

## Lao Focus Group, story 7

R: It long times ago, the one lady who has been passed away or have one boy? No, one boy, not one boy. The girl. Because every day, don't have father, mother, go get the—go look for mushroom and bamboo to sell in the market for living every day, but she poor and then—and that day, and . . . even to drink, you know, no bamboo, no mushroom, to take home to sell in the market to sell somebody. She doesn't have money, she's really hungry. No rain. The river dried up. No water to drink. And she saw . . .

Moderator: The foot, a footprint of an elephant.

R: Footprint elephant, the king's elephant come there. She stepped on that thing. She said, "Oh, I found the water," the water from the footprint. She pregnant. And when she had the baby, the girl, she go to school every day, you know, . . . small like take the . . . She went to school, the friend told her, you know, you . . . my daughter, you don't have father who, you sleep with your mom, but you're mom pregnant. I don't see nobody. And she . . . come home, but they say to you, you know, and said that they told me I'm the elephant daughter. You know why, you know, elephant kid. You sleep with an elephant? She asked her mom. No, I went to mountain every day to look for the bamboo and the mushroom, everything I can make for the money for sell, you know, to sell and buy the food to eat every day and then the mother is sick and almost died and [see if she] tell the truth for the daughter. You know, I dreamed of water. I found the water in the footprint, the elephant footprint, that I'm pregnant. But I don't know, maybe that he pee in there, I drank that and I pregnant. I didn't go to nobody . . . husband, only that I drank that water. You know, and she pass away and the daughter . . . She went to go to the mountain to look for the elephant. The elephant said, "Why you come here?" Answer, you know, "My mom pass away, she said the big elephant in the mountain," you know, I will ask you, "Are you my father?" He said, "I don't know. I didn't sleep with your mom. Why you my daughter?" . . . really beautiful and smell like perfume.

Moderator: Perfume.

R: She go everywhere, you know, smell like perfume every day, you know, every day, . . . , you know? And then elephant said, "If you're my daughter," she bend down . . .

R: Oh, the trunk?

R: Go down, when you my daughter, you can go up there. My trunk, that really is slippery. When you're my daughter, you can stand on that.

R: She said if she's actually the elephant's daughter, then she'll be able to climb his trunk.

R: . . . to really . . . It smelled good. And then the elephant say, "Oh, you're my daughter. Accept you're my daughter." And he build, you know, he make the house for her in the mountain, because she doesn't have the mom no more. So and then she grow up, the elephant to go look for the food, get for her every day, you know, you don't have a mom to take care of you, I take care of you. And then as she I think turn to be 18 years old, she said, "I cannot live in the mountain with my dad. I have to look for someone to take care of me," and she cut her hair to

put in a bamboo, that thing, to tie it very good and put the . . . in there to keep it wet for the [river]. The . . . to open and said I look for my lover. You can find me in the mountain and on top of the mountain there, I live there. I don't have a mom. I have a dad. My dad is elephant. She said, you know, can you accept me as a wife? You will be, you know—to be your wife, you can go up to find me.” And the prince ride a horse to go up the mountain to see her and they really fall in love, you know, they have two kids together. The elephant come back. She's hiding the husband in the trunk, what do they call it? The cave of the tree. Big tree, right, in the mountain. Said, oh, maybe my dad doesn't like the human, you know, he may kill my kid and my husband, you know? And the father get mad. I smell that, no, human in here. Why you don't tell me the truth? And the father said, I want to go somewhere. He came back and bring the food for daughter and . . . come back. He know that daughter lie to him, but he know, but then he go away. The daughter, and she took her husband and . . . [in the river] go down to the kingdom. The father come back to see them in the boat. Oh, my goodness, . . .

R: Wait, so she ran away with the guy down the Mekong?

R: With her husband and the kid.

R: Because she's scared her dad?

R: She scared her dad will kill her husband and kid.

R: Okay, yeah.

R: And then she flowed down the river, the father came back. He really got mad and he looked everywhere. He . . . the tree, everywhere that you leave and not tell me, you're my daughter, you know, you have to tell me the truth. And then—and got really loud, right, in the mountain, he and the father.

R: And then did they get away?

R: Her father died.

R: Oh.

R: How?

R: Because he get mad, he get broken heart when daughter leave him, you know, heart attack. And then he . . . the daughter that when I die, to take this, you know, to put the . . .

Moderator: The ivory tusk.

R: And put it . . .

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Moderator: So in Laos, what you do is you do . . .

R: Put the bamboo together, because you don't have a boat, right?

R: Yeah, yeah.

Moderator: So you take the bamboo and then you weave it together into a boat. You bring the tusk and put it into the bamboo.

R: Float the Mekong River to somewhere.

R: It's like legend.

R: And then he float that thing to the river and it go to the blood of a son, you know, father.

R: Oh, son-in-law.

R: Because the . . .

R: Wait, it flowed to the son-in-law?

R: No, the son-in-law, the . . .

Moderator: Best friend to the son-in-law.

R: King.

R: Oh.

Moderator: Remember, the prince is with his—the elephant's daughter, but the offering, when I die, you need to put my tusk as an offering to the river and when it flowed down, it flowed down to the prince's best friend.

R: But then you know, the water go down this way, but they go up.

R: Mm-hmm.

R: That they go up to the king.

R: Yeah.

R: King's city there and he said that when I went to hunting, every time I found him and we'd go together. He met them. The end.

R: The end?

Moderator: I'm sorry.

R: The friend was really happy they found that.

Moderator: The ivory tusk .

R: He took it.

Moderator: The ivory trade is very popular in southeast Asia and so it's worth a lot of money. And so when you cut off—that's what they use ivory keys for and other—ivory that's been used in pianos and stuff. So when you cut off the ivory tusk of an elephant, it doesn't grow back. So it was worth a lot and it was ironic that the ivory tusk of the prince's father-in-law went to the prince's best friend.

R: And then he just took it and the end?

R: The end, because he was really happy that he found that. He didn't know who it belonged to.

R: Oh, so good or bad? Oh, so it's legend, like he still has it to this day?

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Moderator: So you see in the kingdom, that the ivory tusks are in—it's in front of the palace.

R: Oh.

Moderator: So the palace, he enshrined it as this is a very powerful—like so the elephant's like a patriarch, a matriarch. They are the . . . So there's a million elephants in Laos and so it's the kingdom of the elephants.

R: Yes.

Moderator: And so those—the elephant, it was his kingdom. It was an honoring of his deceased father.

R: Father-in-law.

Moderator: Father-in-law, yes. Because he was a hunter and he went searching for stuff in the woods and he found the ivory in the Mekong River.

R: Oh, and it was the daughter?

R: The daughter and son—the daughter-in-law and son, that he . . . they're really happy.

R: Oh.

Moderator: He traveled north. The prince traveled north to find the daughter-in-law.

R: Yeah.

R: Mm-hmm.

Moderator: And then when he brought—now that his father-in-law has passed away, he brought the princess, his wife, back down to his kingdom in the south and that's where, unbeknownst to them, because the daughter had done this—what do you call that? Homage to the father.

R: Like the Viking ship? Yeah.

Moderator: Yeah, right? And so she's like, I'm doing this donation and it goes down and it actually ends up in his palace, in his kingdom in the south.

R: Oh, wow.

R: Because his daughter went to bury him and everything, you know, the son-in-law too. Because when he died, he told the daughter, said you come back and . . .

R: So it was full circle. She buried him like a Viking burial down the river and then . . .