

THE GIONG LEGEND

Many years ago, during the reign of King Hung VI, in the village of Phu Dong, which is in the Vu Ninh district, there lived a woman who had never married.

One day she went out into the garden and saw a huge footprint clearly imprinted in the soil. The woman tried her feet in it and after that she became pregnant.

She was so ashamed about it that she left her village and went to live in a forest. Twelve long months later, the woman gave birth to a good-looking baby boy. She named her son Giong. Then, together with her baby, she returned to her village. Day after day the mother worked very hard to feed her son and herself. How strange it was! Little Giong could neither laugh nor speak even though he had reached three years of age.

At that time, the northern border of Vietnam was invaded by the An enemies. They destroyed thousands of villages and the people were extremely wretched. Because he was so distressed about this, the King ordered his messengers to look everywhere to find brave and skillful people who could drive out the intruders to save the country. The messengers went to Phu Dong village. Right after hearing the news from the messengers, little Giong suddenly sat up and said to his mother:

"Mother! Would you invite the messengers to come in?"

Seeing her son suddenly being able to sit up and speak, the mother was amazed and happy. she ran out to call the messengers. When they came in, Giong asked them to sit down and said:

"Messengers, hurry up and go back to the Royal Palace and ask the King to forge for me a big iron horse, an iron whip, iron armour and an iron hat. I will defeat the enemies."

The messengers were most astonished with the request of the child. They rushed back to the Royal Palace to tell the King about the conversation with the boy. The king immediately ordered the forging of all the things Giong would need.

When the iron horse and other things were ready, Giong was invited to come to the Palace to see the King. Giong asked to have a large meal before he went to the battlefield. The King ordered a large pot of rice to be cooked for Giong. Even though the pot was big, the rice

was not enough for little Giong so the chef had to cook more. After he had finished eating, Giong stood up and stretched himself. Suddenly he started to grow bigger and taller, until he became a giant.

With the armour on, the iron hat on his head and iron whip in his hand, Giong jumped on to the back of the iron horse. The iron horse reared up, whinnied, breathed out fire and galloped away.

By that time, the enemy troops were at Trau Son. Giong galloped his horse, swung his whip and dashed into the army of the enemy. Wherever he attacked, the enemy were almost all destroyed. The few survivors ran away in confusion. Giong chased after them and used his iron whip to kill them. Suddenly the iron whip broke, so Giong then took out bamboo trees along the sides of the road to use as weapons to kill them. Finally the enemy troops were totally overpowered.

After defeating them, Giong galloped his horse towards the foot of Soc Son mountain. Then both the man and the horse flew up into the sky, leaving the iron armour and the hat on the ground.

In remembrance of the hero who had defeated the enemy and saved the country, the King ordered a temple to be built in the Phu Dong village and conferred on him the hero's honour of Celestial King of Phu Dong. Today, the remains of this hero are still in the temple at Phu Dong village, in the out skirts of Hanoi, and the footprints of the iron horse, which look like rows of round ponds, can still be seen at the foot of Soc Son mountain.

Today, on the ninth of April every year in the lunar calendar, the Vietnamese people hold a joyous festival to celebrate Saint Giong's victory.