



RISING ASIA
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Plucked-up Tales
Ancient Vietnamese Narratives

ALL STORIES TRANSLATED BY ERIC HENRY
ILLUSTRATIONS BY VAN NGUYEN

BOOK THREE

SUPPRESSING MONSTERS AND SPIRITS



Destruction of the Fish Demon. This image relates to Story Number 1 below.



This section has seven tales. The first three describe the depredations inflicted on the people by different types of monsters and the means used to destroy them. The last four are concerned in various ways with the Chinese General and Administrator, Cao Biền 高駢 (Chinese: Gāo Pián), who was sent South in 865 by the Tang Emperor to confront and defeat the forces of Nánzhào (Vietnamese: Namchiếu), which were invading An Nam. Cao Biền won decisive victories over Nánzhào, and remained in An Nam for three years, during which time he undertook many projects that left an enduring imprint on the region. He rebuilt Đại La 大羅 (his capital city, located in modern Hanoi), restored and extended dykes and canals, constructed roads, bridges, and public inns, removed rocks that impeded coastal shipping, researched geomantic features of the terrain, investigated popular spirit cults, patronized shrines and temples, instigated the worship of new deities, wrote poems about An Nam (as the region was then called; meaning “the Pacified South”), expressing Confucian and Daoist ideas, and, it is said, wrote the first book on local geography. All this left a favorable impression on the local people, and so (with only one shocking exception; see below), the stories concerning him show him as a wise and thoughtful person, somewhat in the style of Shì Xié some five centuries earlier (see the story of Sĩ Vương Tiên in the preceding section). A recurring motif in these accounts, however, is his disappointment at being unable to control the spirits prevalent in the South, a disappointment that leads to the conclusion that the South is ungovernable, and that he has no choice but to return to China. The first of the stories concerning him show him presiding over an uncharacteristically barbaric ceremony, involving disembowelment of victims, in order to suppress the power of local Spirits. It is as if a piece of anti-Chinese propaganda got inserted into the tale at this point by accident. The narrative then passes to a seemingly

unrelated story of a clash between a Sea Spirit and the Tản Viên Mountain Spirit, in which the Mountain Spirit is victorious. The tale that follows tells of Cao Biền's unavailing efforts to suppress the Spirit of the River Tô Lịch, and the tale that follows tells of his inability, after the completion of his capital city, to suppress another local Spirit whose temple in the capital later survives a series of fires. The last tale in this section tells of an encounter between the Spirit of Cao Lỗ (the craftsman who in the third century BCE made the crossbow with turtle-claw trigger for An Dương Vương) and Cao Biền. The Spirit appears only to bid farewell to Cao Biền. His nature, he explains, is incompatible with that of two others in the region. – Eric Henry.

Author: Unknown, 14th Century CE.

1. The Tale of the Fish Demon

(*Lĩnh Nam Chích Quái*, Narrative 2, “Truyện Ngư Tinh 魚精傳, Tale of the Fish Demon”)

This tells how Lạc Long Quân rescues the people from a fish demon that can assume human form. The decapitated head turns into a dog's head, becoming “Dog's Head Mountain.” — Eric Henry.

In the Eastern Sea there is a kind of Fish Demon with a body more than fifty yards long and with many feet, like those of a centipede. It ceaselessly changes shape, and is so active that it is hard to keep track of. Rainstorms arise wherever it goes, and it often eats human flesh. Everyone fears it.

In great antiquity there was a kind of fish with a quasi-human face that often went to the shore of the Eastern Sea. There it took on human form, and was able to use speech to communicate with others. It gradually grew large and appeared in both male and female guise. It caught shrimp and mussels to eat and bore a resemblance to the savages

who populated the ocean islands. It lived by catching people. It, at length, became an adult and, together with other men, traded items such as salt, rice, clothes, knives, and axes, often traveling back and forth on the Eastern Sea. Within that area there was a Fish-Demon Crag (Yújīng Yáifish 魚精岩) with a mouth and teeth that jutted out on the shore. At the base of the mountain there was a large cave. This was the place where the Fish Demon lived. When boatmen passed by it, they often suffered setbacks. The winds and storms there were fierce and they knew of no route that would enable them to avoid it. Whenever they set about opening a different road, they met with sand and stones in which they had no means of digging.

