



Passing the Baton  
Finding the Feel of Your Own Body

tasilotor : komi:im  
basang ka hin'azem







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*kmalawa sa mia' atha' athan kazakazash a kalapaw*

## Constructing an Interaction Platform for Diverse Cultures

tu kahiwan a Tai-waan munsai Shpuut a kazash a miakuza ya mriqaz kmalawa mangqtu sa thuini, numa mashtay a thau muqay ya mafazaq miniahala inai a thau muqayiza sa kilhnaqualh a kalawan. antu miazithu, isa Tai-waan miniahala inai a thau antu muqay naur a ipruq a talima, ianan ita mani manasha sa kazakazash, numa kmalawa mia' atha' athan kazash pinfazaq masa palhkakaktha wa mindahip a paziwat a Yuan-un-hui, numa amangqtu kmalawa manasha wa mia' atha' athan malhkaktha wa saran, numa ya suma wa qbit a thau shduu minakaminiahala inai a thau a kazakazash minfazaq numa pasain sa mashashu a mangqtu masa mafazaq lhungqizi mita wa prug, numa musuun piaqitan ya kahiza.

haya wa 《Yuan-sir-kai》 sa mutal faqlhu a lhmaza, iamin palalawan sin-zui MV 郭佩萱 itantu Amis a malacecay kazash taun masa maqitan a aniamin a makakakri, musuun mita wa thau malhkakaktha numa minfazaq. munsai thithu mafazaqiza wa kalawan, tu Shpuut niza tu pasain kilhnaqualh a thau munai, numa pasain sa huruy munai mafazaq numa mriqaz Amis mapitan a kazakazash.

Tai-waan inai maqitan a prug, maqa ianan miniahala inai a thau ianan Shpuut numa ianan Kakitlan, numa ianan shauna' az' az a katataunan qbit a thau, ya miazithu thuini mathuaw maqitan dai. numa thuini a dawaz saran a qu-kii mathuaw maqitan, thuini iamin mat tu kahiwan ianan manasha sa mia' atha' athan a saran, mafazaq mashashu a qbit a kazash masa ininthawan. Yuan-un-hui aminra' inra' in kmalawa manasha wa maqitan a malhkaktha wa kalapaw, pishbiskaw parhaway qbit a thau shduu mafazaq ananak a kazakazash a intua masa miakuza ya mriqaz, numa sunda mutusi pasain sa izai a kafazaqan masa kazakazash, apiaqitan mita mushnaw a Tai-waan.

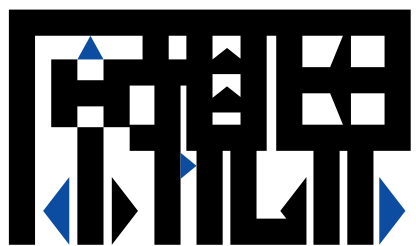
For a long time, Non-indigenous culture and values have been the dominant mentality and structure in Taiwan society. As a result, most of the public only has a vague impression of indigenous peoples and their cultures, dismissing them as merely “tourist attractions”. Indigenous peoples, however, not only are Taiwan’s original inhabitants but also have rich and diversified cultures. As the meeting point where different cultures interact, IPCF aims to set up more channels for the public to learn more about how to take care of our homeland from indigenous cultures and create a better future together.

This issue of *Indigenous Sight* marks a brand-new start. We invited rising MV director Pei-Hsuan Kuo to take part in activities and interact with the Pangcah locals at the malacecay Traditional House Building Workshop. We hope that non-indigenous audiences can shed the traditional role of “tourists” and learn to appreciate the beauty of traditional Pangcah culture as our friends.

The colorful blend of indigenous peoples, Southern Min, Hakka, and residents from different countries in our society is what makes Taiwan so beautiful and prosperous. As internet technology continues to advance, we have more and more channels to learn about different cultures and lifestyles. IPCF will continue to build additional interaction platforms and encourage the young generation to learn more about their cultures and values. With our unique knowledge and culture, we will make Taiwan a more beautiful place.

naur kazash a kalangkan  
CEO of the Indigenous  
Peoples Cultural Foundation





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*Taking Up the Boton >>*





# Finding the Feel of your Own Body

taSilotor: komljin ray basang ka biniazem

How close to reality is your impression of indigenous people?

Given the fact that their traditional ways of life are far removed from those of most people, and that most communities are beyond their daily reach,

a popular stereotypical image of being "indigenous" has been forged through the propagation of school textbooks and media coverage.

But this time, instead of waging a war of words over the issue, we want the non-indigenous to get to know us for themselves by inviting them over for a firsthand experience of the indigenous life.





In this issue, we invite Kuo Pei-Hsuan, an athletic female director who is mistaken as indigenous from time to time,

to spend three days at Taitung's Madawdaw Community for an in-depth cultural exchange.

There, she will experience the authentic traditional ways of life of the Pangcah people, ranging from bamboo cutting, rattan peeling, and bamboo basket weaving, to gathering food in the wild and at the seashore.

Don't miss it if you wonder how she's going to cope with these challenges.

Note: "taSilotor; komisim ray basang ka hin'azem" means "passing the baton: searching for feelings of the body" in SaySiyat language.



