**PART 1, SEPARATION**

**23rd July, 2020. 7PM AEST**

*00:01 Black screen, in a dark room a bright square of light is projected on the wall.*

*A person sits at an overhead projector, places a transparent sheet on the surface.*

*An intricate design is projected. Central sunburst within concentric circles of complex patterns.*

*00:24 A hand lettered title card reads “Part 1, Separation”*

00:29 Âu Cơ, a Creation myth of a nation founded on divorce.

00:36 Almost five thousand years ago, Kinh Dương Vương the first Vietnamese king, from the kingdom of Xich Quỷ, married the princess Thầnh Long Nữ, daughter of the Lord of the Dongting Lake, fed by the Yangtze River.

*00:56 In close-up detailed pattern is revealed, a design featuring human figures in silhouette rowing a dragon boat, seated one behind the other. The pattern moves unevenly across the illuminated surface behind it.*

01:15 This princess bore him a son, Lạc Long Quân, the “Dragon Lord of Lạc.” Originating from Dongting lake, princess Long Nữ was believed to be descended from a long line of Dragons. Her son inherited extraordinary strength and intelligence, and like his mother had a strong affinity to water.

*01:36 Drops of water fall through the air against the shifting surface of the ocean.*

*01:47 Photos of rolling hills and light breaking through clouds above.*

01:55 The kingdom of Xich Quỷ was bordered by a high mountain range that

stretched right down the shorelines to the ocean. The young Dragon prince was often seen playing in the ocean, swimming in the waves amongst the other sea creatures.

*02:11 A black and white crested bird with a red cheek hops about in a cage.*

02:16 But up in the mountains was a divine fairy called Âu Cơ. She was a healer

who travelled from place to place, curing sickness. As she made her way down the mountains, she was ambushed one day by a monster, and turned into a bird to escape.

02:39 Seeing this beautiful spirit struggling, the Dragon prince ran from the ocean, picked up a stone to slay the monster. Looking upon her rescuer, Âu Cơ fell hopelessly in love and transformed back into a beautiful fairy.

*02:56 Hands break open a Dragon fruit.*

03:01 Soon after their union, Âu Cơ bore a sac of 100 eggs that hatched into 100 beautiful children. They grew up strong and courageous like their father, and kind and skillful like their mother.

*03:17 A banana leaf is cut.*

03:23 Despite the love they had for each other, Âu Cơ yearned for the mountains whilst Lạc Long Quân the Dragon Prince had his heart set on the ocean. Eventually they separated, with Âu Cơ taking 50 of her children to the mountains, and Lạc Long Quân staying with the other 50 children along the coast.

*03:43 Projected on the wall, blurry footage of a man holding a writhing snake. He lifts it in the air and smiles as its tail curls up towards his face and wraps around his arm.*

*03:53 Close up of the snakes’ scales.*

04:00 They made a promise that despite their distance, they would always protect each other.

04:06 So, in the mountainous areas of Northern Vietnam, Âu Cơ raised her children to become the fearless Hùng Vương kings. She taught them to breed animals and cultivate the soil to grow fruit trees and harvest mulberry bushes.

04:22 Along the coastline Lạc Long Quân taught his children to govern his kingdom, teaching them the skills of fishing, ocean faring, and the art of tattoos to scare off monsters as they dived and hunted for food.

04:42 These tribes became the ancestors of the Vietnamese people,

*04:57 The horizon over the sea.*

05:00 And as children, we are told by our elders:

*05:05 Các con là những đứa trẻ hạnh phúc,*

*vì chúng con là con Hồng cháu Lạc,*

*Đất nước gấm vóc,*

*thiên nhiên yêu đãi,*

*tài nguyên dầu có,*

*rừng vàng bạc biển.*

*05:19 Hand-written title card projection reads:*

*05:21 Precious children of the Dragon and Fairy*

*Your country is as beautiful like silk,*

*Nature has been kind and bountiful,*

*Gold in the trees, silver in the seas.*

*05:31 The tides moves in and out on a beach, with pine trees growing nearby.*

05:36 But, to be so blessed is to be cursed, borne from a mythical separation of the gods.