One night, some immortal beings came down and pried up rocks with which to build a canal, so as to make traveling easier for humans. The canal was almost dug when the Fish Demon, having changed into a White Rooster, began crowing on top of the mountain. This made the crowd of immortals believe that morning would soon come, so they all flew away. What they built is called the “Buddha Road.”

Đào Thương Long¹ took pity on the peoples’ difficulties, and so made a large boat and, ordering the Spirit Dạ Xoa 夜叉 to forbid the God of the Ocean to stir up winds and waves, oared the boat to Fish-Demon Crag, and sent a person to make a pretense of giving the Fish Demon something to eat. When the Fish Demon opened its maw to swallow the offering, a red-hot piece of steel entered its mouth instead. The Fish Demon, heaving and struggling, leapt down to strike the boat. Long lopped off the demon’s tail, peeled off its skin, and dragged it up the mountain, where it is now called Bạch Long Vỹ 白龍尾 (White-Dragon-Tail). The upper segment with the head floated out on the ocean,

¹ One manuscript here has the variant name “Lạc Long Quân.”

changed into a dog, ran off, and disappeared. Long filled up the ocean with stones, recovered the segment, and beheaded it, whereupon the head became an island now called “Cầu Đầu” (“Dog-Head”), while the remaining portion of the body floated out to Man Cầu 曼求, where it is now referred to as “Cầu Man Cầu” (“Man Cầu Dog”). This was the origin of those places.

Author: Unknown, 14th Century CE.

2. The Tale of the Fox Demon

(*Lĩnh Nam Chích Quái*, Narrative 3, “Truyện Hồ Tinh 狐精傳, Tale of the Fox Demon”)

This tells how Lạc Long Quân rescues people from a Fox Demon with nine tails who assumes human form and inveigles young men and women into his cave by singing. This takes place during the reign of Lý Thái Tổ [1010–1028]. The story provides origin myths of the early capital, Thăng Long, and includes many local names and features of the city. –Eric Henry.



Pursuing the Fox Demon.



In olden days, Thăng Long City was called Long Biên 龍編. No people lived there in high antiquity. In the time of King Lý Thái Tổ 李太祖, when he was oaring a boat at the Nhị Hà 珥河 Ferry Crossing, two dragons led the boat along, and so the place was named “Thăng Long,” “Rising Dragon.” The King established his Capital there, and it became the place we know today.

In the beginning, there was a stone mountain to the West of this place at the bottom of which was a cave, where lived a Fox with Nine Tails that lived more than a thousand years and turned into a demon. It appeared in many thousands of different forms, assuming sometimes the aspect of a person, and sometimes that of a monkey, and roamed through all inhabited places. At that time, at the base of Tản Viên 傘圓 Mountain, there were some Savages who lived in huts woven from grass, and on top of the mountain there dwelt a Spirit whom the Savages worshipped. This Spirit taught the savages to plow fields, weave cloth, and sew white clothing to wear, and because of this was called “Bach-y-man” 白衣蠻 (“White-Clothes-Savage”). The Fox with Nine Tails transformed itself into a Savage Dressed in White and mingled with them, participating in their singing groups. It was, thus, able to lure some boys and girls to return with him to the cave, where it imprisoned them. This made the Savages very miserable.