# Stone-Slab Houses are the only Things I Used to Know of!



Head of Grass Power Studio

Born in 1992

Kuo Pei-Hsuan

MV director

Love to drink. The drunker she gets,  
the more talkative she becomes

A goober in disguise of a hipster



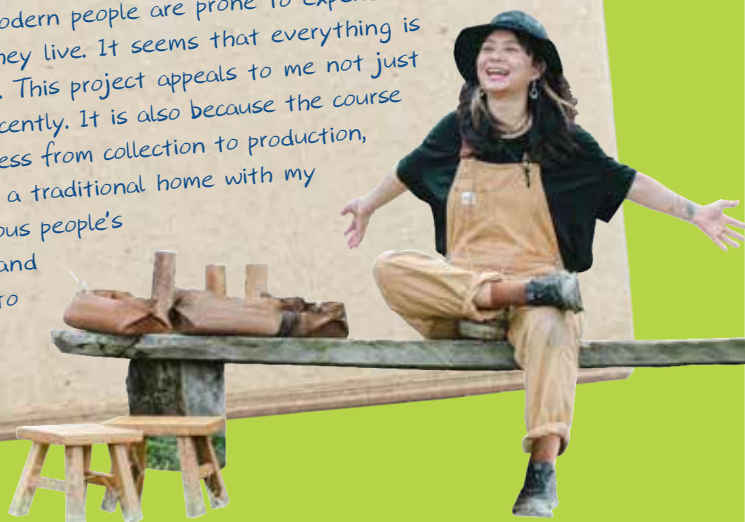


I've just returned from a trip to Taitung one month before receiving the invitation to this project. During that trip, what impressed me most, besides the relaxing beauty of nature and landscapes, were Taitung's various delicacies and buildings featuring indigenous elements, as well as numerous handicrafts and ornaments that decorated the fronts of houses. But when asked about the characteristics of Taiwan's indigenous culture, I cannot think of an answer at the moment. This is because we usually do not deliberately make a distinction between the indigenous and non-indigenous in daily lives, except when seeing performers in traditional costumes or encountering products whose names highlight indigenous elements. It's been my belief that this is how we live in such a place that is home to people of diverse ethnic backgrounds. How am I going to prove my connection to these communities? Take, for example, memorizing the names of all the different indigenous groups across the island for exams, or listening to indigenous music and watching movies about them as hobbies?

I have a particularly vivid memory of my childhood and would often recount some of the scenes so precisely that my parents got shocked. When I was young, they loved to get kids in touch with nature, and therefore I've visited indigenous communities many times. Up to now I still remember some fragments of the memories from the age of five, which are so vague that I assume them to be a dream when I grow up. As I remember, it was a night when the adults formed a circle to make merry, singing to the guitar. A curious girl, I went around to see and touch whatever interested me. Suddenly I got burned by something glowing red with heat. Frightened, I was lifted by my parents and warned by a middle-aged man who said laughingly, "It's a cigarette!" Shortly afterward, a local girl about my age, who seemed to be familiar with the place, came over and invited me to play hide-and-seek. Unlike me, who was very introverted then, she was so bold and venturesome as to take me to hide here and there from the adults and even invited me to her home as a guest. In the end, I was brought back by the adults, who reminded me, "She is the community leader's daughter, the princess of the village." I had not the slightest idea of what "community leader" meant. I just thought, "Wow! She's way different from the princess I've seen in cartoons who lives in the castle." Years later, I did find some photos that proved these memories were not dreams at all. They were real experiences from my childhood.

Now because of my job as an MV director, I get to know many musicians and indigenous pop singers, the most well-known among whom include A-mei, Power Station, and Abao. Recently I am also interested in the new generation of indigenous rappers and YouTubers, whose energy and natural sense of rhythm form my perception of indigenous people. What is more, they seem to be able to hold their liquor, which is worth anticipating to a big drinker like me.

After years of working, I have a feeling that modern people are prone to experience a sense of insecurity about life due to the way they live. It seems that everything is easy to get, but none of it truly belongs to you. This project appeals to me not just because I fell in love with camping and fishing recently. It is also because the course it offers enables me to experience the entire process from collection to production, to feel the interaction with nature, and to build a traditional home with my own hands. Though my knowledge about indigenous people's houses is limited, it is both the intellectual and spiritual growth that I am looking forward to achieving through this opportunity.





# Building a House That Feels Like a Real Home Where One Belongs

Akac Orat (Chen Hao-Yi)

Accompanied by three dogs and five cats; also raises chicken and pigs

An expert on wilderness and the Amis rattan weaving culture

Having grown up in the Puyuma Community of the Pinuyumayan and received a series of training for age organizations, Akac Orat returned to his mother's hometown, the Madawdaw Community of the Amis, at the age of 30. He was saddened to see the community had been Christianized, leaving no marks of its traditional culture. This inspired him to step onto the path of learning about the Amis culture from his mother's side. He turned this aspiration into action by spending nearly seven years learning rattan weaving from local elders. Apart from making baskets, rattan is a common building material mainly used for binding the posts and beams of houses. After gaining a thorough understanding of natural materials, he decided to build a traditional Amis family house of his own.

To begin with, Akac Orat spent two and a half years preparing building materials he needed. He also recruited 600 volunteers or so to help him build the house modeled on the traditional style of more than a century ago,

kitchen

## Materials used in the family house

Including 600 bamboo posts, 800 bundles of thatch, 1,500 stalks of silver grass, 12 logs, and 3 kilometers of Yellow Rotang Palm.



which took them three and a half months to finish. The house was built entirely of natural materials by hand, and the only modern tool used was the chainsaw. It was not that Akac Orat refused to adopt any convenient way of doing it, but simply because he had no time to make money for buying necessary tools, for he had thrown himself wholeheartedly into the project.

