

1. The Story of the Abandoned Child

Many years ago in a Tao village, a woman became pregnant, but she wasn't married. She was very worried about what the people in her village would think, and so she asked her mother to abandon the baby in the forest after it was born. Her mother did what she asked and left the little baby boy in the forest to die.

Fortunately for the baby, an old man was fishing nearby and heard the baby crying. He hurried to find the baby and saved him. For many years the old fisherman and his wife had wanted to have a baby but couldn't, so they decided to raise this baby as their own.

When the boy became older and played with other children from the village, they teased him and said that he was not the real child of his parents. They said he was abandoned in the forest. The boy argued with the other children. He knew that his parents loved him very much. As he got older, he became more responsible and helpful to his parents. He helped his mother with the chores and his father with the fishing. He grew into a smart and handsome young man.

One day, he went to the farm to work in the field and met a woman. She exclaimed that she was his mother. He didn't believe her but the woman continued to say that she was his mother.

Later, the young man asked his mother about what the woman had said. His mother decided that he was old enough now to learn the truth and she told him everything. When he knew the truth, the young man decided to prepare a big meal for his friends and family. This was to show respect and appreciation for his parents that had raised him. He gave his parents the largest serving of the best foods. He also invited his birth mother and gave her a small serving of food as well. This showed that he did not hate his birth mother, even though she had abandoned him.

2. The Rainbow Bridge

To the Atayal, the rainbow is a bridge that links the human world and the spiritual world.

The rainbow bridge was originally a man named Buta. Buta was a great man and a skillful hunter. He was known for always following the teachings of *gaga*, the code of moral values and customs of the Atayal. His fellow villagers respected him for it and often asked him for his advice. On his death bed, Buta told the villagers that his spirit would become a rainbow and that he would watch over them from the sky. He also told them that as a rainbow, he would serve as their only bridge to the spirit world. Buta told his people to obey the teachings about *gaga* and promised that if they did, he would allow them to pass the rainbow bridge and enter the spirit world.

In those days, Atayal men were expected to be brave hunters. They needed to be able to kill boars, deer, bears and even to hunt the heads of their enemies. Women were expected to be good at weaving and farming. When a brave man died, the Atayal believed that all the spirits of the people and the animals that he had killed would come and accompany him on his journey over the rainbow bridge to the spirit world. The man's ancestors also came and praised him for all that he had achieved during his lifetime.

Lazy cowards, on the other hand, could not pass the rainbow bridge. The passage would be too difficult and dangerous for them. Frightening animals, such as hungry snakes and other beasts, would be waiting for them under the bridge. When such people tried to cross the bridge, the bridge would shake violently and throw them towards the hungry animals below. Those who tried to find a way around the rainbow bridge to go into the spirit world only ended up wandering lost in the wild forever.

They Atayal believe that Buta's famous shout became the thunder that often appears with the rainbow. Thunder serves as a reminder to all the Atayal people to follow the teachings of *gaga* and lead good and virtuous lives.

3. Pali's Red Eyes

According to the legend of the Paiwan, Pali had a pair of red eyes. He killed every living thing the very moment he saw them. Fearing for their lives, people from his village always kept their distance from him. Therefore, Pali felt very lonely.

One day, a boy named Balan approached him, asking Pali if they could play together. Pali happily agreed. Balan then visited Pali after sunset every day. Since they always played in the dark, Pali could not see Balan so there was no danger of killing him. Pali expressed how much he longed to see his friend and the rest of the world.

Wanting to help his friend, Balan took a piece of thin film from bamboo and placed it over Pali's eyes. This way, Pali could see the world without doing any harm. When Balan took Pali home, all the villagers ran away in the very beginning; but eventually, they accepted Pali when learning that he could no longer hurt them if his eyes were covered with a strip of bamboo. Pali also helped the villagers defeat their enemies by taking the film off his eyes and looking at them.

One day, Pali and the kids from the village went to a valley. It was a hot day so all of the kids jumped into the river. Waiting on the river bank, Pali dozed off. A wasp came over and carried away the bamboo strip that was covering his eyes. When he opened his eyes, all the children he saw were killed right away. Only several kids who had been in the water were safe. They ran back to the village in fear. The angry adults came to question Pali, and they decided to exile him to the interior mountains.

Living by himself in the mountains, Pali became lonelier. The only thing that cheered him up was Balan, who would bring him food. One day, some enemies from a nearby village lured Pali out and chopped off his head. When Balan found out that Pali had been killed, he quietly buried Pali's body.

One day, Balan saw a big betel nut tree standing right in the place he had buried Pali. The fruit on the tree was large and red. Balan knew that Pali had transformed into that tree, and that his red eyes had become the red fruit, which would watch over and safeguard his tribe.

4. Baleng the Snake Bride

A long time ago there was a tribal chief who had a beautiful daughter named Baleng. Her tenderness and incredible beauty earned her a good reputation among the villagers. Therefore, Baleng received more admirers than any of the other young women in the tribe. However, she was not attracted to any of her suitors.