This caused Long Quân to order the subordinates in his Sea Kingdom to make the water rise up and destroy Mount Tiểu-Thạch-Sơn 小石穴 (“Small-Rock-Mountain”), and dig in its place a wet lowland area in the middle of which was a deep abyss called “Thi-Hà-Trạch 尸狐澤 (“Fox-Corpse Swamp,” now called “Hồ Tây” or West Lake) and established a Pagoda there to maintain control (now called “Thiên-niên-quán 千年觀,” or “Thousand-year Hermitage”). To the West of this

swamp was an area where the ground was level and where the fields and ponds were cultivated, called “Lỗ-Hồ-Động (魯狐洞, “Fox-Cave Pit”).” All the higher and dryer places there had inhabitants, and their dwelling place was called “Hồ Thân”狐村 (“Fox Village”), and the cave is now called “Lỗ Hồ Đàm” 魯狐潭 (“Fox-Marsh Pit”).

Author: Unknown, 14th Century CE. Translator: Eric Henry

3. The Tale of the Tree Demon

(*Lĩnh Nam Chích Quái*, Narrative 4, “Truyện Mộc Tinh 木精轉, Tale of the Tree Demon”)

This relates how a malevolent Tree Demon demands a human sacrifice once a year on the 30th day of the 12th month. It is vanquished by Kinh Dương Vương, but then grows powerful again. It is finally defeated and killed through rope acrobatics devised by the Magician Dũ Văn Mâu 愈文牟 in the reign of the early Viet Warlord, Đinh Tiên Hoàng 丁先皇 [reigned 968–979].– Eric Henry.



An acrobat swoops past the Tree Demon.

In ancient times, in the Phụng Châu region, there was a gigantic tree called Chiên Đàn 旃檀, the trunk of which was a thousand levels high, and the luxuriant foliage of which spread for unknown thousands of miles. Cranes nested in its upper branches, so the place was called Bạch Hạc 白鶴 (“A Thousand Cranes”). After lasting for untold thousands of years, the Chiên Đàn tree grew dry and became a Demon. It was strong and powerful, and often killed people.

Kinh Dương Vương used magic to overcome the Demon, but it constantly changed location, appearing one day in this place, and another day in that. It changed form unpredictably, and often ate people, so the people had to build a temple in order to offer prayers to it. Each year on the last day of the last month, they had to offer the spirit a human being as a sacrifice; only then would the spirit cease its depredations and leave the people in peace. The people came to call the it “Xương Công” 猖狂 (“Mad Monster”) demon. The Southwest portion of this area was close to the Country of Mi Hầu 獼猴. Local people [people of Phụng Hâu] had the barbarians of Bà Lộ 婆露 (the Diên Châu 滇州 Prefecture of today) seize a Laotian person to serve as a sacrificial offering; this was done every year,

Only when Qín Shǐ Huáng sent Rèn Xiāo 任囂 to be the Commandant of Long Xuyên 龍川 did this situation change. Rèn Xiāo made alterations in this practice and forbade the use of humans as sacrificial victims. Angered by this, the Demon retaliated with killings, after which the sacrificial offerings were carried out more respectfully than ever. This continued until the time of Đình Tiên Hoàng, when a Magician named Dũ Văn Mâu 愈文牟 appeared. He was from the North, practised severe monastic austerities, and was more than forty years of age. He had traveled through many countries, was familiar with many

languages, and had mastered the magic arts of golden fangs and brazen teeth. When he came to our land, he was more than eighty, but Tiên Hoang did not receive him with any mark of special respect, treating him only as a teacher [shī 師], so he used magical techniques to suppress Xương Công and finally kill him.

