

## Carriers of Tradition



This photograph collage displays a priceless collection of backpacks from Northern Cordilleras region of the Philippines. Running through early 2004 at the Hohenthal Gallery, Treganza Anthropology Museum at San Francisco State University, these bags, some estimated to be hundreds of years old, were exhibited by Charisse Aquino, the curator of the event.



**Tobacco carrier – Tinakaw (Tingguian)**

Joe Camel would be proud. That's because this pasiking was specifically designed for tobacco. The fatter and more open complexion of this pasiking made it easier to handle the delicate tobacco leaves of the Ilocos.



**Hunter's Backpack – Fangao (Bontoc)**

So what do you think this is made of? You'll be surprised. "It's actually a fiber of bangi which is another type of palm" Charisse Aquino said of this pasiking of the Bontoc. "It used for waterproofing so when hunters go out, their meat won't get wet."



**Backpack - Lagpi (Isneg)**

These bags, with multi-colored tassels hanging from their embroidered waistband, look like they deserve a shot a Louis Vutton showroom. Strangely though, these backpacks open in the back and peaked at the top, are known by the Isneg as lagpi and they were used not by women but by men.



**Backpack – Pasiking (Kalanguya)**

Notice the high heels on this backpack. Why does it wanna be taller than the rest? “This wooden base shows that you put it in soil so we know that it was used in wet farming areas such as the rice terrace,” Charisse Aquino said. O... that’s why.



**Backpack – Sakopit (Kalanguya)**

The purpose of this bag seems simple: for carrying around chickens (their head will stick out on one side.) Don’t get bit.



**Hunting Backpack – Inabnutan (Ifugao)**

Gone Huntin'? No need for a rifle and camping gear. These simple backpacks would do. This is a inabnutan, similar to the Bontoc fangao. It held all their hunting provisions nicely protected under a coat of bangi, a type of palm, which when processed has the appearance of hair.



**Ceremonial Backpack – Bangeo (Ifugao)**

If you think of a funeral, things such as a Hertz come to mind. For the Ifugao, you're looking at theirs. This backpack is used for a himong, a funeral ceremony where those wearing this bag remain at the front of the bangibang, procession.



**Ritual Basket – Punamham (Ifugao)**

Yummy. In this Tupperware-shaped box, researchers found sticks, betel nut and yes, adidas (aka chicken feet). But unlike the akub and the topil, this was not used for carrying food. This rattan punamham is actually for ritual used by a mumbaki (shaman) for healing rites, divination and sorcery.



**Deer Pasiking – (Ilonggot)**

This bag gives a new meaning to the word “road kill”. Apparently, those lucky Cordilleras who had access to fresh road kill could make a backpack out of the entire hind quarter of a deer. Seriously – I’m not joking!



**Traveling Backpack - Hape'ng**

On a long jog and worried you wouldn't be able to sit and relax? Well, if you're carrying one of these multifunctional backpacks from Ifugao Corp. you're in luck. Just take it off and sit on it. It's square top and rattan hoops will support you just fine.



**Basket - Labba (Tinguian) (top left)**

**Basket – Awit – (Kalinga) (top right)**

O the basket. It may seem simple but each of the tribes has given it different names. The Tinguian call them labba, Kalinga call them awit, and the Isneg (not shown) call them aglimaman. Even with all these different names, their purposes remain the same carrying things from vegetables to nuts atop their heads.



**Sacred backpacks – Tabka (Bontoc)**

Chemical imbalances beware. These may look like the rest of the backpacks but don't be fooled: it's been said these packs have the power to cause serious mental illness. Among the Bontoc, these backpacks, owned by an entire family or kinship group, are believed to be representative of their ancestors. Kept next to the hearth at home (which pertains to their charcoal-like appearance), these packs are used to memorialize those befalling violent accidents or having a fatal encounter with a headhunting expedition.

According to locals, when the tabka is neglected, for instance, when it's not checked periodically for damage and regularly replenished with rice and salted meat, harm and injury soon befall the caretakers. Such instance require begnas (welfare feasts), where men take the tabka out of the village for a short duration while the community, which sponsored the begnas, sacrifice and eat animals to appease the takba.



**Cedula Case – (Gaddang)**

This may look like the forerunner to the modern soda can but it was actually housed a cedula used for identification purposes says Charisse Aquino. "Basically it acts as a driver's license or a social security card, for it states your name, where you're from, and whether you're married or single. During the Spanish period, everyone had to have it. That's why Jose Rizal and all them burned their cedula in protest."



**Backpack - Pasiking – (Kankan'ey)**



**Men's Loin Cloth - Ba-al (Tinguian)**

Ever wondered why Filipinos never kill house lizards? Perhaps this ba-al or loincloth for men from the Tinguian may hold some clues. Weaved into it, is a lizard motif which is prominent in carvings all around the country such as along the edge of this pasiking from the Kankan'ey. The lizard apparently is known to represent good luck.



**Lunchbaskets –Topil(top left)/ Akub (top right) (Bontoc)**

Perhaps you've wondered where your habit of taking leftovers and sealing them in plastic containers came from. Well, wonder no more. These fascinating gems prove that times haven't changed. They're lunchboxes or what Charisse coined "the precursors to Tupperware." "They use it in the rice fields. You could put your meat and rice and your kamote in there. They are very durable."



**Locust Carrier - (Tinguian)**

The purpose of this interesting pasiking has perplexed even experts but speculation has it that it's likely to have been used as a cage. "Most likely the slots were made for some animal, like locust for they are known to be a good source of protein," Charisse Aquino said.



### **Snail Sieve – Haydu**

Dinuguan. Balut. Spam. Out of all traditional foods that continually seep onto Filipino tables, snails rarely come to mind. But surprise, surprise, locals use this bad boy to capture snails in the paddies after a rice harvest.

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