The purpose of family houses may differ for different indigenous groups. For some communities, houses are designed to be inhabited by a single family, while in the Amis society a typical family house is built to accommodate the whole clan. Embracing the idea that buildings must be built for practical use, Akac Orat made many adjustments to the house to meet his needs by scaling down the layout and placing the kitchen and a *latrine hut*\* outside. Next, he is planning to build a pigsty and a chicken coop to replicate a traditional living environment.

Having replicated the desired living environment and ways of life, Akac Orat undergoes a fundamental change in the rhythm of his daily life, which requires him a great deal of effort to maintain. To ensure a traditional way of living, he has to check the condition of the house every day, chop firewood in the mountains, fire-cure thatch for roof maintenance, and engage in seasonal hunting. He no longer lives by a mechanical, dull daily routine of punching in and out and spending his free time looking at his phone. "This is the kind of life that I choose to live. Money matters but it's not everything. No matter how rich you are, it's pointless if you don't understand the environment you live in and the land you stand on. Such a meaningless life is not what I want," says he.

\*"The Amis people do not consider death a taboo matter but do care much about urine and excrement," explains Akac Orat. In the past, when there was no toilet, people used to go all the way to the beach in the early morning to relieve themselves. They would do so by dipping themselves in the sea so that they could clean their bottoms conveniently. In this specially designed eco-friendly latrine hut, however, there is neither a toilet nor flushing. What you have to do after using it is cover the sewage with wood shavings to remove the odors.



Hao-En —

A Hongkonger of partly  
Taiwanese heritage —

— Have settled down in Taitung  
since 2018, when he served  
as a volunteer in Akac

— Orat's traditional family  
house building project.

↑ Akac Orat thinks that since it's impossible to get rid of termites entirely in the natural environment, the only way we can do is to live at peace with them. So, he places piles of wood outside for termites to feed on to prevent them from invading his house.



# The First Lesson for Beginners

It is human nature for people to work with convenient tools. But while in the wilderness, it would be beneficial in helping you stay calm in face of danger if you are equipped with some useful survival skills. The first lesson Akac Orat gave Kuo was how to make chopsticks with a pocket knife. Then he brought her to Mount Madawdaw, the highest peak of the Coastal Range, to learn about the forests and gather the Yellow Rotang Palm. The aim was to familiarize Kuo with the traditional indigenous culture through hands-on experience.



## Making Eating Utensils with Bamboo

Traditionally the Amis people do not use modern tools such as saws to fell bamboo although they are handy for the purpose. The reason is that the sawdust would jam the pores of bamboo plants, which results in the death of the forests. Akac Orat also reminds us to make sure there were no snakes hidden under the leaves before moving the felled bamboo because you do not want it, if any, to fall onto your head.





The rattan palm is part and parcel of the Amis people's lives. It is used for a wide range of purposes such as building houses, making baskets, and cooking as an ingredient. The dishes made with *dongec* (the Yellow Rotang Palm's stem), in particular, are a must-have for traditional rituals and festive events. But it's far from easy to gather the plant in the wild. Let's take a trip to the mountains and learn about some other plants along the way.



Tropic Ageratum, also known as floss flower, is a medicinal plant commonly used for first aid in the wilderness. When getting injured, rub the leaves and apply them to the wound to reduce inflammation, stop bleeding, and prevent bacterial infection. Finally, wrap the wound with leaves of such plants as Formosan Palm or Railway Beggarticks.



The white pith of the rice-paper plant's stem can be said to be natural Styrofoam, which is exceptionally light in weight. It is pliable when soaked with water but hardens when dried, and therefore serves as a perfect filler for the bamboo beams and posts of houses to prevent rainwater and honey from penetrating. The pith can also be used to patch the holes of bamboo rafts to increase buoyancy.

## Gathering dongec

When gathering Yellow Rotang Palm for their *dongec* as an ingredient in cooking, you have to cut the stems off at the sixth leaf from the end so that the plants may keep growing. But there is no gain without pain. The cut-off rattan stems are hard to remove since they tend to be tangled with trees and weeds. You must have a "tug of war" with these stubborn wild plants by removing the thickly entangled leaves and branches before bringing them home. After pulling them down, you have to peel off the skin of the rattan vines covered with sharp thorns to prevent getting hurt.



Some commonly seen members of the grass family like *Miscanthus*, Chinese Pennisetum, Silver Grass, or Wild Sugarcane, are suitable for making chopsticks or barbecue grills. When there is limited access to edible wild plants in the wilderness, the Amis people tend to cook with the stems of gramineous plants, whose bitter taste is believed to be able to help reduce body heat; while cooked in combination with protein, they can add a sweet and refreshing flavor to the dish. Drinking water from a river is risky because it might introduce parasites into the body. In cases like this, one can eat Ginger Lilies to prevent infection and expel toxins. But the Amis people usually do not drink river water when they need to replenish the body's fluids. Instead, they do so by eating gramineous plants.



Akac Orat is teaching Kuo to peel *dongec* rattan with a sickle.

I just need ten minutes to get it done. How long will it take you, anyway?



# A Real House That

## What do you expect the Amis family house to look like before coming here?



Originally, I thought the typical type of indigenous dwelling houses were those made of stone slabs. The stone slab houses have left a deep impression on me because in the past, wherever I went for sight-seeing or school outings, they were the only kind of dwelling to be showcased. We were taught that it's customary for indigenous people to bury their deceased family members beneath the stone floor in their houses. So, I had no idea and was eager to know what a "family house" was when you talked about it in the beginning. I thought it was the name of an institution or organization.