The names of the techniques he used were: *Thăng Kỵ* 尚騎 (“rider”), *Thăng can* 尚竿 (“pole-wielder”), *Thăng Thát* 尚韃 (“scabbard-wielder”), *Thăng toái* 尚碎 (“smasher”), *Thăng câu* 尚鉤 (“hook-wielder”), and *Thăng hiểm* 尚險 (“diver”).² Some, also, were called “man falling off a horse” (*lạc mã nhân* 落馬人) and “singing child” (*xướng nhi* 唱兒). Every year, he would create a flying tower twelve yards high, planting a tree in the middle. He used hemp to make a great rope and twist vines around the exterior. The two ends of the rope were securely buried in the earth, and the middle portion was looped over the tree. The “*Thượng kỵ*” (“rider”) technique consisted of a man stepping onto the rope and quickly ascending it twice without falling, his head wrapped in a black turban and wearing black trousers; the “*Thượng Can*” (“pole”) technique consisted of using a rope one hundred and fifty yards long with a place where rope diverged in three directions, and having two people holding flags clamber up the rope and avoid each other at the three-way divergence without falling down; this alternated with the “*Thượng thát*” (“scabbard”) technique, which consisted of using a wooden plank one foot three inches long and seven centimeters thick which would be placed on a tree seventeen feet high. The *Thượng thát* or “Scabbard-wielder” on top of the plank, would jump and fly in the air

² In the preceding list, I have adopted the suggestion of Professor Nguyễn Thị Oanh that the Chinese ideograph *shàng* 尚 is used to represent the Vietnamese word “*thăng*,” indicating a male human being of low status. The word is here applied to various kinds of acrobatic performers.



two or three times moving crosswise back and forth. This would give way to the Thượng toái (“smashing”) technique, which consisted of using bamboo to weave a cage shaped like a fish trap three feet long, and four feet in circumference. The Thượng toái would be thrown into the middle and made to stand without falling. This was followed by the Lạc-mã (“horse-falling”) technique, in which a person astride a horse would cause the horse to fly and then bend down and pick up an object from the ground, without falling. This was followed by the Thượng can (“pole”) and Thượng hiểm (“diving”) techniques in which a man lying on his back would support a long pole and have a child clamber up its length. Or he would have children advance shouting noisily who would strike gongs and drums, and then surge forward singing and dancing to kill animals to offer to the demon. The Tree Demon came down to eat the offerings and gaze at the tricks being performed. Then the Magician, intoning a spell, withdrew his sword and beheaded the Tree Demon. The Spirit Xương Cuồng and all his followers were, in this way, killed.

From that time on, the people no longer suffered from the necessity of sacrificing a human being every year, and the lives of the people were thus protected.

Author: Unknown, 14th Century CE.

4. The Story of Tản Viên

(*Lĩnh Nam Chích Quái*, Narrative 15, “Truyện Tản Viên 傘圓山傳 Tale of Mount Tản Viên”)

This story recounts traditions surrounding the King of Mount Tản Viên, named after one of the fifty sons of Lạc Long Quân who followed their mother to the highlands.

Cao Biền 高駢 of the Táng tries to suppress the spirit of this Mountain-King, and those of other mountains, by means of a ceremony involving seventeen disemboweled maidens and animal sacrifices. While

thus engaged, he often sees the Spirit-King riding by over a mountain range. The King spits down Cao Biền in scorn, which causes him to conclude that the Spirits of the South cannot be suppressed.

The story then details the rivalry of the Mountain Spirit and the Water Spirit, Thủy Tinh 水精, over Hùng Vương's daughter My Nương, and provides an explanation of the seasonal floods in the eighth and ninth months. Item 3.6 in *Việt Điện U Linh Tập* recounts the portion of the story concerned with the battle of those two spirits. – Eric Henry.

Mount Tản Viên lies to the West of the Capital of Nam Việt. The mountain rises straight and high in the form of a parasol [*tản* 傘] and takes its name from that resemblance.

In former times King Lạc Long Quân took Âu Cơ as a bride, and she gave birth to a sac with one hundred eggs. Long Quân took fifty sons with him to the ocean, and fifty other sons returned to the mountains with their mother. They administered the realm and went by the name Hùng Vương. Tản Viên Sơn Đại Vương [“the Great King of Parasol Mountain”] was one of the fifty sons who had returned there. He returned from the Sea Kingdom from the Thần Phu 神扶 estuary and, seeking a place to live that was high and dry and where the people's customs were simple and wholesome, he oared his boat from the River Cái to Long Đâu [“Dragon Perch”] Village near Long Biên 龍編 City with a view to settling there, but after a time, feeling dissatisfied, he oared his boat further from Linh Giang River to Phiên Tân 番濱 Village. There he saw and appreciated the height and beauty of Mount Tản Viên, with its three great rocks standing side by side, as shapely as if drawn by hand, and he saw that the people at the base of the mountain had simple, unspoiled customs.



