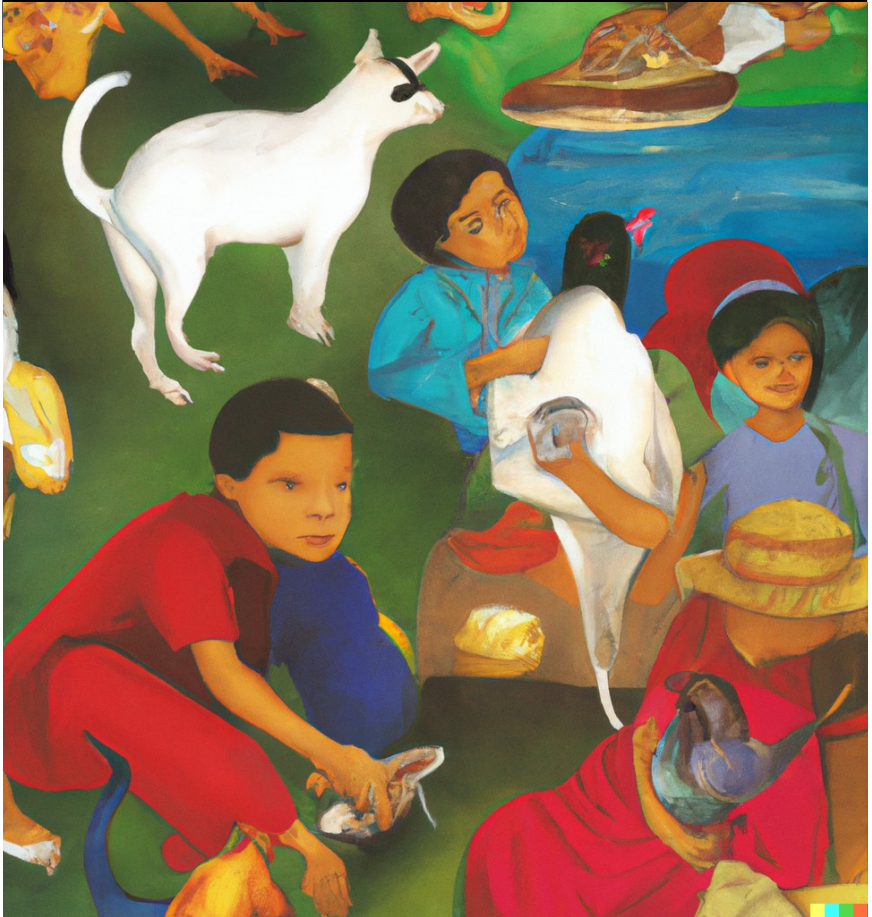


Journey Planet 64



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[Comments - JourneyPlanet@gmail.com](mailto:JourneyPlanet@gmail.com)

Welcome to *Journey Planet* issue 64! We're back and we've got the return of Jean Martin and Chuck Serface to help us dig into a topic that I love: folk tales and the Philippines.

As with almost every culture I've encountered, my connection to the Philippines is via food. I grew up next door to the Casem family, a large family who spoke Tagalog and had me over all the time. They were always cooking huge amounts of food, notably *pancit*, *lumpia*, *adobo*, and various delightful marinated meats. *It was amazing.* I learned a bit about Filipino traditions, at least those of Luzon, and while I never picked up the language, or any of the eighty or so other languages spoken on the archipelago, I did gain a great appreciation for the sound of the language, and especially the singers of the 60s and 70s, the music I can still pick out every time I enter a Filipino restaurant in San Francisco.

I also had a long-standing love of the Mabuhay Gardens. It's one of the most important locations in the history of punk rock, of San Francisco music, and they had amazing food. More on that in another issue.

In other news, I'm over COVID, and we're going to WorldCon. It will be great there are several first time nominees with *Journey Planet*, including Jean and my darling wife Vanessa!

So, about the art. I got access to DALL*E 2, an AI art program, which created the covers.

As I write this, the world just lost Nichelle Nichols, she of *Star Trek* fame. The story of Dr. Martin Luther King convincing her to return for more seasons is a legend that shows exactly what she meant to the world. I met her a couple of times, and she was witty and charming and wonderful. We've still got Kirk, Sulu, and Chekov, but Uhura had a special place.

