

## EMPEROR LE THANH-TONG (1448-1497)

### MERCHANTS

Twenty-four hours a day they're on the go,  
Importing ship-loads, stuffing their godowns full.

Their snake-cold hearts can simulate a glow,  
Their viper-tongues exude the smoothest bull  
As, country-wide, they sell the simple short.

But cheats are cheats, no matter where or when;  
And though we laugh at monkeys of their sort,  
I see no joke in monkeys cheating men.

*(Translated from the Vietnamese by Graeme Wilson)*

## THAI THUAN (c. 1475)

### RIVER LANDING

Blue cooking-smokes obscure the sagging thatch  
Of the few crude dwellings beyond that landing-plank  
Where a single boat, bound down-stream, briefly lolls.

Three of the rat-like children crouched to catch  
Crabs in the mud-flats of the river-bank  
Carry banana-leaves as parasols.

*(Translated from the Vietnamese by Graeme Wilson)*