## What do you think when seeing the Amis family house for the first time?



It's very special because I have never seen a genuine one like that in real life. As I imagine based on what I've seen on the screen, the house might have a thatch roof. But at first glance, I thought the hut looked much like a film set. I even shared it on my Instagram story, which got many of my friends asking what kind of big project I'd been shooting because they all thought it to be scenery. I think this is partly because the interior of the house is somewhat too well-planned and organized with every corner and space designed for a clear purpose. To me, this seems to be lacking a "sense of real life." But maybe this is because I seldom have an opportunity to come in contact with an indigenous building like this, which is built entirely with bamboo. Even the furniture and utensils are made of natural materials that are rarely seen.

## "Lacking a sense of real life," is it because you feel like it's being introduced as a kind of cultural venue?



Yeah, kind of. I think few people would be willing to give up technology and live in a simple house like that. It's just like almost no one can do without smartphones, right? By the way, is there any outlet inside? It's really hard for me to imagine someone should choose to live a life with neither electricity nor the convenience of modern tools. It also makes no sense to me that someone would deliberately do so in today's society with advanced technology and science. But after the home tour and introduction given by Akac Orat himself, I realize that he has made the decision with careful consideration, which I think is very good and can agree with. I agree that indigenous culture needs preserving, but if you do it too deliberately or meticulously, take replicating the house, for example, the result would appear contrived. That's why so many people thought I was shooting a film because such a primitive way of life, which is true to the real thing, is nowhere to be found except on a film set.

## What's the difference between this time and your previous experiences visiting indigenous communities as tourists?



In the past spring vacation, I've been to an indigenous village with my family for sightseeing. I found the entire community was deliberately set to create a sense of indigenouness, with traditional stone-paved streets mixed amid modern buildings, which seemed rather odd to me. And there were shops and vendors selling slate barbecue or souvenirs everywhere, making me feel that local residents intended to highlight their indigenouness as a selling point, which made me ill at ease.

But today's experience is different. It's very realistic. Akac Orat's demonstration gives me an understanding of what it's like to live an indigenous life. This is the way he lives and he's doing it for real. But he does not make it a point of using only primitive tools. After all, such a tough way of life is not what we want. And it's because of this that human civilization has evolved to its current level; there is no reason for us to seek to return to a primitive



# Resembles a Film Set

life, which is only possible in reality shows. When it comes to real life, you don't have to force yourself to stick to the traditional way. It's not wrong to use modern tools, anyway.

## Is this your first time cutting bamboo? How do you feel about that?



Yeah, my first time, I think. But it has never occurred to me that I should be so clumsy with a machete. I always thought it was a piece of cake, and I was dumbfounded! You cannot imagine how panicked I was when seeing myself unable to aim the machete at the same place. "Am I really that clumsy?" I thought to myself, which was really abnormal. So, I got very frustrated this morning because I'd always thought I was athletic and a quick learner. Plus, I love watching online videos on wilderness survival, which leads me into thinking that bamboo cutting is easy. But I was totally wrong. It was damn hard! I couldn't believe it. I've been put up with my frustration since this morning and thought the level of this task might have been too challenging for me. I rarely had a moment of self-doubt like this throughout my life. I thought I was like Morikawa Aoi, the genius Japanese actress, but it proves that the reality is far from my imagination.

## Since you have much experience in camping, what do you think when seeing Akac Orat use a wood fire to grill food?



I've already told my friends that we need no flame guns anymore for future camping. I'd like to challenge myself to make a fire simply with a lighter. In fact, I'm longing for such a natural way of fire-making without the help of modern tools. When there is no firewood available, we can make do with tree branches. I also want to buy myself a pocket knife. I fell in love with it the moment I got to use it today. Fire, or flames, are particularly fascinating to me because I'm a visually-oriented person who likes to see things in motion anytime, anywhere. Someone told me that in ancient times, fire was like primitive people's TV. When you have nothing to do in the wild, you can watch the burning fire in the darkness of night and appreciate the ever-changing play of flames.

## Do you remember how many wild plants you've encountered this afternoon?



To be honest, I'm more of an animal person and have a poor memory of the names of plants, which tend to go in one ear and out in the other. But I do like such a self-sufficient way of life as gathering food or raw materials from the wild. Now I only remember the medicinal plant for wounds because its flower is of the same color as the purple herbs for replenishing the hit points in RPGs.

## How do you feel after playing tug of war with the Yellow Rotang Palm today?



It was intense! I've never been as exhausted as I was today in any of my previous experiences of outdoor sports. I could not help but wonder if anyone else could bear the toil like me. Although it was frustrating, still I tried desperately to understand how it works by feeling through the body. This is indeed a lesson that must be learned through firsthand experience instead of simply by watching as a bystander. These two ways of learning are completely different. The human body is a tricky but intriguing thing. Just as Akac Orat says, "Your brain is smart, but the body is clumsy." What you think is far different from how your body feels. There are many things that require you to familiarize the body with the details before getting it to work in sync with your brain, and it's easier imagined than done. You can never learn the ropes without gaining enough practical experience through hands-on practice.











# Get Your Equipment Ready.

## Time for Treasure Hunt in Intertidal Zone!



To feed oneself, one has to make utensils first; to harvest on the foreshore, one has to weave a basket first! To prepare for the harvesting event in the afternoon, Akac Orat helped Kuo Pei-Hsuan weave a basket with whip vines in a family house, so that they could then collect the harvested mollusc and shellfish. It is just that weaving a basket requires manual dexterity, which might pose a challenge to Kuo, who tends to be rather energetic than calm and quiet.