OK, enough is enough from me! Take care of yourself, and try and wear a mask everywhere. We all gotta get through this as healthy as possible!

Chris



Rediscovering Filipino Mythology
By Jean Martin

I became enamored of Greek and Roman mythology when I was a kid growing up in the Philippines. I especially loved Edith Hamilton's *Mythology* book, and of course the *Iliad*, *Odyssey*, and *Aeneid*. More recently, I delved more into Norse mythology through Neil Gaiman's book of the same name. I've also enjoyed the Greek-, Roman- and Norse-inspired series of young adult novels by Rick Riordan.

But these are all products of Western (a.k.a. European) civilization. I didn't really look into Filipino *alamat* (legends, myths, folklore, fairy tales and fables) because these just seemed to be part of our lives. They were also mostly scary stories of creatures that most people, including myself, considered as real. Examples include the White Lady of Balete Drive (a female ghost on a street we used to pass by on our way to our piano teacher), *mangkukulam* (witches), *manananggal* (vampire-like creature) and *nuno sa punso* (dwarves). So I didn't really want to think about, much less encounter, them.

There were some lovely stories such as *Ibong Adarna*, a 16th century epic poem about a magical bird. I also seem to vaguely remember some folklore and creation myths that we learned about in school. I'm assuming that most of the pre-colonial Filipino stories were pushed aside when the Spanish conquered the Philippines in 1565, replacing them with the Bible and Catholic saints. The country remains very Catholic to this day.

Also, with multiple ethnic groups spread around the Philippine archipelago, myths and legends aren't as coherent as those of the Greeks or Romans. The Tagalogs in Luzon (the northern island) are the majority and where Manila (where I was born) and Quezon City (where I lived for 20 years before I came to the U.S.) are. But there are different languages and cultures in the middle Visayas islands as well as the Muslims in the southern Mindanao island.

The Indians, Chinese and neighboring Southeast Asian nations have also had a lot of influence on the Philippine islands before the coming of the Spaniards. And of course, the Americans added their culture to the mix when they colonized the

Philippines in 1899, after a brief period of independence from Spain.

I moved to the San Francisco Bay Area in 1987, and I've pretty much forgotten about Philippine culture as I embraced my new homeland. But even before that, since high school, science fiction, fantasy and historical fiction from the U.S. and the U.K. were my favorite type of stories. I enjoyed these on my own for a very long time until I discovered fandom in the early 2000s. And the rest (conventions, fanzine editing/photography, costuming/cosplay, historical dancing, etc.) is history.

With the recent proliferation of myths and legends from non-European sources in the U.S. in various media, I was very excited to hear mention of *aswang* (monsters) in two of my favorite TV shows: *Lost Girl* and *Legends of Tomorrow*. Then in 2021, Netflix premiered the six-episode animated urban fantasy series *Trese*, based on the comics of the same name. You can watch this in Tagalog with subtitles. My husband, Christopher Erickson, and I chose to watch it with the English dub because it featured several well-known Filipino and part-Filipino actors, such as Jon Jon Briones, Darren Criss, Manny Jacinto, Sumalee Montano, Nichole Scherzinger, Lou Diamond Phillips and Dante Basco. All of these



new developments made me interested in rediscovering Filipino myths and legends.

I was also looking for opportunities to cosplay a Filipino mythological character when the Greater Bay Area Costumers Guild (GBACG) announced that they were going to hold a “Baba Yaga’s Forest Tea Party” where attendees can come as folklore and fairytale creatures from around the globe. I remembered that *Take Back Halloween* did a costume tutorial for Maria Makiling, a *diwata* (fairy or goddess) who lives on Mount Makiling in the Laguna province near Manila. Most artistic representations of Maria Makiling have her in a white shift with a flower in her hair and so it is very simple. I liked the “Take Back Halloween” DIY version, which was more elaborate yet fairly easy to recreate.

Maria Makiling is actually a mythological figure I was familiar with growing up. But I had to do a bit of research to refresh my memory. That the mountain’s various peaks are said to be her face and breasts is something I do recall. But that she was a guardian and benefactor for the townspeople nearby is something I just learned. There are several legends related to Maria, the most common of which is that people who get lost on Mount Makiling are those who have followed her into the woods. There have also been some reported sightings of a woman in white wandering around whom they’ve attributed to be Maria.

