THE YUVUK is a sturdy wide-mouthed ovaloid basket used by women to carry harvests. Made by a single weaver, it is made of didit or nito (*Lygodium japonicum* Tard. & C. Chr.) strips intricately woven over a framework of tiblas vine and bamboo. It is provided with a strap (apid) of braided bark strips and sometimes slung on the forehead so that it serves as a counterweight while striding the rocky and hilly island of Itbayat.

The process of making the basket is simple. First, the framework (pamakaw) is prepared by selecting long and straight didit, preferably while still in the field. These are coiled around a piece of bamboo or banana stalk to straighten the didit without removing the petioles, only the leaves. The bundled strips are then left for two days to allow them to settle into a permanent shape.

On the third day, the strips are cleaned and smoothed with a dull knife. The cleaned strips are bundled for more efficient handling and storage. Meanwhile, vayu or hanut is collected from the bark of a vayu or hanut tree and stripped into a smaller width for the apid.

A big ring of about 12 to 16 inches in diameter is formed. Weaving begins with the X-shape design between the pamakaw which is done in a circular direction. It does not need a molder. The depth depends on the maker but practically, it is the same as its mouth. When weaving is paused, the didit strips are soaked in water to soften it and to prevent it from becoming brittle.

Afterwards, the tiblas of around 4 meters is woven for the rim. This is fastened in two layers in and out the top part with didit. Tiblas of around 5-6 meters is needed for the pakaw, the frame of the woven basket. It is fastened from bottom to the mouth, extended above its brim forming scallops, or are arched back to the bottom. One quarter is framed. Each base of the big scallop or arch above the brim is tied by weaves of small scallops then the opposite side is done.

Inverted V-shape weave is done in the middle of each big scallop for support. It is where the rope of the apid is passed through. The strap is woven in a one-over-one, one-under design using vayu or hanut. The length of the strap depends on the user’s needs.
Balanced on the stern of a dugout boat, a T’boli fisherman wears the s’long naf.

The s’long naf is decorated with precious silver melted from coins.” (Villegas, 2012).

There are various Philippine salakot shapes: helmet-shaped, some pointed and others rounded like a mushroom. Jean Mallat, a French visitor to the Philippines in the mid-1880s, described it as “shaped like a small umbrella”. It was well-formed, held its shape and was kept in place atop a head with an inner headband (baat) and a chinstrap. It is a hat that had been used for centuries by farmers, fishermen and common folk, but during the Spanish colonial period, especially during the 19th century, particularly China, Japan, Korea, Indonesia and Vietnam. Pigafta wrote after his 1521 voyage to the Philippines as Magellan’s chronicler of a “queen who wore a large hat of palm leaves.”

THE MOST UBQUITOUS of Philippine hats was, and possibly still is, the salakot, a wide-brimmed conical casque, present not only in the Philippines but also in other parts of Asia, particularly China, Japan, Korea, Indonesia and Vietnam.

The salakot has been made in most parts of the country. In the South, the Maguisnadao tagpian was twilled soft strip bamboo, decorated with nito (Lignadium circinatum) or smoked bamboo, and the Samal version, plated rattan (Calamus sp.), nito and cotton. For the T’boli, who continue to use their traditional dress, adornments and accoutrements, the s’long is gender specific – for men, a conical but low-pitched bamboo s’long naf is decorated with simple geometric designs in black and white and lined with woven rattan. For women, it is the wide-brimmed s’long kimihang, a construction of bamboo strips and cotton cloth as overlay with a lining that hangs down the side and back. Visayans call their salakot, sarok, cognate to the T’boli’s s’long naf.

In Luzon, the Tagalog made some of the finest specimens of the salakot existing today. One is made of fine bamboo with a pointed tip but with a shallow-pitch, its rim woven with rattan. Another Tagalog style features a cone-shaped crown and gentle brim; the entire salakot of bamboo and rattan.

Up north, the Ilocano utilized anahaw leaves (Livistona rotundifolia Lam. Mart.) and nipu leaflets (Nypa fruticans Wurmb) pressed between web-like weaves of bamboo and nito or rattan for their kattukong.

Although the salakot was fabricated throughout the islands, those from the Cordilleras and Ilocos provinces were exceptional and duly noted. The Kalinga kalangung of rattan and nito or of light wood, are roundly bulbous or gently sloped but impeccable in symmetry, tightness and evenness in plating. The Higaon hallidung, a man’s sun hat formed from the collection of the Fowler Museum, UCLA and featured in the book Basketry of the Lacoo Cordillera, Philippines, was given a layer of resin to make it waterproof. A number of stunning Tingual examples, accessioned to the Museum Volkenkunde in Leiden, the Netherlands, were collected in the early and mid-1880s. They are testaments to some of the finest weavers the Philippines ever had. The Tinguian and Ilocano share the use of the gourd (Lagenaria siceraria synonym Lagenaria scintaria, or nipu in Tagalog and tabungaw in Ilocano), hollowed out and dried, then transformed into a kattukong or what in Abra is referred to simply as tabungaw. In the holdings of the Museum Volkenkunde is an exquisitely crafted Philippine hat made of split gourd or upo, reinforced with nito woven onto the rim. It has been dated to before 1891, the year that Alexander Schadenberg presumably collected it in Abra.

The making of gourd into tabungaw continues to this day. Teofilo Garcia of Abra province forms gourds into elegant casques as his vocation. In 2012, he was awarded with a Gawad sa Manlilikha ng Bayan (National Living Treasures Award). It is a commitment to his culture, a display of quiet pride in his art and the discipline it requires. It is also a constancy that manifests a sustainable relationship with his environment, most specially his tabungaw garden. All these repose in each tabungaw that Teofilo Garcia creates.

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