This is the moment when mastering the skill of using both hands and feet matters. If only hands are used to fix the position of the strips, the strips cannot be secured in place.

### Time to Test Dexterity and Patience

**1** Arrange 6 rattan strips in a criss-cross pattern to form the basket base. Weave another thinner rattan strip over and under the 6 rattan strips.

**2** Add another rattan strip to the basket base in order to move on to the second row by weaving the thinner strip firstly under and then over the base strip, repetitively.

**3** When weaving to the end of the first thinner strip, cross another new thinner strip over it to continue weaving. The addition of the new thinner strips is determined by the size of the basket. When the base is almost done, pull the strips upright towards the centre to create a bowl shape and proceed with the weave.







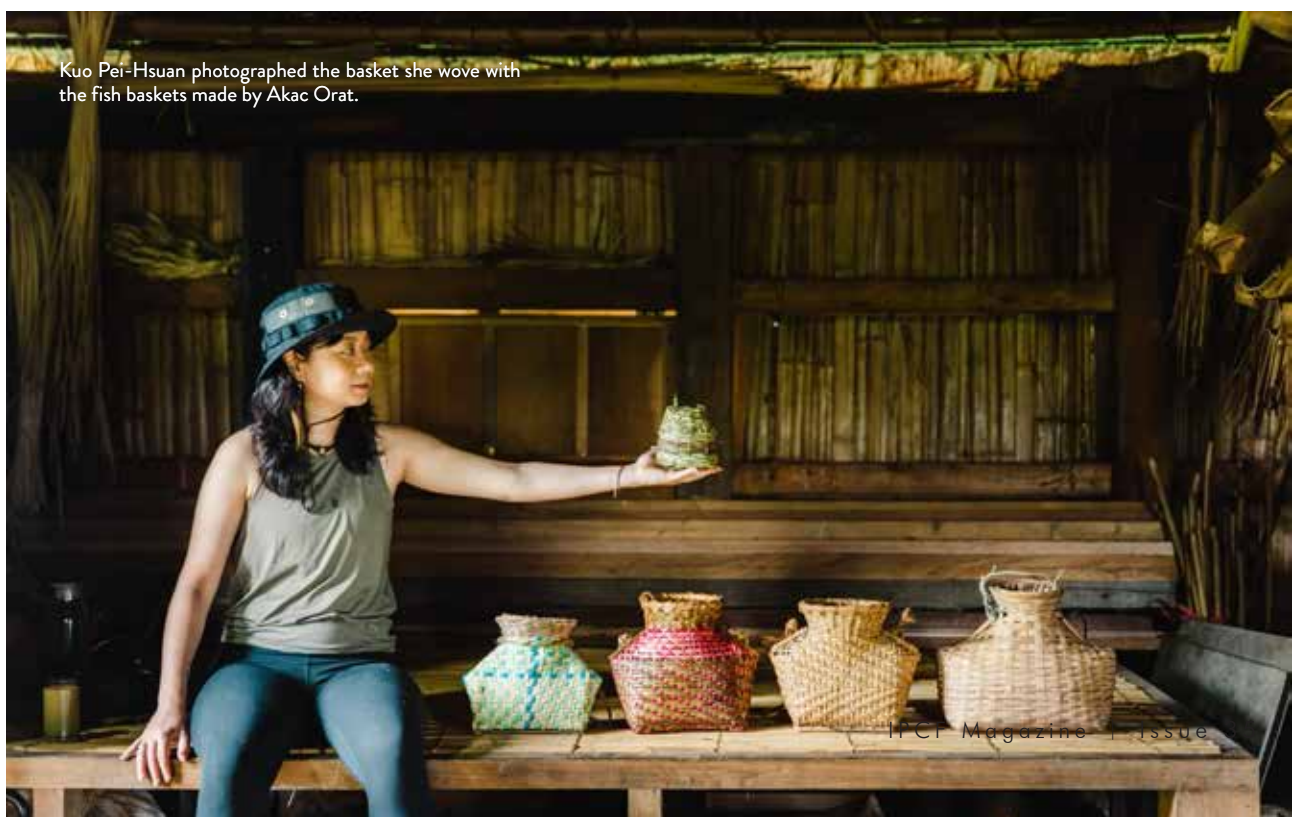
How we learned from the elders in the past is different from today's step-by-step approach. The elders would say, "Learn by watching." They would demonstrate, and sometimes we would spend the whole day watching. In our culture, we tend not to ask much, otherwise the elders would scold, "How come you do not watch at all? All you do is open your mouth and speak. Why do you not learn by doing?" Therefore, it is important to watch and observe in our culture. Now we spend a lot of time using smartphones, but when it is time to get work done with our hands, we have hand-eye coordination problems; therefore, our physical senses require development and training.

4 To finish the basket, cross one of the seven base strips over the other on its right and tuck it into the horizontal strips over and under. Finally, make sure its end is placed on the inside of the basket. Repeat the same steps for the rest of the base strips.

There is over a dozen weaving methods in the Amis culture. The one introduced here is quite common, and not unique to the Amis.



Kuo Pei-Hsuan photographed the basket she wove with the fish baskets made by Akac Orat.





## Animals, Where are You? Do Not Cover Yourself Up

In the Amis culture, there was a clear division of labour; men wove tools with bamboo and went hunting; women wove cloth and worked on the farm. Both, however, took on chores in the water. Why is going to the sea to play such an indispensable role to Amis people? The reason lies in a tradition called “Pakelang.” Now many people interpret it as a victory celebration banquet, but in effect, this tradition is organised to indicate an end to a crucial event and the beginning of another. When conducting Pakelang, Amis people need to dive in the sea as “water” implies “cleansing,” symbolising the removal of impurities and fatigue. As a result, in Pakelang, fish and shrimp are served to show that people have dived in the sea.