Christopher and I arrived at the Huckleberry Picnic Area at the Roberts Regional Recreation Area in Oakland for the GBACG event last April and it was the perfect location. The trees provided a great background for photos with everyone portraying either characters from their own cultural backgrounds or those that they just liked. There were people from Chinese, Mexican, Jewish and Slavic myths and legends. There were also some who were fairy tale and Disney characters. It was wonderful to see so many cultures from all over the world represented and to see everyone displaying their creativity.

Serendipitously, around the time of the GBACG picnic when I was wondering how else I can promote Filipino *alamat*, I was discussing with Christopher J Garcia how I can contribute to *Journey Planet* as an editor again. He asked me to pitch an idea

and I thought why not Filipino folklore, myths and legends? I thought it was an idea out of left field and a long shot, but Chris liked the idea.

In the process of soliciting art and articles, I found a Facebook group dedicated to the subject and I also discovered other groups and people who are doing scholarly work and discussions as well as different media inspired by



Filipino *alamat*. There are novels, comics, podcasts, art, etc. by Filipinos in the Philippines and from the Filipino diaspora. It was wonderful to see how Filipinos all over the world are connecting and reconnecting to our country's stories.

This has been a fun and stimulating rabbit hole I've fallen into. So I'm sure this is just the beginning for me. And I hope that my article and these wonderful essays and stories I've found for this issue of *Journey Planet* serves to raise awareness of Filipino *alamat* for fellow Filipinos like me who would like to rediscover our heritage. And for other folks around the world who might be interested in finding a whole new realm of interesting stories from a rich and diverse culture that's not often in the limelight.



Filipino Mythology
Condensed to the Stars
By Pat M. Yulo

We love

our mythology. We're intensely familiar with Greek, Roman, Norse and Egyptian gods and goddesses. We enjoy stories from every known, and lesser known, parthenon—Anansi stories from Ghana, Coyote stories from Native American tribes, Pachamama from the indigenous people of the Andes. Neil Gaiman's "Sandman" introduced readers to a plethora of other lesser familiar gods and goddesses, such as Ish-tar and Susano-O-No-Mikoto.

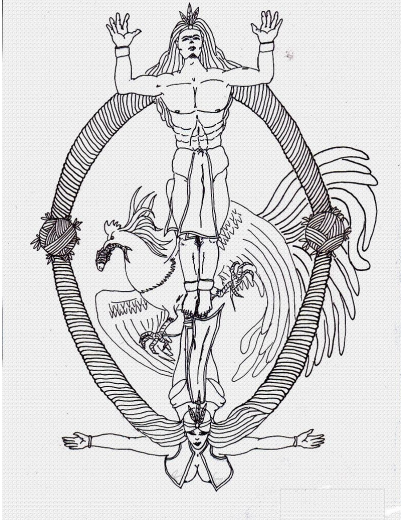
One country, however, has remained on the edges of popular mythology appreciation. The Philippines, a tropical archipelago home to 7,000 islands and just as many magical creatures, has yet to make it into the mainstream. Many have clamored for Gaiman to write stories about the rich and deep mythologies of the Philippines, with its *aswangs* and *diwatas*, but in a tweet dated August 7, 2018, he said that the mythology is best left to the "terrific Filipino writers."

The mythology of the Philippines has been around for millennia, but a combination of oral tradition, a diversity of dialects, and 300 plus years of Spanish colonial subjugation, combined to make these stories hard to access in print. But more and more authors are taking up the call. Modern voices are compiling and writing stories for newer audiences. These voices are finding novel formats and wider audiences.

Nowadays, books of compiled Filipino mythology are readily available on Amazon, as well as some folktales in picture-book form. One book of note, *Mythology Class* by Arnold Arre, is a Philippine National Book Award winner. The story melds traditional myths with contemporary plots and was compiled and published into one graphic novel in 2014.

In 2021, Netflix released *Trese*, a six-part animated series about Filipino monster hunters and the monsters they defeat. The series was based on the bestselling comic books of the same name by author Budjette Tan and artist Kajo Baldesimo. The comics and the animated series featured such classic Filipino creatures as the *tikbalang*, a humanoid creature with the head and torso of a horse and with the speed to match, and *tiyanak*, a small, black goblin that disguises itself as a baby before attacking unknowing humans.