One year during the millet harvest festival, a light breeze came and was accompanied by the sound of a bamboo flute. Baleng was deeply enchanted by the melodious music. The tune of the bamboo flute reminded her of a giant hawk, first soaring to great heights and then plunging to the earth until abruptly, the music stopped. Then a cold wind started blowing and became more and more violent. Then, a giant and spectacular snake appeared and slithered toward Baleng, but in her eyes she saw a handsome young man standing in front of her. She immediately fell in love with the man.

News of this incident spread around the village the next day, but no one knew that the snake was the king of the Dalupalhing Tribe. A few days later, another big storm approached. In the storm, the villagers saw all the members of the Dalupalhing Tribe escorting their king to Baleng's house. They all looked like snakes. The snake king revealed his intention to marry Baleng. Baleng happily agreed. On the wedding day, a huge crowd of people joined the wedding procession and marched toward Dalupalhing Lake. After the wedding Baleng left her village and went to live with the Dalupalhing Tribe.

Years passed and Baleng missed her people very much. So, she sent her children to visit the villagers. One day, a woman who didn't know Baleng's story saw some snakes sleeping in her baby's cradle. She was so scared that she tipped the cradle over and all of the snakes fell to the ground. Being distressed, Baleng spoke to all the villagers in their dreams, "I will no longer send my children to visit you because you've forgotten me." She also added, "When you see an egret flying above the village, remember that it represents my everlasting memory of you." Afterwards, when the people saw an egret flying in the sky, they were reminded that Baleng would always love and care about them.

5. The Rainbow Kilt

Long ago, two very smart and skillful young men, Kulas and Kacaw, were both popular and good at hunting, dancing and singing. They had different personality types. Kulas was outgoing, firm and unyielding but good at helping others. Kacaw was reticent and withdrawn and a man of honor and propriety. They were the best future leaders of the tribe.

They both fell in love with a girl named Samala, but according to tribal tradition one woman could not marry two men. Kulas came up with the idea that he and Kacaw would fight and the winner would marry Samala. Kacaw agreed, and they asked the tribal chief to preside over the competition and determine the champion.

Knowing that these two fine men were going to compete, the whole tribe gathered to watch them. In running and archery they were on a par. In order to determine the winner, the leader chose to conduct a pole vaulting competition from one precipice to another across a river. The one who would successfully pole vault to the other precipice would be the winner. This was a daunting challenge that could kill them. Kulas walked to the drop-off to see how deep the ravine was and the distance one needed to pole vault over. He shuddered at the thought of trying to meet the challenge and told the leader he had a stomachache and needed to go to the bushes to relieve himself, suggesting Kacaw to be the first to pole vault. The leader agreed. Kulas then thought that after Kacaw would pole vault from the precipice and die he could marry Samala.

Kacaw was willing to go first. He earnestly prayed to Great Spirit to give him bravery. Great Spirit heard his prayer. When Kacaw nearly fell into the river, a colorful flash of light flushed out of the river and raised Kacaw over to the other precipice. When Kulas was heading back, he heard the crowd excitedly clapping their hands and cheering. Kulas knew that Kacaw was the winner and he felt terrible, thinking of how it was all over for him. The leader then announced Kacaw as the winner who could marry Samala.

After that, Kacaw told Samala that it was actually Great Spirit that helped him to successfully take on the challenge. He then asked Samala to weave a rainbow kilt to thank Great Spirit for helping him to win the competition.

6. Ten Suns

Once upon a time, there were ten suns in the sky. The Amis people could hardly bear the heat emanating from the suns. All the rivers ran dry. There was no water to drink, and no crops would grow. People barely survived. They thought that something needed to be done. The men volunteered to shoot down the suns and they prepared their gear for this undertaking.

A long time had elapsed, but the ten suns were still ablaze. People in the village did not know where the men were. They completely disappeared. The suns were blazing; neither men nor women could do any work in the fields. No one knew what to do next. A woman named Laya suggested that women catch the suns by themselves.

After Laya and the other women had discussed the issue, they decided to weave a net that was best in retaining heat without burning. They made the net as tall as the sky and as widespread as the earth, set to catch the suns. They climbed up to the very top of the trees and spread the net over the earth, waiting for the suns to go down. As the suns were setting, the women caught them, but they only caught seven suns. The remaining ones were frightened of being wiped out; hence, they asked Amis women to spare them. Amis women thought that the suns were actually helpful.

After a discussion, Amis women sent Laya to negotiate a solution with the suns. Laya requested the suns not to appear together simultaneously so that people would not be scorched. She said: "One of you needs to disintegrate into the sky. One of the remaining suns would illuminate the sky during the day and the other at nighttime." The three suns were willing to comply. One sun then blew itself up and split into what came to be stars in the sky. The second sun became the moon and only appeared at night. The last sun did not change and kept appearing during the day.

Afterward, the crops were growing, the rivers were flowing, and Amis people had a good life. Amis male elders thought that the women were very competent so they decided they would listen to women on every issue. It was then that the Amis social system became matrilineal.