Akac Orat also pointed out the importance to observe the changes in waves when people harvest creatures on the beach. To ensure one’s safety in the natural environment, one has to be on high alert at all times and pay attention to wind and waves.



Urchin targeted!



Got you! Without spines, you are nothing to fear for!



I am going to eat up the best part of you.



Bring the rest of the trophies home!







The creatures Kuo Pej-Hsuan harvested.



Even though the intertidal zones are rich in a variety of creatures, not all of them are edible. The characteristic cone, a species of sea snails, is one example. Since they are venomous, only part of their feet can be eaten. When you bring them home, do not put them in fresh water, otherwise they will stink. You can simply freeze them. Although most people eat shrimp and crabs, many crabs actually contain toxin. Along the east coast, probably only 5 species of crabs are edible.



A sea cucumber shoots white silky threads.



Do you need stones to prepare hot pot?

Picking Up Stones



## Picking Up Stones for Hot Pot?

Akac Orat revealed that lunch for the next day was Amis-style stone hot pot, but prior to making it, picking up stones would be the first priority. Plus, it could only be Maifan stones. That is an interesting fact that has never been heard of before...



# Many of My Firsts

## How does it feel to weave a basket in a morning?



It was exhausting! I had to be completely focused, and the teacher helped me with many parts. In the beginning, I felt as frustrated as I did the day before, especially when I suddenly realised that I did not follow the right step, and I had to undo the weave and start all over again. At that moment, I felt, "Phew, luckily, I have just started, otherwise I would definitely break down!" The most challenging part was the first and second rows, which required feet to help keep the rattan cane in place, but it was still difficult to control; so I used clippers and then realised that it took the cane sometime to become fixed and take shape. After that, it was all about repetitive work, similar to knitting, and a bit hypnotising.

If I focused on or repeated something too often, this thing will stick in my mind with a lingering effect. For example, after I made a music video, and as soon as it was released, I would watch it over and over again until I did not want to watch it anymore, which means I am done with it. It is exactly what happened yesterday. I kept on thinking about by how exactly I should sharpen the rattan, and was perplexed by it. Today, weaving the basket was quite repetitive as well. One good thing is that other memories of this afternoon occupied my mind. I was super excited when I saw the sea!

## You had the Yellow Rotang Palm and other wild vegetables collected today for lunch. Have any of them left you with a strong impression?



What has really impressed me is the bamboo rice, which is tremendously sticky. The teacher said that in the past this sort of rice was used as glue. Seriously, I could not even wash it off me. What is more, I do not usually have bitter gourd soup, but the Yellow Rotang Palm I had today tasted quite similar to bitter gourd, and it was not too bitter. I guess it was probably because I had a hard time stripping rattan, and eating such veggies made it less bitter and acceptable.

I also tried fireweed today. Neither did I eat it before; nor did I know that it is edible. The teacher told us that the Japanese military aircrafts used to spray the seeds of fireweed, but I was quite sceptical. Do Japanese grow a lot of these vegetables? I have never seen anything like this in Japanese cuisine. When I ate it, I got carried away picturing summoning Japanese Kappa. What does fireweed have anything to do with Kappa? Can you summon a Kappa simply with fireweed? Later on, I realised that the teacher actually meant that the seeds of fireweed were sprayed during the Showa Period, which sounds similar to summoning Kappa in Chinese...





## Why are you so interested in harvesting in the intertidal zone?



I really love oceans and often go fishing and swimming in the blue water. Today I saw a huge variety of creatures. For example, stones are topped with amazingly beautiful coral reefs, and the shells of the hermit crabs have been the prettiest and most colourful I have ever seen, since I was a child. I was fond of catching them when I was younger. Upon a closer look at the shells, I found some unknown creatures in them. That was super cool. The moving long-spine sea urchins were amazing as well. Its legs (tubes) extended so long and moved around like an alien. The first giant intertidal reef that we saw was, out of my surprise, full of sea urchins. Each rock pool in that whole area was extremely colourful. Actually, I wanted to stay there staring at them, but the teacher kept on moving along. I was wondering maybe something was underneath. Looking closer, I found nothing, so I gave up.

To me, intertidal zones are very different from oceans. In the oceans, it is easier to find coral reefs and what is inside them from a broader view. In the foreshore, each pool has its own work. I felt like spending a long time trying to find out the creatures in each one of them. The funny thing is that my observation became less accurate in the intertidal zones since I was attracted to each moving living thing.

## Do you find anything difficult when harvesting in the intertidal zone?



Today at first, I tried to catch fish like cats with my bare hands, but failed completely. I caught nothing at all. The teacher shared his story of being scratched by rocky reefs before, and this reminded me of my experience of swimming through a hole in the ocean. Thanks to the flotation, my whole back was scratched against the reef. That is why I could totally relate to the teacher. Along the way, it has occurred to me that to experience is to learn. Only when I go and experience, will I understand what to be careful with and fearful for. In fact, the teacher reminded me many times on the shore that urchins shot their spines. The word “shoot” that he used scared me. Does that mean when I come too close to a sea urchin, its spines will whoosh towards me?

## On the way back, the teacher mentioned the environmental protection issue. Have you been inspired?



I like one of his points, which is to return a bit of what you get from here. If you catch some fish from here, take away some litter with you. This is a good idea, and something that we all can do as individuals. I will pick up some garbage when I go fishing next time, but if there is too much, I might give up as well...