Filipino mythology is starting to gain wider popularity, and these are some of the celestial tales told in the wider Tagalog region, which encompasses the current capital of Manila and the surrounding areas of southern Luzon, one of the largest islands of the archipelago.



Like any good pantheon, let's start with the Jupiter/Zeus/Odin equivalent. *Bathala* is the highest-ranking god of the ancient Tagalog people. His name derives from the Sanskrit *Bhatarata Guru* or "the highest of the gods." He is the creator of all things and his domain is in the highest reaches of the sky. In pre-Spanish Philippines, *Bathala* was the ultimate deity. When the Spanish colonized the Philippines, they did what they did all over the world—they internalized

the local gods and represented them with a Christian patina. Thus *Bathala* also became the equivalent of the Christian God, *Diyos*. Hundreds of years later, his name is still used in the phrase "Bahala na ang Diyos" ("Leave it to God"), which could be loosely related to "Que sera, sera" ("Whatever will be will be"). This fatalistic attitude is endemic to the Filipino people.

Bathala, like his counterparts, could get a little randy and had multiple children with a variety of unnamed mortal women, spawning a pantheon of demi-gods. Unlike his Western counterparts, *Bathala* was not constrained by the sanctity of marriage, and his consummation with mortal women was never questioned as morally impudent. In other words, he did not have a wife named *Hera* breathing down his throat to stop being promiscuous.

One of the most famous sets of *Bathala's* children are his three daughters: *Mayari*, *Hanan* and *Tala*. Their unknown mother died shortly after giving birth to them. The most beautiful of them was *Mayari*, the Goddess of the Moon. *Hanan* was the god-

dess of the New Dawn and Tala was the Goddess of the Stars. *Bathala* took these three sisters with him to *Kaluwalhatian*, his celestial court and gave them power over their domains.

Not only was *Mayari* given charge of the moon and night sky, she was also given responsibility for combat, war, weaponry, hunting and beauty. She would be closely equivalent to the Greek *Artemis*.

Neighboring the Tagalogs is the Kapampangan ethnic group, residing in the province of Pampanga. They have a day and night origin story relating to *Mayari* and her brother, *Apolaki*. *Apolaki* was the son of *Bathala* from another mortal woman and the god of the sun and war (so basically, *Ares*). In this tale, *Bathala* dies without leaving a will. The two demi-god siblings quarrel with bamboo clubs, each one desperate to become the world's sole ruler. *Apolaki* struck *Mayari* in the face and she became blinded in one eye. So shocked at his violence, *Apolaki* relented, and agreed to become co-rulers with her. So they split the day in half, but because of her blindness, *Mayari*'s light is dimmer than that of her brother's.

Hanan, the goddess of the new dawn, was dutifully prayed to by the pre-colonial Tagalog people when a new phase of life began, such as the birth of a child, the passing into adulthood, and even death. She was prayed to at the beginning of the farming cycle and for bountiful harvests. Her symbols were the rooster and the dawning sun, an icon still seen on the Philippine flag. Her closest Western counterpart would be *Demeter*.

Tala is the goddess of the morning and evening star. Her story varies, however, depending on the region it's being told in. She is supposedly the creator of traditional Tagalog constellations, and considering that Filipinos were a seafaring society, she would be relied on by fishermen and the like. *Tala* used orbs of light to guide seafarers home. After the Spanish arrival, her orbs were demonized and called *santelmos*, an evil fire spirit. (If you watched *Trese*, you would have seen them).

There is one version of the myth that leaves *Hanan* out. In this story, the three siblings are *Apolaki*, *Mayari* and *Tala*. When they grew into adulthood, *Bathala* held a large feast in *Kaluwalhatian*, or the Sky World, to proclaim their cosmic destinies.

Apolaki was named the God of War and the Guardian of the Sun. *Mayari* was given domain over the moon, and she was to be called the Goddess of the Moon. *Tala*, the youngest, was given charge of all the stars and was named the North Star herself. And, thus, *Bathala's* three children took reign over the sky.

