

The religion of worshipping the sky and spirits-A talk about the Mipazos

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Mipazos in Tao language means “feeding, offering, and worshipping”. *Mipazos* is a very important ritual for the traditional Tao religion. The origin can be traced back to the legend after the great flood.

After the flood withdrew, there were two brothers remaining on Lan-Yu island. One of them named Jipaptok stayed in the south, the other went across the mountain to the north. His name was Si Zogzog.

After Si Zogzog moved to the north, he stayed and had descendants of his own. However, the route he took from the south to the north is no longer identifiable. Only the location, where he first lived, was passed down orally. This location is at Jisaod above the Jimawawa bay. Because the flood had just withdrawn, he stayed up there to observe the ocean in close proximity. A few years later, he moved to a much flatter area at the Jimawawa bay. After doing so, he had two more children. One passed away from diseases, while the other one survived. Years after, his grandchild was born...The immigration and reproduction process became stable, and his descendants moved and lived in the area of the current Iraraley tribe.

One night, Si Zogzog’s grandchild was warned by an ancestor in a dream that his life was in danger. He was asked to prepare three bamboo sticks for protection – with both ends carved sharp. The grandchild followed the instructions of the ancestor. According to the dream, one carved bamboo stick should be kept in the house for self-protection, the other two should be flagged on each side of the house (*panibeciban*). When enemies came to rob possessions, a huge eagle flew down from the sky after being ordered. Its two claws grabbed the sharp bamboo and shot it against the leader of the enemies. After it killed the leader, it threatened the rest. The enemies were frightened and fled. As a result, Si Zogzog’s grandchild survived. After the survival, the god from the sky came to his dream and told him that it was the holy god who protected his life. Si Zogzog’s grandchild should bring offerings from the ground as pay-back. This included when killing the animals, some should also be offered to the god.

As a result, Si Zogzog’s grandchild killed the fattest pig and divided it into two baskets, one of which was for the ancestor. At the first time worshipping the offering was placed on the ground in the yard of the four-door house. However, the god did not accept it, because putting the offering on the ground was regarded as insincere and dirty. The second time, the offering was placed at a higher spot, at the stone stairs made of akashi stones (*pannazaban*), but the god again rejected, for it was the place for cooking the animals. At the end, the offering was placed on the beam in the four-door

house (*apat so pantow*) and the god finally accepted. Therefore, the following *mipazos* has never changed the place for the offerings.

As for the place for worshiping the ancestors, it is at the left side of the four-door house, where the sun sets (*sieran*). This is the opposite location of the right side, which is where the sun rises as well as the place to worship the god.

Prayers Used in the Offering Process

akma namen ney matkez a kavakan na makaop no saka vahey.

Hope our family can be together and intact.

iyaap rana o singasingeh no kanekanen namen na tao pasaoden moama do.

Please come and take this precious food, we will then be enriched.

langaraen na kapa ka pingtek mo jiyamen na tao do teyraem.

(look up) sky again ... long life ... you ... we ... people ground

The Process of *Mipazos*

During the Tao's *kapitowan a mazapao*, or *mapehma* as its informal name, the host will take a wooden mortar and pound the rice to announce that *mipazos* is around the corner. People in the tribe spread the news, and the next day is *mangap do kareyyan*. Women go to taro fields and dig the taros for preparation. In addition to the taros for their own families, taros for relatives and friends also need to be prepared. This day is called *manoma savonot*. Then the following day is *manowjia savonot*. People need to dig sweet potatoes, taros, and yams. The day is called *mangap do kasnge nan*, meaning "harvesting for the ritual nearby".

The main job for men is to prepare animal offerings for that day. They need to catch and kill pigs and goats, select dried fish from storage, for men, women, and dried fish as gift for friends.

Presenting the Offerings

The morning of worshiping god and ancestors, the offered animals' fur will be burnt using thatch. Pigs and goats are the highest level among offerings. If the family has not yet any domesticated animals, they either use a piece of pork belly as their offering, or get the offering from their friends who have domesticated animals. Different parts of a goat are divided into seven portions and given a name in offering, one piece of each is taken: *yatas* (front belly), *peinpein* (ribs), *rala* (blood), *apow* (lungs), *atey* (liver), *vitoka* (stomach), *ci nai* (intestines). Offering with pigs is the same, except *atey* (pig's liver) is not included.

The offerings include the main dish for Tao people: taros, a type of yam (*patan*), betel sprout, betel nut, and yam. When placed in the basket of offering, traditional food will be skin-on and cut in half right in the middle. The

offering basket (*kazapad*) is made of vines (*nini*), there are a pair chicken feathers flagged on each side of the basket.

Raon (giant elephant's ear leaf) and *daepdep* (betel), where offerings are placed on, should be washed with clean water. Although food do not need to be washed, it should be well-organized. It is a taboo after the ritual to leave the offering basket randomly. The main hosting family in Iraraley, Sira do Raraan, dress formally and arrive at the beach during 4 to 5pm. They hold the offerings up high facing the mountain with their heads up. They read the prayers and invite the god to come to the world.

Prayer

osok kamo na moakey do langaraen.

oya namen i pazos jinnyo.

na ka lovotan rana singasingeh no kanekanen namen.

pasaoden nyo o kanekanen namen micamadadayan.

Looking upon the lords, please come to our human world. Here we have offerings, which are all precious food we produced on the ground. Please enrich these food resources.

When men arrive at the four-door house one by one, the whole family should gather on the balcony and sit on the stones. Women may not present the offerings. When men present the offerings and read the prayers, women should also pray to the god to protect the family and enrich the food resources.

Taboos during *mipazos*

1. Do not call the name of the god (Si Lovolovoin).
2. Do not speak loudly in the tribe on the day of offering.
3. Do not be angry nor shout on the day of offering.
4. Do not go to the source of the river in the mountain nor row to the ocean. It can be done after five days.
5. Everyone must have smoke in the house on the day of offering.
6. Do not miss any offerings, except for pigs and goats.
7. Men with pregnant family member are forbidden to present offerings.