He then had a road built that went straight as a thread from Phiên Tân Village to the side of Mount Tản Viên. From there, he went on to Uyên Động and to Nham Tuyền, a place with a different Spring, and then went on the Mount Thách Bàn at the head of the Vân Mộng region. At other times he made excursions to the Chiết Giang 浙江 River to look at the fish, and wherever he passed on country roads, he built pagodas for people to rest in. In response to all these marks of his passing, people of later ages made temples to him, where they prayed in times of drought or flood. In this way, fires were prevented and droughts forestalled more quickly than an echo follows sound, so swift was the magical response. And when days came as bright and clear as if a banner were flapping above the mountain ranges, the people in nearby villages all said that this was a manifestation of the Mountain Spirit.

When Cao Biền 高駢 of the Táng Dynasty wished to suppress the efficacy of all the famous sites in the land of An Nam, he opened the bellies of seventeen people, all women not yet married, threw away their intestines, and stuffed grass and straw into the cavities. He had bodices put on them and had them seated on chairs, sacrificed cattle and water buffalo, and whenever he saw any movement among the seated women, withdrew his sword and beheaded them. Such methods were used to worship Spirits among all coarse and ignorant people. When creating such spectacles on Mount Tản Viên, Cao Biền would often see Vương 王, the Spirit of the Mountain, riding above the clouds on a white horse, who would spit and gallop off. Cao Biền sighed in frustration and said, “The spiritual strength of the Southern Region cannot be gauged. The living essence of the Mountain-King cannot be eradicated. The power of his response shows this.”



The Mountain Spirit does battle with the Water Spirit.

It is related among the people that the Mountain King and the Water Spirit both lodged proposals to marry My Nương 媚娘, the daughter of Hùng Vương. The Mountain-King was the first to complete all the rites of engagement, and Hùng Vương gave My Nương away to be his bride. The King received her on Mount Tản Viên. The Water-Spirit made his proposal too late, and so was full of resentment. He came with all the creatures of the water to attack the King, in order to seize My Nương for himself. The King, at once, used an iron net to make a barrier across the River Từ Liêm 慈廉 in order to prevent this attempt. The Water-Spirit created a small new river that went from the Lý Nhân 蒞仁 River to the River Hát 喝江 before emptying into the River Đà 陀江 in order to attack Mount Tản Viên from the rear. He also opened a small path from Tích Giang 昔江 up to Mount Tản Viên that passed through the villages of Cam Giá 甘蔗, Đồng Lô 東樓, Thạch Kê 石雞, Ma Xá 麼舍, and Đục Giang 沿江, eroding the region so that it became a depression that was accessible to sea creatures, who often came and raised wind-storms, caused sheets of



rain to descend, and raised the surface of the water, so as to attack the King. The people on the mountain all made sparse protective fences, beat on drums, threshed rice, and raised shouts to defend the place. Whenever they saw tattered masses of moss floating by beyond the fences, they would use arrows to shoot down all the creatures resembling serpents or fish that filled the river. The aquatic forces would be defeated and driven back, but retained the will to fight, so that in the eighth and ninth months there would be many crop-damaging floods, with the folk at the mountain's base suffering the most. This has continued to the present day.

And the people all say this happens because the Water-Spirit and the Mountain-Spirit both wished to marry the same wife.

Author: Unknown, 14th Century CE.

5. The Story of Tô Lịch

(*Lĩnh Nam Chích Quái*, Narrative 19, “Truyện Tô Lịch 蘇瀝江傳, The Tale of Tô Lịch River”)



The River Tô Lịch.