There is one more Tagalog myth that pertains to *Tala*. In this version of the story, the sun god is named *Arao* and the moon goddess is called *Buan*. Each one of them had a bevy of star children. *Buan* was worried that *Arao* could kill her children with his heat. So they both agreed to destroy their star children. *Arao* devoured all his children, but the guileful *Buan* hid hers behind some clouds. *Arao* became enraged at this deceit and spent the rest of his life eternally trying to destroy her. At dawn, *Buan* brings forth her eldest daughter *Tala*, the evening and morning star, and hides the rest of her children away. They say that a lunar eclipse is when *Buan* is closest to capturing *Arao*. From this myth, we get the Tagalog words for bright star (*tala*), sun (*araw*) and moon (*buwan*).

The Philippines has an extensive collection of mythology that springs from the Jungian psychology of the collective unconscious. In many ways, it parallels the stories of common Western myths, while continuing to be unique to the diaspora of its people. We hope this article whetted your appetite to discover more about a culture and the stories it tells.





Adarna

Adarna

By Karl Gaverza

Editor's note: *This piece from Karl Gaverza's website, [philippine spirits](#), which houses stories that he writes based on Philippine mythical creatures. "Adarna" is based on a 16th-century Filipino epic poem about an eponymous magical bird.*

The sun shone with an unforgiving glare, but this did not stop the two friends from resting their wings upon a tree and greeting each other warmly.

One had just fled from captivity in a faraway kingdom while the other had sought forgiveness from their king. It had been an exceptionally challenging time in the lives of both these great birds, but they were thankful for each other's company.

"Tell me your story, old friend," the great bird, Sumayang Galura, requested.

"It started when I was spending the night on the Piedras Platas, as I always do."

"Your tree of diamond?"

"The very same. As the sun was setting, I began to sing the first of my seven songs, when I had finished with the seventh, I did not realize that there was a human below me and my droppings had fallen on him."

"He then turned to stone"

"That he did. Some humans just don't realize what they get themselves into. The next day the same thing happened with another human that fell asleep at the foot of my tree, I didn't know they were brothers then."

"What happened then?"

"The human's other brother came forth and captured me while I slept. He stayed awake during my songs and avoided my droppings until I fell asleep. He turned his brothers back from stone, but they did not appreciate their freedom. They beat the brother that freed them and took me to their king."

"Will the cruelty of humans never cease?"

"I would not sing my song to heal the king until my true captor returned, and he did. I sang and my song revealed the duplicity of the two brothers, they would have been banished if not for the forgiveness of the brother that freed them."

"He sounds like a naïve human."

“After that, I was not treated badly, but I yearned to stretch my wings and fly through the sky once again. I had this opportunity when one of the brothers just released me. I think it was to frame the good brother as a fool, but that is just my guess.”

“It seems you have had a great ordeal, old friend.”

“I have had an adventure, as what fills most of our lifetimes. Sometimes they come to us and we do not have any choice in the matter. My captivity has only made me more grateful for the freedom I now possess.”

“Wise words, I would expect no less from you.”

The sun set as the two great birds continued their conversation. The star’s light gave their feathers a brilliant glow as they talked late into the night.





Kasalan ng Tikbalang (A Tikbalang's Wedding Day)

By Claire Mercado-Obias

Deep in the dense mountains lives a creature with a body of a human but bearing the head and hind legs of a horse. *Tikbalang* is what he is called. His lifetime appointment is to guard the rainforest and all its inhabitants, a huge responsibility given all the egos that live within this sacred space. But he's built for the task for he is the best of beast: horsepower, strength, agility and tenacity—the animal you chose to bring to battle. He is also the best of man: attractive, intelligent, strategic, protective and persuasive.

He is friends with all that live there, but he is their leader first. He is well-respected for he takes his job seriously and is the first on the scene when any kind of danger occurs.

Humans, they always find their way into the rainforest. Who can blame them for answering the seductive lure of nature? There's nothing wrong with that. They only need to be wary. When they mindlessly trespass the *Tikbalang's* territory and do naughty acts like inflicting harm to the ecosystem or being too rowdy, they will be punished. The *Tikbalang* curses them with a circuitous route so that they lose their way. It is believed that the single antidote is to turn one's shirt inside out and only then can a human find their way home. This is just for minor offenses. When you incur his wrath, he can easily send you to another realm.

When a maiden walks into the forest, however, the *Tikbalang* watches from behind trees, curious about this beauty. She treads gently, appreciating each blossom, communing with every insect, basking in the serenity of her surroundings. There is a calmness about her. "Surely, she can be trusted, can she not?" the *Tikbalang* asks himself. He allows her to wander some more, and he quietly observes her.