## Were you confused about picking up Maifan stones in order to use them in hot pot?



I have seen people using those stones for grilling, but I did not know that it was Maifan stones. I cannot figure out how they are going to be used for hot pot tomorrow. Do we throw them into the pot and cook food with them? If we filter them and cook food with them, I guess they will give a special flavour. At least, it seems reasonable to me.



The hot pot Kuo Pei-Hsuan imagined.











# Pick Your Own Veggies

## Checking Out Roadside Edible Wild Vegetables

Many wild vegetables that grow along rural roads are delicacies on the Amis table, prompting some to joke that the Amis people “love to eat grass”. There is another saying, “the Amis enjoys bitter tastes” because most wild vegetables taste rather bitter. The most common way to prepare wild vegetables is to put them in soups, add protein or some wild spices for seasoning and you have a nutritious meal. Follow Akac Orat as he walks around the family home in search of wild vegetables and ingredients for his hot pot!



### Fireweed

Commonly known as Shōwa grass in Taiwan because its seeds were scattered from Japanese planes during the Shōwa era.



### Alianthus Prickly Ash

If you can't find ginger for your fish dish, use Alianthus Prickly Ash instead. The leaves are sun-dried and then ground into a powder. Add salt into the powder and you have the indigenous version of salt and pepper. Remember to break the top end of the branches when harvesting Alianthus Prickly Ash or the plant will grow tall and lose its flavor.



### Common Paper Mulberry

Also known as “deer tree” as it was once used as deer feed. There are female and male paper mulberry trees and the male trees grow small flowers. The Amis usually eat the leaves of the male trees.



### Cinnamon

Don't consume too much of this plant as it is slightly toxic. One to two leaves should suffice when cooking. Cinnamon leaves release oil when rubbed. Apply the oil to your forehead to make yourself more alert and awake.



## Guava

Its leaves can get rid of mucous membranes. Eat one or two leaves when you have gastroxenia or diarrhea problems.

This is what a small guava plant looks like? It tastes awful!

Observing details is key when gathering wild vegetables. Things to look for include the colors of stems and veins, the shape and length of the leaves, or rub the plants gently to smell their scent.



It smells like betel nuts.



## Taiwan Wampee

A plant that tastes similar to star anise and is often used to make wine. Rub the leaves for a unique scent!



The act of picking wild vegetables is like birds eating plants in the wild. Fruits fall off the plants and new ones grow again, maintaining the sustainability of the environment. We used to be able to find more than a dozen different varieties of wild vegetables, but now only fireweed and black nightshade are more common. Exotic birds that migrated here have disrupted the local food chain, unfortunately.

## Witch's Butter

This type of gelatinous fungus is typically known as "lovers' tears". It appears in clean areas when it rains. Highly nutritious, it is regarded as "the treasure in the rain". Remember to clean it thoroughly though!







## Black Nightshade

This plant only grows in wintertime. It's great for porridges because it can be boiled for a long time. However, the fruit is slightly toxic and may cause diarrhea if you consume too much.

## Lemmon's Marigold

A type of aromatic plant that can be made into tea and wine. The Amis people use about twelve kinds of plants to make wine. The fruit of Yellow Rotang Palm can also be used to make cocktails.



Can you still recognize these greens after sorting them back home?



## Taiwan Fig-tree

Its roots can be used in chicken soup.



## Slender Amaranth

Its leaves can be used in soups.



## Sama

Also known as Wild Lettuce, this plant has a very bitter taste. It can be used in dishes, soups, or brewed into tea. Pick the tender leaves only, the older ones are not good for eating.





## The Stone Hot Pot Really Has Stones In It!

Unlike the enameled cast iron pots used in hot pot restaurants, traditional Amis stone hot pots require a Maifan stone that is burnt to a high temperature and then placed into a betel nut leaf sheath container filled with food. The high heat will boil the soup and cook the food. This cooking method was created in the past when the Amis people used whatever resource they could find by the river to conduct Pakelang. There is a lot of andesite in the eastern part of Taiwan and our forefathers found that the stones came in handy when cooking, and thus this method was passed down.

Porphyritic andesite, commonly known as Maifan stone, has water filtering features and does not crack easily under high heat.



Traditionally, the Amis people will set up a cooking stove with three large rocks. This is called a Parod ("stove").



Early indigenous peoples used fallen betel nut leaf sheaths as containers. The leaf sheaths are flexible and become soft and malleable after being soaked in water. The dried leaf sheath is hard, durable, and easy to keep.

The stone gradually loses its high heat in the soup, so we have to continuously reheat the cooled stones in the Parod. The process has to be repeated a couple of times until the food is thoroughly cooked and can be eaten. "The stone hot pot is a piece of Amis life wisdom. In the past, a meal mostly consisted of rice and soup, and preparation methods were simple. This allows us to taste the original flavors of the food and adding spicy wild vegetables can bring out the flavors even more," explained Akac Orat.

When our ancestors prepared stone hot pots by the river, a pot of raw food and ice-cold river water usually needed at least twenty stones to ensure the food was thoroughly cooked.



Indigenous peoples are not natural historians and knowing more doesn't necessarily mean you are better. There are a lot of things in this world that you need to learn through your body and experience. Take rattan cutting for example, the point isn't about learning about the knife, it's about learning how to use your hands and body. Once your body learns the rhythm and feel of the task, it becomes easier. It's not that we refuse to use tools that make the job easier, we wish to let everyone learn more about the spirit and culture of the land through our traditional ways.