This is a *Tale* about Cao Biền containing an explanation of the origin of the name of the River “Tô Lịch.” Cao Biền first meets a Spirit of that name while boating in the river. The Spirit later creates an elemental disturbance there, after which he appears to Cao Biền in a dream. Cao Biền, unable to suppress the Spirit, decides that ruling the South is an impossible enterprise, and returns to China, where he is captured by rebels and executed (The *Tale* says merely that he returned to China and was killed). Item 2.4 in *Việt Điện U Linh Tập* is parallel to this one.— Eric Henry.

Cao Biền 高駢, having a thorough understanding of astronomy and geography, studied the land’s topography and built the La Thành 羅城 Fortress to the West of the River Lô 瀾 and stationed himself there. It had a circumference of a thousand paces. To the Northwest there was a small river that flowed Southward from the Northwest and emptied into the great river. Each time it rained, this river spread and rose.

Once, when Biền was on a boating excursion, he met an old man with silvery hair and a distinctive physiognomy who had also come on an excursion. He laughed and spoke in a natural manner. Biền asked him his name.

“I am Lịch 瀝 of the Tô 蘇 lineage,” the man replied.

“Where is your home?”

“I live here in this river.”

Having said this, he clapped his hands, whereupon the sky at once grew dark, and he could be seen no more. Biền realized that man was a Spirit, and so named to river “Tô Lịch.”

One morning when it had just grown bright, Biền was standing Southeast of the Capital on the bank of the River Lô, and saw that a great wind had arisen from the river, that the heaving waves were emitting a



roar, and the clouds were black, casting a pall on everything. There was a strange person more than two yards tall standing on the surface of the water. His upper body was wrapped in golden raiment, and he wore on his head a purple cap, and in his hand he held a golden tally. He was flying up and swooping down in the sunlight. When the sun had risen three poles, the clouds had not dispersed, and the figure still stood there. Biền was astonished and wished to force the figure to subside, but could not decide on a means to do so. That night, he had a dream in which the Spirit spoke to him as follows,

“Do not try to suppress me. I am the Spirit Long Đâu 龍肚 (Dragon Belly), the Chief of all the Earth Spirits. I heard that someone came here and built a city wall. We had never previously met, so I made myself visible. Even if you should try to make me disappear, it would not worry me in the slightest.”

Startled at this, Biền had an altar made as soon as it was bright, abstained from food, and used gold, silver, bronze, and iron to cast a spell, uttered maledictions for three days and nights, and then buried an amulet to suppress the Spirit. That night, there was noisy thunder and fierce rain and wind, and in an instant he saw that all the gold, silver, bronze, and iron amulets had been swept into the air and had turned to flying ashes, all of which flew off and disappeared.

Cao Biền sighed and said, “This place is ruled by Spirits. I had better not remain and fall prey to some disaster. I must return to the North at once.”

The Emperor Yìzōng called him back, and Biền was killed.

Author: Unknown, 15th Century CE.

6. The Story of Long Độ Vương Khí (*Lĩnh Nam Chích Quái*, Narrative 26, “Truyện Long Độ Vương Khí 龍度王氣傳, Tale of Long Độ Vương Khí”)

This *Tale* concerns a Spirit, Long Độ Vương Khí, who manifests himself, first to Cao Biền, and then, some centuries later, to Lý Thái Tổ, the Founder of the Lý Dynasty. The account concludes by relating how the Temple honoring this Spirit in Thăng Long never burned down, even though Thăng Long was thrice consumed by fire. Item 3.3 in *Việt Điện U Linh Tập* is parallel to this one. – Eric Henry.

This Spirit was originally the King Long Độ Vương Khí 龍度王氣. In former times, when Cao Biền 高駢 made an excursion to our Southern land and had just finished building the City of Đại La 大羅, he went to gaze at the Eastern Gate, when clouds and fog arose all at once, and he saw a dazzlingly bright, multi-colored mass of cloud arise from the earth. A person arrayed in woven clothes, of marvelous strength, and riding a Golden Dragon and clutching a Golden Tally followed the cloud and drifted in the foggy air, then after a brief time disappeared. Cao Biền was astonished at this, and thought that it might have been a Malevolent Spirit, so he wanted to build an altar to suppress its activities.

