legend about Fangfeng focused on his role as regional divinity or ruler. The earliest source is the anecdote in the Annals of Lu section of the *Guoyu* where Confucius identifies the giant bone as that of Fangfeng. A possible stimulus for the emergence of this legend could be the historic extermination of the Souman people, claimed to be a race of giants, and decapitation of their leader, Qiaoru, in the seventh century BCE by the state of Lu (see earlier discussion). In the early centuries of the common era, Fangfeng was one of numerous defeated generals who were offered rites of propitiation. Early rituals celebrated his huge size and strange appearance. Landmarks such as Execution Pond and the rocky outcrop, Wangfeng ta, reminded the community of his ignominious death. In the time of Qian Liu, the story of the execution of Fangfeng was elided by the Wuyue state. At this time Fangfeng was reconfigured as a venerable ancestral deity, a symbol of the autonomy of the region. In the Song era, the temple cult of Fangfeng expanded beyond the traditional kingdom to adjacent urban areas, with some shrines and temples still observable in the modern period. Once again, the extraordinary stature, untimely death, and spiritual power of the deity were commemorated by the local populace and temple custodians. The move by the state from the Tang and Song period on to register (and control) regional deities stimulated local agents to elaborate stories about why their god should not be banned but rather entered in the register of permitted rites. Stories about floods impeding Fangfeng's journey probably originated in attempts by temple custodians and supporters to exonerate their hero, who was treated as a criminal in the canonical tradition. In this way locals could justify to officialdom the annual sacrifices to Fangfeng. Zhang Jie's ode to the temple refers to obstruction by flood waters, an indication that the process of exoneration was underway in the twelfth century CE. There is also a record dating back to the eighteenth century of a couplet written on a timber column in the main hall of the Fangfeng temple where the deity is commemorated for his "prevention of harm from vast floods, dragons, and snakes."[107] Stories about Fangfeng's flood exploits would surely draw from tales about Great Yu's flood control that were associated with the imperial rituals established in Shaoxing. Water management was in any case a desideratum for anyone seeking to rule regions subject to constant flooding. However, legends that reflected poorly on

[106] See studies by various scholars in Zhong Weijin 1996 and also Zhong Weijin 2006.
[107] Lin Xiangxiao 1996, pp. 142–143.

Great Yu would not have been recorded in the regional gazetteers, which are our main source of information about temple cults.[108] The oral tradition as it developed during the imperial era can mostly be inferred from unexplained anomalies, controversies, and contradictions. It is clear, however, that officials, literati, and the populace in general continued to debate whether Yu's harsh punishment of Fangfeng was indeed justified, and even whether Yu was in fact a good and sagacious ruler. It appears that the core function of the temple cult, at least in the late imperial era, was the exoneration of the deity through the annual rites. It is noteworthy too that the contemporary iteration of the annual sacrifices insists that Yu did in fact exonerate Fangfeng after his death, a notion absent from the classic texts. The local magistrate (or other officials) used to preside over the annual rites; in the contemporary era local cadres play a similar role. Potential contradictions between the Fangfeng cult and the temple cult to Great Yu in the same region are ignored or perhaps seen as irrelevant. The historic cult to Fangfeng appears to be another case where "local elites" were at odds with the state's program to standardize ritual expression.[109] Beyond the village community, the perceived injustice done to Fangfeng still reverberates in scholarly debates about imperial Chinese governance.[110]

Throughout the imperial era and into the twentieth century, the population in upland Zhejiang sought official recognition for their local deity. The oral tradition surrounding Fangfeng borrowed from the ancient classics and the temple cult to Great Yu. This could be regarded as an aspect of the "cultural integration" of centre and periphery, in that local communities emulated and sought to participate in state sanctioned religious practices. On the other hand, it is also an example where the region has responded in unexpected and creative ways to the orthodox interpretation that the Chinese state seeks to impose. It offers a further demonstration of the way that myth making and religious orthodoxy is always subject to contestation and debate by local communities. In this case, the insertion of Fangfeng into China's greatest mythic story has enabled ordinary people to grapple with issues such as conquest, justice, and the nature of imperial rule.

Appendix 1: Stories about Fangfeng Collected in the 1980s

1 尧封防风国, *FFZH*, pp. 181–182.
2 大禹找防风, *FFZH*, pp. 183-184
3 防风立国, *FFZH*, pp. 185–186
4 防风著书, *FFZH*, pp. 187–188
5 防风之死, *FFZH*, pp. 190–191
6 防风塔, *FFZH*, pp. 192–193
7 防风井, *FFZH*, pp. 194–195
8 防风为何封王, *FFZH*, pp. 196–197

[108] Authors of gazetteers often sought to link local deities to state-sanctioned cults, see Szonyi 1997, p. 126.
[109] See discussion in Sutton 2007, pp. 9–10.
[110] A contemporary study of China's system of imperial government cites the case of Fangfeng as an example of arbitrary rule by an absolute monarch, see Fang Zhiyuan 2008, p. 3.

9 防风三难大禹, *FFZH*, pp. 198–199
10 王鲧和防风, *FFZH*, pp. 201–202
11 禹杀防风氏, *FFZH*, pp. 203–204
12 大禹斩防风氏, *FFZH*, pp. 205–206
13 三条鱼精争封地, *FFZH*, pp. 207–208
14 三王选地盘, *FFZH*, pp. 208–210
15 雌雄井, *FFZH*, pp. 211–213
16 防风氏与金龙狮, *FFZH*, pp. 214–215
17 蔑匠成将军, *FFZH*, pp. 216–217
18 防风王的架坯, *FFZH*, pp. 218
19 石龟传奇, *FFZH*, pp. 219–220
20 防风氏的由来, *FFZH*, pp. 221–222
21 防风氏为啥又称汪芒 [茫] 氏, *FFZH*, pp. 223–224
22 刑塘戮防风, *FFZH*, pp. 225–226
23 十里湖塘七尺庙, *FFZH*, pp. 227–228.
24 防风舞, *FFZH*, pp. 229–230.
25 防风草药, *FFZH*, pp. 232–233
26 禹杀防风求天助, *FFZH*, pp. 234–235
27 武康防风庙的来历, *FFZH*, pp. 236–237
*28 淀山湖, *FFZHZ*, pp. 396–397
*29 大禹封山访巨人, *FFZHZ*, pp. 398–399
30 神雕助防风 *FFZHZ*, pp. 400–401
*31 防风王神秒治洪留石浪, *FFZHZ*, pp. 402–404
*32 孝丰长人会的传说, *FFZHZ*, pp. 405–406
33 红枫树防风树, *FFZHZ*, pp. 407–408

Note: Stories 28, 29, 31, and 32 were not included in the analysis because they do not belong to the Zhejiang region or are of unknown origin. See fn. 94.

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Chinese Abstract

創造地域的神話——浙北山地的防風氏崇拜

本文探討了中國最著名的神話故事之一——大禹治水。大禹在遠古時期因治理洪水泛濫而聞名。按照古代記載，防風氏是浙江北部封嵎山的守護神；在夏朝立國時因故被大禹處死。浙北地區的鄉民試圖把防風幫助大禹治水的故事納入大禹的神話傳統中，從而為防風洗冤。這其中更泛的問題是：大禹誅殺害防風的正義性和君主立法的無限權威性。本文通過古代文獻以及民族志的證據考察來研究公眾情緒、地區緊張局勢和治理觀念在中國地域文化中寺廟崇拜傳統和神話故事建設中的互動作用。

關鍵詞: 中國洪水、中國寺廟傳統、大禹、防風、中國治理、中國地域文化

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