# I Hope I Can Pass On These Knowledge Some Day

## How did the wild vegetables picking go?



At first, I thought we had to go into the mountains like the first day to get them, but turns out a lot of them just grow by the road. So I think it means no one intentionally grows wild vegetables, they just pop up wherever and you have to know how to identify them or else you'd be in trouble. I think right now I can only identify Sama. But its leaves grow in very irregular shapes and I can only recognize one of its forms. If it grows into another shape, I don't recognize it anymore. This is also something that surprised me - the same plant could have different shapes and forms. I never knew that! That makes it even more difficult to tell the plants apart. If I had to collect them in the wild on my own, I'd probably poison myself.

## Did you enjoy your first taste of stone hot pot?



The stone hot pot was amazing, it was great! The umami flavor is completely different. Originally I thought the stone would be cooked with the soup, so imagine my shock when they threw a steaming hot stone into the water! I didn't know you could cook like that and the soup really tasted wonderful. Actually, I snuck a Maifan stone into my pocket. I'll use it as a reference to look for more stones, haha!

## What cultural similarities and differences did you observe in the past three days?



I think the concept of time is very different. They acknowledge certain things take time to work out; unlike us, we compress time and try to complete a lot within a very short period of time. They don't really care about efficiency. I don't mean it in a bad way, they just let things occur naturally. This is something that has never crossed my mind. And the mentor also mentioned that if there are termites, just put out wood for them to eat. I think that is a good idea, using natural ways to keep the pests out of your way. But what about the cockroaches in my kitchen? What can I do? Put food on the balcony? This would look like I'm feeding the cockroaches...I'm not sure how I'm going to deal with that at the moment, but his words do make sense.

## Any thoughts after these three days?



Even after spending three whole days in this environment, I still feel like a tourist. The life wisdom of the indigenous peoples is endless, you need to immerse yourself in the environment for a very long time to fully understand it. However, my question is if everyone can participate in this activity, it could become very touristy; yet if a non-indigenous person wants to learn all of this, where can they start? I've heard that even some indigenous members find it challenging to return to their communities to learn all of this, so I'm wondering are there too many restrictions? But I know the restrictions are there for a reason, because if the access is too easy then the whole activity would become a performance.



Originally, I thought this project was simply designed for ordinary people to observe and experience the traditional ways of indigenous life. With this in mind, I did not take it seriously but thought I was coming for an outing. Never did I expect that it would turn out to be a survival camp in the following three days.

At first sight of the house, I thought it was nothing more than a traditional hut built with bamboo and thatch. But I was surprised to find that despite its primitive appearance, the interior was well planned and equipped as if it were a reconstructed model displayed in the National Museum of History. What distinguished it from the latter was its strong atmosphere of life. After lunch, I still felt myself to be a tourist until Akac Orat reminded me: "Feeding yourself is important. Hurry up and eat your fill, we're getting to work." I came to realize later that there were no other challenges as hard as those daily tasks like hunting, food gathering and collecting firewood for cooking when it comes to living a primitive indigenous life. One could hardly survive if they came with a playful mentality as if attending an afternoon tea party.

Walking along the bumpy trail to the mountains that afternoon, I felt relieved and secretly delighted about the lesson on wild plants. Little did I expect that the road had become so slippery with the rain that my new hiking shoes could not protect me from falling. Although I had always considered myself athletic, I inevitably began to walk cautiously after a few slips. As I watched the earnest Akac Orat introducing the wild plants and explaining their uses, I felt a deep despair down to the core, for I could even hardly remember the names of people around me, let alone the plants. To make matters worse, I had to learn to cut the dongec rattan with a sickle without damaging the stem. For a clumsy person like me, who had failed to hold a knife correctly, this challenging task nearly drove me to a breakdown. Akac Orat once said, "Observing is the best way of impulsive and uncompromising nature as a fire sign stood out in the face of such a huge challenge. Reluctant to throw in the towel, I kept waving the sickle, but only to return with frustration and a sore body in the end. Not until then did I understand that what is meant by experience is something that must be tried for yourself by using your body to acquire the feeling along the process. Just as Akac Orat noted, "Quite a few people are brilliant in mind but clumsy in body," I've personally experienced what it means to be "easier imagined than done."

While living in the city, I can hold up to three meetings a day plus work part-time, which requires me to manage my time precisely. But when exposed to such a primitive way of life, I find my sense of time completely different. The timespan is elongated. It takes three to five years to build a family house, and several years for plants to grow, but no one knows precisely how long it takes to develop a bodily feeling to familiarize yourself with the use of tools. Only then do I realize that it takes numerous repetitions to become skilled. There are neither shortcuts nor petty tricks for one to succeed. What we have are time and body. Our forebears spent their whole lives seeking to improve their ways of life. Nowadays, however, as we enjoy the ease of eating, drinking, defecating, urinating, and sleeping brought by modern conveniences, we dare not boast that our life is more fulfilled than those of our ancestors. Knowledge is not equal to wisdom because "knowing about something" is entirely different from "learning through experience." How much of our time is spent in developing our bodily feelings and sharpening the acuity of the senses, anyway?

Akac Orat once told me about his experience of being struck by a wave crashing into a reef, resulting in injuries over the entire body. To me, this forms a sharp contrast with the endeavors of our forebears, who strived for generations to pursue a more advanced way of life to avoid getting injured. But they could never have expected that nowadays, we have entered a time of trauma. I can't judge which is the right path to choose but hope that I'll be able to explore more potential ways of living in the future with the firsthand experience gained through this project.











Taking Up the Baton >>