The Spirit appeared to him in a dream and said, “Please don’t give way to suspicion. I am not an Evil Spirit, but Long Độ Vương Khí. I have appeared here because I am pleased at your completion of the city wall and have come here to observe it.”

Cao Biền was startled into consciousness, and in the morning called his entourage together and said to them, “I cannot submit to some distant person. Letting some Foreign Demon make an appearance here is not auspicious.”



A person there asked permission to make an image resembling the being that Cao Biền had observed in the dream, and to use a thousand catties of iron to suppress it. Cao Biền accepted the proposal and had the structure made to suppress the Spirit. When evening came, the sky grew black, and violent winds and rains reduced the structure to rubble.

Furious, Cao Biền said, “I now know that I shall return to the North.”

And it was just as he said. People thought that a miracle had occurred, so they established a Temple dedicated to the Spirit next to the marketplace in the Capital.

Later, when Lý Thái Tổ 李太祖 completed building the walls of his Capital, he dreamed that a Spirit came before him offering congratulations in the form of two prostrations.

The King said to the Spirit, “You should continue to enjoy offerings for a hundred years.”

The Spirit said: “Your City shall endure for ten thousand years; this is what I shall rely on—why speak only of a hundred years?”

The King regained consciousness and directed that a sacrifice be performed at once with wine and offerings, naming the spirit Thăng Long Thành Hoàng Đại Vương 昇龍城隍大王 [the “Great King City-God of Thăng Long].

At that time there was a wind and rain storm of such ferocity that many streets lay flattened. Only the Spirit remained the same in appearance as he had been before. The King, at once, honored him with the title Minh Hạnh Đại Vương 明亨大王 and had all the rites dedicated to the coming Spring performed, accompanied with all the forms of prayer and sacrificial offering.

In the course of the Trần Dynasty, the Capital was consumed three times by fire, but the Temples were not damaged. The great Abbot Trần Quang Khải 陳光啟 left a poem on this that is still recited to this day:

From olden times the Mighty Kings have ruled in strength;
 Now only do we know their ghosts are here in might.
 Fires raged three times, but they were not consumed;
 Winds blew with violence but those Spirits did not bend.
 Our leaders overturned their countless hordes of men;
 And gasping out their lives, they fell, defeated, to the earth.
 We pray the mighty tree shall keep the Northern Troops at bay
 So that all the universe may be at peace.

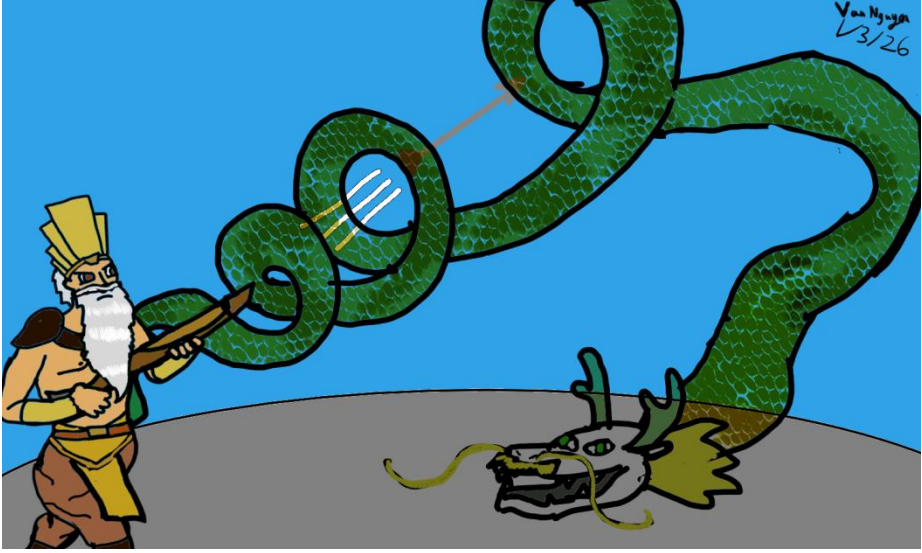
Author: Unknown, 15th Century CE.

