

護王出身爲記

The Story of the Great Protector, the Dog King

Translated by P. K. Leung

Introductory Note

The *She* 畬 people are one of the many ethnic groups living in the mountainous regions of Guangdong, Guangxi, Zhejiang, Fujian and Anhui. They have been known under different names throughout Chinese history, including She Yao 畬僚, She Man 畬蠻, Pan Hu 盤瓠 and Mo Yao 莫僚, and they were the early settlers in the Fujian and Guangdong borderlands. In the early-Ming period they mingled with the Han Chinese and eventually became sinicized.

The most distinctive cultural feature of the *She* people is dog worship, and this is common among all the *She* settlements in the various provinces. Besides the story of the Dog King, there is also a “Song of the Dog King”, popular among the *She* people in Zhejiang, which traces their ancestry back to the same source.

In Hong Kong, many places are denoted by the name *She* 峯, which is a variant of *She* 畬, an indication that there were a considerable number of *She* settlements in Hong Kong in the old days.

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THE PROTECTOR originally came into the world as the Azure Dragon of the Eastern Sea. He was born from the left ear of a large-eared woman. A surgeon who had been summoned removed from the woman's ear some sort of larva. This he placed in a corner of the Great Hall; whereupon hundreds of birds flocked round to pay their respects to the larva. The surgeon then cut the larva open and brought forth a dog which, after eight months of care and nourishment, grew to be eight feet long and four feet tall. His body was covered with a coat of variegated colours and markings. Even in the concourse of the market-place he was a dog that stood out as quite extraordinary.

All this took place in the reign of Emperor Gaoxin. It happened that at that time King Fangyi of the Maritime Regions had raised a rebellion in which many civilians were killed. As the imperial army failed to suppress it, the Emperor issued an edict announcing that whosoever should subdue the rebellious King might choose for his wife one of the three imperial princesses. But this offer met with no response.

When the Dragon Dog saw the edict, he volunteered his services. Thereupon the prime minister, Guo Ziyang, brought the Dog to the Emperor, who was greatly pleased. He asked in what ways the Dog was particularly gifted, and the Dog replied, through the prime minister, that besides being brave in battle he could also assume an infinite number of forms. With the blessings of the Emperor the Dog departed, and crossed the seas to the Maritime Regions, where he sought and obtained an audience with Fangyi the barbarian king.

King Fangyi, greatly pleased by such an unusual visit, feasted the Dog on meat and wine, and assembled his soldiers to join in the drinking. Forgetting all caution, the King became tipsy, and at the third watch the Dragon Dog snapped off his head.



The Dragon Dog snapped off King Fangyi's head

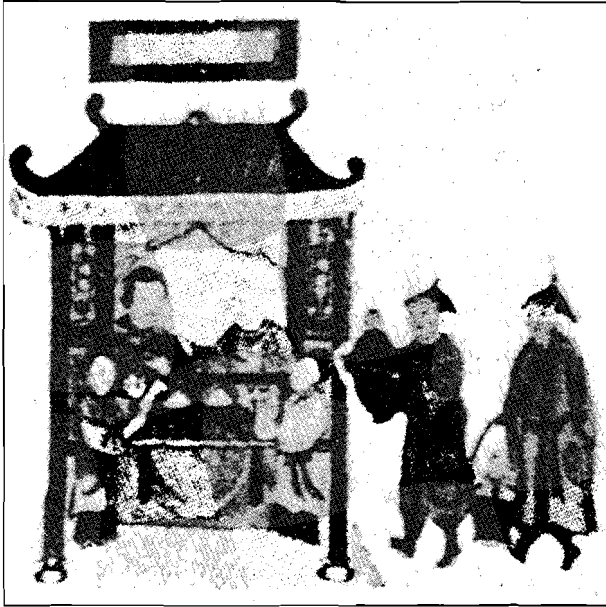
The soldiers immediately pursued the Dog, but the Dragon King of the sea, much stirred by the event, dispatched the River Duke and his entourage to escort the Dog safely back across the sea. The imperial troops were already watching for his return and the prime minister in person took him into the Emperor's presence at once.

However great was the Emperor's satisfaction on seeing the Dog and the head which had been brought back, he could not rest until proof was obtained that the head was indeed that of King Fangyi himself. When a countryman over ninety years old, who knew King Fangyi, was brought forward, he recognized the head as truly that of the King. Thereupon the Emperor commanded the appointment of the Dog to a position of great eminence. This, however, the Dog declined, insisting only on marrying the princess of his choice.



The transformation of the Dog

The Emperor, unwilling to withdraw a promise once given, asked the Dog if he had the ability to change himself into a man. The Dog replied that he was indeed able to do so, and seven days were granted within which the transformation was to take place. On the fifth day the Emperor learnt that though a partial metamorphosis had taken place the head was still dog-like. Regardless of this, a day was chosen for the wedding.



The wedding of the Dragon Dog
and the Princess

Twenty years thereafter the couple had become the parents of three sons and a daughter, whom they brought to pay their respects to the Emperor. The Emperor bestowed on them the names of Pan, Lan, Lei and Zhong and commanded that henceforth they were to marry only among themselves. He divided land amongst them, and the Dog, true to his nature, chose land in the mountains, where his descendants could plough and harvest and were exempted from government taxes. Disputes between civilians and the military were forbidden, and the retainers of government officials were not permitted to interfere in public affairs. Offenders were liable to arrest. The Dog declined to live in a luxurious mansion in the capital, and chose instead to live deep in the mountains. With the Emperor's permission, the Dog departed from the capital, escorted by an imperial guard.

Some time thereafter the Dog set out for Mt. Mao, intending to follow the Tao. On his way through the mountains, he suddenly slipped and fell to a tragic death in the valley below.

At the funeral the Dog received imperial honours. Thereafter, by imperial command, the families of his descendants dispersed, migrating to Fujian and Guangdong. During the Han, Tang, Song and Ming dynasties they were granted the title of Protector.

Autumn, in the twenty-first year of Daoguang of the Qing dynasty [1841]