

Vietnamese Focus Group, story 6 (Formation of Vietnam)

R: But surprisingly, none of you picked the Lac Long Quan Au Co story. That is the main story about . . . Very important story in our history.

R: Something . . . with real power.

R: It a part of our history, called . . . the word in Vietnam called Con Rong, Chau Tien. This mean Children of the Dragon and Grandchildren of Fairy. So that the Vietnamese is proud of that heritage which is son of the dragon and grandson of fairy. So the story go like this, Lac Long Quan is one of the son of the dragon from East Sea coming to the north. And met a lady which is the daughter of fairy of the mountain. So they got married. After that the Au Co, which is the name of the daughter of the fairy, not give birth, she laid a hundred eggs.

Moderator: She's a very fertile woman.

R: She laid eggs that hatch into a hundred sons. This is just a story, a hundred son.

R: It's like the God of the Mountain and God of the Sea.

R: Then after they live with each other for a while, Lac Long Quan said to Au Co, "I am the son of the dragon, we live in the sea. You are the daughter of the fairy, you are the mountain. We cannot live long together. So why don't we divide it? I take 50 sons going down to the sea. You take 50 sons, go to the mountain." So they separated. And 50 children . . . however when we separate, but we help each other. If there is any problem we will help each other. So the 50 son go with Lac Long Quan, that make the Vietnamese today.

R: I think because Vietnam was surrounded by the sea, so that's why they . . .

R: I think the story . . . I mean today, a lot of people explain the story the way how our ancestors tell the story.

Moderator: There's 50 sons up north and 50 sons in the south. So 50 sons in the mountains, and 50 sons in the sea.

R: The 50 sons follow the father, make the country, we call Van Lang. And there are a lot of stories relating to those dynasty called Van Lang. Eighteen kings Van Lang. Many stories like banh chung, which is we make the rice cake, and the story how we eat the petal . . . the Asian, we eat the leaves and the...

R: The beetle juice.

R: Yeah, yeah, beetle. So many story relating to that 18 kings we call Van Lang. That is the pre-date to An Duong Vuong which is the story my wife said. So that is pre-date to that history.

R: This one is the 18 one also the princess . . .

R: Yeah, that is one of the story within the dynasty of 18 kings. However, the people today, they can explain the story the way how people back then think, and create that story for us. They think that there are many tribe back then. They live like a tribe, like here the Indians. They live by tribe. So they stand for a hundred tribes, different tribes.

R: So that's how they put the whole Vietnam.

R: In the northern part of Vietnam, so a hundred tribe just out of the wood, hundred, many. Just mean many, that's all. It doesn't mean a hundred, but mean many. Many tribes come together living in that area. Some from the sea coming up, some from the mountain coming down. But interesting thing is they explain that because of the people from the sea follow the father, which is the father is the head of the household. While the mother is a different type of tribe, what do you call that?

R: The mountain . . .

Moderator: The mother is matriarch, and the father is the patriarch.

R: Yeah, matriarch, exactly.

Moderator: That explains why there's certain tribes.

R: Oh, your dragon grandma.

Moderator: On my father's side Chinese from Southern Guangzhou, they moved to Burma. And so there is the matriarch. And when I met her after my father died, she actually literally sat on a wooden dragon chair, as the matriarch to preside over. So I didn't know that, I didn't know about them until I went to the memorial.

R: You could be a princess.

R: I thought that, when I went to Vietnam just in October, then I note that the women, they like the head of the house. When they talk, the husband has to listen to them. Even they get married, they choose the husband, not the husband choose them. Interesting, I've talked to them, because we sat together, and they're saying, you know, and they work. They take care of the kids. They take care of the household. They do everything. And I say, "And what about husband?" Still today.

R: Today, even you go to the northern part of Vietnam in the mountain area, they still have the . . .

R: Mother is the head of the house and they do a lot of things. The husband doesn't know a thing.

R: I don't know. The man is not doing anything.

R: They don't have to do anything.

[Crosstalk]

Moderator: So is the mountain the matriarch or the . . .

R: The mountain is the matriarch. Yeah. Like the Hmong people. All of us know that story, maybe not new so much. But this one here, everyone knows.

R: [What is the title of the story?](#)

R: Children of the Dragon, and Grandchildren of the Fairy. Con Rong, Chau Tien.

Commented [C1]: Above story? Not sure about this / the above story

R: Wow! That's amazing.

Moderator: And so they don't understand . . . I learned that even though there's different countries, the sea communities are more similar than the mountain communities. That ethnically, you could be ethnically—it doesn't happen in Laos because we're land-locked, but if you do Cambodia, the Philippines, Vietnam, Indonesia, the people from the coast are more similar than the people from the mountains are more similar. Because there's a big divide between the mountains. The culture doesn't travel over the mountain. Whereas with the seafarers, they would go from one island to another island. They would intermarry and then that's where they get the mixing or the blending of the different tribes. So you have very similar like my dad's ethnic Chinese, Burmese, but married to a Laos-Thai woman. But it's all mountain. They were all mountain people. Versus the people from the Philippines and Indonesians, they are more similar.

Commented [C2]: Part of story?

R: So the mountain people were more isolated?

Moderator: Mm-hmm, they were isolated just by geography, that the culture is more mountainous. Mountain people versus sea people.

R: That's so interesting.