7. The Story of the Spirit of the Stone at the Đô Lỗ Breaker (Lĩnh Nam Chích Quái, Narrative 35, “Truyện Đại Than Đô Lỗ Thạch Thần 大灘都魯石神傳, Tale of the Stone Spirit at Đô Lỗ Breaker”)

This tells of the Spirit of Cao Lỗ, the Officer under An Dương Vương, who devised the trigger mechanism of that ruler’s magically efficacious crossbow. In this *Tale*, the Spirit appears to Cao Biền in a dream after the latter has won a victory over Nam Chiếu. He announces that he must leave the region because his nature, which is that of a White Dragon, is incompatible with those of An Dương Vương, a Gold Rooster, and the Lạc Lords, who are White Monkeys. Item 2.11 in *Việt Điện U Linh Tập* is parallel to this one. – Eric Henry.

On examining the Account of Đô Lỗ 都魯, we see that there was a Prince with the surname Cao 皋 and the given name Lỗ 魯, who was a man of ability under King An Dương Vương. He was commonly called

Đồ Lô Thạch Thần 都魯石神, a name derived from the fact that the Spirit was the Ghost of Thạch Long 石龍 (“Stone Dragon”).



Cao Lỗ, the Spirit of Đồ Lô Breaker.

After pacifying Nam Chiếu 南詔, Cao Biền 高駢 made a tour of Vũ Ninh 武寧 Prefecture. Upon reaching one of the chief places there, he had a dream in which he saw a remarkable figure: a man nine yards tall, with broad, manly facial features, hair swept up like the mallet of a drum, cut into hundreds with a knife, a short red blouse, and a red chest band, who came seeking an interview with him.

“What is your name?” asked Cao Biền

“Your servant’s name is Cao Lỗ 皋魯,” the man replied. “In former times I assisted An Dương Vương as a General and often had great success in driving away bandits. When my forces were destroyed by the Lạc Lords, I went elsewhere. After my death, the Lord on High, regarding my loyal service with approval, made me the Guardian-Spirit of this stretch of rivers and mountains, conferring on me the title Quản Lĩnh Đô 管領都 General. I am thoroughly apprised of such matters as the

pacification of Nam Chiếu, the suppression of invading bandits, and the sowing of rice, for I am the Spirit who oversees this area. Now, illustrious sir, that you have suppressed the rebel hordes, and our borders are at peace, I must return to my original associates. For me to fail to announce this to you would be a breach of courtesy.”

Taken aback by this, General Cao asked, “Why do the Lạc Lords dislike you?”

“Matters concerning the other world cannot be revealed,” he answered.

Upon further questioning, the Spirit went on: “An Dương Vương was a Gold Rooster Spirit, and the Lạc Lords were White Monkey Spirits. I am a White Dragon Spirit. Roosters and Monkeys get along well, but there is tension between those creatures and Dragons, so my departure is necessary.”

Having said this, he disappeared.

General Cao spoke about this with his Officers, and then intoned a poem,

This land of Giao is fine indeed
It lasts in glory for a thousand ages.
The worthy men of old can still be seen.
Fulfilling still the aims of Spirits.

Then he intoned another,

The hundred Việt are firm within these Lands,
A region of established hills and streams.
The Souls and Spirits all attend as one,
Their blessings to the Táng still quick.



And he followed this with yet another,

The hills and streams here in the South are fine;
The Dragon Spirit lives here in Enchanted Land.
The people here need not have furrowed brows;
For here, their peace is well assured.

Several Dynasties have passed by, but the domestic ways here survive in
beauty, and the sacrifices offered are splendid.