05:45 Some say this story illustrates the matrilineal and double-kinship traditions of the Vietnamese culture. Where women can separate and start a new lineage. It also symbolises the divisions embedded into Vietnamese history. There are the geographic and historic manifestations of being divided: between the mountains and the sea, the North and the South. And now, the people who stayed and those who left, displaced and dispersed across the seas.

*06:18 Close up of the drooping pine needles of the trees, trembling slightly in the air.*

06:24 In Vietnamese, we describe country and nation with two distinct characters. “Đất” and “Nước”: Soil and Water.

*06:49 Dark branches in the background come slowly into focus.*

06:54 These unions, separations and returns are embedded in our diaspora, so I guess this is a good place to start our project. Of looking at the displacement of the ancient Đông Sơn Bronze drums spread across the many soils and oceans of our new homes.

07:11 As Vietnamese-Australians, myself and Victoria feel this sense of profound separation and distance, of ourselves being divided.

*07:21 Light shining through lattice pattern windows. A reflection on a glass case and the shadow of a person moving past.*

*Close up of the sunburst pattern on the surface of a bronze drum. Light flickers across the embossed surface.*

07:41 And from this we begin by looking at the centre of our Đông Sơn drum. Here lies a star, our sun, our Ông Trời. Most drums start with this motif as with most mythologies and worlds, including that of our contemporary realm, life revolves around the sun.

07:59 It follows that our story works outwards to introduce you, ring by ring, to the iconography on the Đông Sơn drum face.

*08:05 A papercut silhouette of the drum surface patterns appears. The central star surrounded by circles.*

08:12 Extending from the sun are four rings of geometric design. It is encircled by decorative lines. Perhaps from the centre come soil and water; pillars like mountains from the sky and oceans at its base. And here our first peculiar repeated shape emerges. These shapes bringing to mind anthropomorphic figures guiding us into a ring of thick ripples of rising and swaying rice plants in a paddy.

08:44 The peculiar realisation is that from these plant-like ripples emerge four scenes. Slightly eroded since their original, ancient casting only adding to their mystery.

*08:55 In close up, shadow silhouette of the drums patterns cast on the wall.*

08:59 Perhaps this connection between bronze vessels, like the drum, peoples of the past - their history and their battles - and creatures that herald the coming of rain that accounts for the alignment between each scene and the presence of a bronze frog at the edge of the drum’s surface. Along each scene, a frog appears, its bronze body ornamented with lines like gentle tattoos. When frogs call, they herald rain, marking the necessary liquid for agriculture and thereby represent fertility, growth and good fortune and a long-fulfilled life.

*09:36 Handwritten text reads: “like water which nurtures all things without* knowing, Rắn Cạp Đuôi, 2020. A clip of the band performing follows.

***[ RCD program approx 47 minutes ]***

*54:47 A group of frogs nestled together, their throats pulsating.*

54:58 And with that piece, by Rắn Cạp Đuôi, water that nourishes all, water that falls from the skies, the Vietnamese landscape continues to be enriched with an orchestra of myriad creatures, frogs and birds singing. Eventually birds, with long necks, strong legs that provide gentle understanding and vision, soar into the growing rich paddy fields, impressing their image of foresight upon the tribes and villages across the land. Here arrives the mythical Chim Lạc, a crane-like creature guiding lost people into the highlands of Northern Vietnam.

*55:35 The shadow of a hand arranges a slide on a projector. A view of a damaged bronze drum, followed by a projection of a visit to the Art Gallery of NSW to see their two drum samples.*

55:57 [ Bronze gong reverberates ]

56:06 This bronze echo and sound of the Đông Sơn drum is unmistakable. Beautiful in its artistry and powerful in its technology that has enabled these enormous drum vessels to be dispersed across the landscape, its roar and echo is easily recognisable. So distinct, in fact, that its clashing alarm for the tribes could rapidly unify communities from the lowlands and the highlands to battle. Drumming for war.

*56:31 Text reads: “Bronze Echoes, Victoria Pham, Performed by Salina Myat”*

*56:37 A pile of rice sits on the centre of the drum surface. As the drum is beaten, the rice vibrates and shifts, a hand brushes across the surface and into a cup. A young woman seated on the floor in front of the drum.*

***56:50 [ Salina performs ]***

***01:03:13 [ Acknowlegement of country and credits are read ]***