

Pis syabit

TAUSUG, SULU ISLAND GROUP PROVINCE, SOUTHERN PHILIPPINES.

The *pis syabit* is the multi-colored woven cloth of the Tausug. It is traditionally worn by Tausug men as a headdress or clothing accessory, folded neatly and draped over the left shoulder. It is worn along with the *lapi* or upper garments and the *sawal* or loose trousers. The *pis syabit* symbolizes the wearer's elevated position in society. Nowadays, it is common to see even women, especially young students, wearing the *pis* either in its traditional function or as an accessory in contemporary fashion such as shawl and neckerchief, or used as a table cover, wall ornament or tapestry.



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THE PIS SYABIT is precisely a tapestry weave. Square in format, measuring 100 x 100 centimeters, the term *syabit*, meaning to hook, is a direct reference to the production process of inserting or hooking-in disconnected weft threads of various colors, white included, across a generally dark yet finely striped body of warp threads. Each insertion of a colored weft thread fills-in a centimeter block or blocks delineated by the fine stripes of either red or yellow warp threads, resulting in a design form and virtually engulfing the entire design composition that are locked in a grid.

The *pis syabit* exhibits much sophistication in design yet it is done in tapestry weave which

The Yakan *saputangan* is worn in different ways depending on the occasion. (from left clockwise) *Elen-elen* (for everyday wear); *hap tabuan* (for going to market); *ginuna sipagkawin* (worn like a veil when attending a wedding).

is considered the oldest and most traditional technique in producing ornamented woven textiles, aside of course from the plain weaving technique wherein stripes and plaids are formed. Tapestry weaving does not employ a shuttle-fed weft nor design sticks inserted across pre-designated warp yarns to produce the designs, as is done in continuous supplementary weft or *sus-suk*. Both insert the weft design yarns by hand or with the use of a finely carved wooden tool. Tapestry weaving does not have a principal weft. All weft yarns are disconnected and of variegated colors depending on the designs. The Philippine tapestry weave, as represented by the Tausug *pis syabit* and the *kumbut/kandit*, and the *saputangan* of the Yakan, are of geometric designs, with the former exhibiting greater geometrization than the latter.