

## [New rice feast of the H're people in Po E Commune, Kon Plong District, Kon Tum Province, Vietnam]

**Video:** <https://youtu.be/tL0huQaWn60>

Subtitles and Transcript

00:00~

H're is one of the Vietnam's 54 indigenous ethnic groups of early settlements in the Central Highlands region of Vietnam, a part of the Truong Son Mountain Range.

As of the census in 2009, there are about 127,420 H're people accounting for 0.15% of the national population concentrated in residence along the bordering districts of Quang Ngai and Kon Tum provinces.

The H're indigenous ethnic community in Kon Plong district reside mainly in: Po E, Ngoc Tem and Hieu communes. According to Elder A.Xi (born in 1930) and other clan heads in Violak village the H're indigenous people have been living in the upper Violak pass since a very long time ago.

01:00~

The H're indigenous worldview is that all things have soul and spirits. In the natural world of the H're, there are many kinds of spirits called Zang. They are Spirit of the Sky (Zang Pling), Spirit of the Thunder (Zang Y Voac), Spirit of the Land (Zang Ta Ni), Spirit of the Mountain (Zang Vang Can), Spirit of the Rock (Zang Ha Mat), and Spirit of the Tree (Zang Loong) and so forth.

Most of H're ritual ceremonies are related to rice, and also around the rice-planting season. Rice planting ritual is to pray to the Zang spirit to bless for a good crop, good harvest and healthy **animals**. Nearly all the months throughout the year the H're organize rituals and traditional festivals. Rice cultivation of the H're is closely attached to spiritual ceremonies. They are 'Pu Ri' (Straw Burning Ceremony), then making edges of the rice fields from November to December, 'Kroang Po' (Buffalo Praying Ceremony) for plowing in February. 'Re-Mao' (Sowing Ceremony) in March, 'Pet Mo' (Transplanting Ceremony) in April. 'Choa' (Rice Transplanting Closing Ceremony) in June, 'Ca Ma Mieu' (New Rice Harvesting and Bringing Rice to Storage Ceremony) in August. 'No Ka Phep Mo Nieu' (Harvest Closing Ceremony) in November, and 'Ka Tinh Na Ni' (Mouse Ceremony) in December.

02:26~

'Ca Ma Mieu' ritual ceremony is organized over 3 days. During the ceremony, families wash all the dishes then prepare a bundle of firewood, knife, roll of white threads and a basket. Before the couple go off the field, they burn the bundle of firewood the husband with a knife goes first; the wife takes the burned bundle of firewood and carries a basket containing the roll of white threads.

In the field, the wife places the bundle of firewood at the edge of the rice field and kindly prays to the Rice Spirit to stay, not to be afraid, and not to feel upset because of being cut, but inviting the soul of the Rice to come home. After praying, she takes 1-2 sample bunches of rice cut by a knife or

sickle, only enough for the Ritual ceremony. While the wife is cutting the rice, the husband collects a cotton mop or tree branches. Then, the tree branches are split up into small twigs. When the wife finishes cutting the rice, she puts a tree twigs at the edge of the field. Then, the husband goes first, the wife follows, and both together head to their home. At any cross-road (across the stream, the rice field, the little road, big or small) the husband places a tree twig in the direction towards the home in order to prevent the Rice Spirit from misdirection. He also uses these three branches to make a bridge for the Rice Spirit to cross the stream, to pass over and to follow the family home. When the husband finishes this task, the wife is allowed to carry on her back the basket of rice (representing the Rice Soul) across the stream. When they get home, the leftover of tree bars are placed in the yard. The wife takes two cotton mops to place on two sides of the sacred door of the house. The husband goes first through the sacred door, followed by his wife who put down the baskets of rice.

The wife makes a knife of bamboo in order to thresh the rice. It is forbidden to use the foot to thresh. Then, she separates all rice grains. Rice is then roasted and cooled down. The person who first pounds the rice is often the oldest woman in the house or the rice is pounded by the wife under the 'signal' of the oldest woman or her husband. Next one in the family who knows how to pounding rice will take part. When finished pounding, they separate out all husks, rice and broken rice components.

04:29~

Next, they sacrifice a black chicken near the sacred door, taking a few drops of blood to mix with the broken rice. The remaining blood is put into a bowl. They use leaves of the 'Pa Tieng Giang' and 'Ra Nghep' trees to dip in the cup of chicken blood to paint on poles of the house. Gong, sacred Mortar, Sacred Ghe Wine Jars and all other instruments.

At the same time, they say thanks to all sacred things and household appliances, wishing for a good season in the coming year. The prayer eats some broken rice first, then other people in family. Finally, the rice is cooked for all family members and neighbours to eat, drink and dance happily.

As the perception is that rice has a soul, the rice storage house is made very carefully and repeatedly offered as residential housing for the rice plants. When cutting wood for making the rice storage house, building and inaugurating it, all must organize rituals giving thanks to the Zang.

05:37~

Especially, when the family brings new rice into the rice storage house, they must do rituals offering chicken or pig to kindly ask the Zang's storage house to be full up with rice and prosperity.

A Chon –Pho Bi thu Dang uy xã PỜ Ê: These are 13 Festivals in a years. As this month has eating new rice (Toc Mo), bring rice to the store. First, after rising rice from April then Feeding them. When rice is well, from 10 to 25 August is new rice Festival. All of our traditional festival are not disappear and have to keep them for next generations.

06:27~

Villages of the H're people such as the ones in Po E commune are among the few locations left in the Central Highlands still preserving almost intact the traditional practices in natural resources governance and social relations. Eco-cultural values of the villages of the H're have great potential as a driver for social and economic development associated with cultural identity preservation whilst at the same time blending with cultural ecotourism.

Today, however, such values of the H're are facing several major challenges especially adverse impacts of cassava and acacia plantations, external cultural influence and conventional tourism.

With cultural values that have been built and nurtured over many generations.

The H're will certainly overcome such challenges and move toward a brighter future.