Just as she steps into the *Tikbalang's* territory, he appears behind the blanket of fog, his mane flowing in the wind. The maiden is startled but is not afraid. She looks into his eyes and calls out, "Hello" with confidence.

The *Tikbalang* keeps a safe distance, wondering, "Why is she not scared of me?" For all who cross his path run in terror at the sight of him.

She continues, "My name is Tessa. Your home is beauti-

ful.”

This simple courtesy earns his trust. He allows her to cross the threshold and he follows her lead. He quietly keeps her company even as day turns into night. He is enchanted by her. He has always lived a solitary, independent life. Never did he realize the delights of companionship.

Smitten, he woos her with the finest flowers and exotic fruits from the belly of the forest. He serenades her alongside bird song. He walks with her, graciously giving her a tour of the land, showing off the majesty of the yakal trees, captivates her with a view of the waterfalls and the endless blanket of stars in the midnight sky. She can't help but blush with appreciation.

She looks longingly at him, runs her fingers through his mane and puts her hand lovingly on his cheek. It is believed that if you pluck one of the *Tikbalang's* golden hairs, he will be subservient to you. But in this case, it is not necessary especially when feelings are involved. The *Tikbalang* and Tessa ... they fall in love.

The *Tikbalang* is torn. He is bound to the forest for this is his calling and a creature like him cannot be accepted in any other place. He may look like a monster, but he understands the value of choice. Could he expect Tessa to give up everything she has?

Tessa, embraced by the peace of the forest and unsurprisingly enamored with a half-man and half-animal, willingly says yes. She is ready to leave the chaotic city life perhaps to escape her past and begin anew.

They get married in a flat and secluded area of the forest, sunlight filtering through the canopy of trees. Fireflies illuminate the path. Cicadas croon the bridal march.

The *Tikbalang* wears a white tunic, similar to a caparison worn by horses in the medieval times. Tessa wears a crown of orchids in her hair, the same orchids tucked with passion flowers in the bouquet she carries.

Animals and creatures, large and small, surround Tessa and the *Tikbalang* in a semicircle. The *Kapre*, a tree-dwelling giant with a fondness for cigars, officiates their union. They exchange rings fashioned from the roots of pine trees, trees that symbolize longevity. When the *Kapre* declares, “I now pronounce you hus-

band and wife,” they kiss passionately. All the guests applaud and cheer enthusiastically as butterflies flutter about like confetti. The *Tikbalang* neighs loudly in agreement.

On this day, their wedding day, the sun shines brightly as the rain falls simultaneously.

A paradox. Could it represent painful tears on a most festive day? That the forest’s bachelor is hitched? That a maiden could not find human love? That the universe was against the romance of beast and woman? Or it can mean tears of joy, the result of love at first sight and of beating the odds.

A sun shower—there are brilliant meteorological explanations for this—but a *Tikbalang* on his wedding day is a much more romantic story. And just as a sun shower passes, a rainbow is never far behind.

After all, a *Tikbalang* deserves a happily ever after, too.





The Philippines: Home of the 10 Celestial Eaters

By Gerard Galo

We are always fascinated with stories about giant monsters. From the ancient Titans of Greco-Roman mythology to the sci-fi cinema monsters—the likes of King Kong. We always wonder if such monsters do exist in our blurry, mythically rich past or just tall tales of our imaginative ancestors to scare their children to conformity. Whichever that is, the stories of giant monsters as told in Philippine myths are integral part of pre-colonial Filipino society.

The beautiful island nation, the Philippines, is not a stranger to stories of giants in its diverse indigenous mythologies. The archipelago, comprising 7,641 islands, is a recipient of several socio-cultural diaspora throughout history. The Austronesians from mainland Asia are said to have travelled to the Philippines

in land bridges that are now long gone, submerged beneath the waves. Other ocean-going societies in the Pacific and Southeast Asia, have contacted the island natives and eventually settled in, bringing their rich culture and beliefs with them. With that said, the interaction of these myriad of cultures resulted in the fusion of Hindu-Buddhist beliefs with the animistic way of life of pre-colonial Filipinos. That's why today, the Philippines is a melting-pot of several endemic mythologies, a byproduct of countless cultural exchanges in the past.

The concept of giant monsters in Philippine mythology is something every Filipino ethnic group is familiar with. The present Filipino word for giants is "Higante," a word of Spanish origin that has eclipsed the indigenous word for giants, "Tayarak." The word *Higante* refers to tall anthropomorphic beings that are said to have inhabited huge Banyan trees, as they unceasingly puff smoke from their cigars. However, these are not the only giants in Philippine mythology; it also speaks about giant creatures so big, they can swallow the Sun/Moon.

The giants in myths come in different shapes and sizes, but certain Japanese folktales have a specific terminology for these colossal behemoths, which they call "Kaiju." The word Kaiju by its exact modern definition are skyscraper-sized monsters, such as Godzilla in the eponymously titled movies. Japanese Kaiju TV shows, such as *Voltes V* and *Ultraman*, were especially popular in the Philippines during the 1980s. Modern cinema has had a recent revival of these genres, featuring a kaiju wreaking havoc in the urban landscape as people scatter at the mercy of these walking calamities. Though these kaiju movies are just purely works of fiction, pre-colonial Filipinos earnestly once believed of gigantic beasts roaming among these islands causing disastrous cataclysm and said to be harbingers of apocalypse.

The oral transmission of these giant monster stories has distinctly classified the creatures as "Dambuhala." The word *Dambuhala* is also interchangeable with the word *Higante* in modern Filipino vocabulary. However, several Filipino folklorists carefully assign the word *Dambuhala* to mythical beasts of immense size, while the word *Higante* (or known natively as *Tayarak*), refers to tall, human-like beings. According to the *Core*

Etymological Dictionary of Filipino, the etymological origin of *Dambuhala* comes from the Malay word "jambu(h)ara," which means whale. This gives us insight as to how pre-colonial Filipinos conceived the idea of giant monsters. The Balangay societies of pre-colonial Filipinos must have encountered these gentle sea giants. These people were so awestruck by these immense creatures that they began to imagine the animals of Philippine fauna available in their area into fantastic creatures of similar gigantic proportion.

The majority of giant monster stories in the Philippine mythologies, have a common thread of narrative: A creature of unspeakable proportion arises/awakens from its slumber as it attempts to devour a celestial object in the skies causing an eclipse. This trope of giant monsters in Philippine mythology is well known throughout the diverse ethnic groups in the archipelago. Such consistent themes of mythical giant monsters give rise to the informal labeling among Filipino mythology folklorists as the Celestial Eaters. In Philippine mythology, there are 10 Celestial Eaters, the following as listed: Bakunawa, Arimaonga, Minokawa, Sawa, Kedu, Lawo, Olimaw, Tambanokawa, Tambanokano and Bawa.

(1) Bakunawa/Baconaua: the so-called King of all Celestial Eaters, is a gigantic sea-serpent. It has two sets of gigantic wings, coarse whiskers, a reddish tongue, a looped tail, a single horn on the nose, and a mouth 'the size of a lake'. It is a serpent being present in various distinct Philippine mythologies: (a) a beautiful sea goddess who turned into a serpent deity after her love for the moon goddess Haliya was spurned in Bicolano, and Panay mythologies, in which the golden masked goddess Haliya (moon goddess) fought Bakunawa when it tries to eat her/moon; (b) while in Bisaya mythology, she played and swallowed six of the seven moons, leaving only one in the end; (c) in one myth, Bakunawa is said to have swallowed most of the moons in anger because her sister, an ancient sea turtle, was killed by humans; (d) another myth states that Bakunawa fell in love with a village girl and swallowed the moon in anger because the village chief burned the girl's house. The common theme is that Bakunawa



devours the moon or the sun and will disgorge it by producing loud noise. Bakunawa is revered in both Visayan and Bicolano mythology, it is said to live in the depths of the Visayan Sea.

(2) Arimaonga: it is a gigantic, flying lion-tiger hybrid that lives in the sky dragging a riderless chariot (which was once ridden by the Maranao Sun Deity along with its angel charioteers). It becomes playful and swallows the moon causing the lunar eclipse and when one of the wheels of the chariot that carries it gets destroyed, thus forcing it to deviate from its regular path, causing the solar eclipse. Whenever there was an eclipse, Maranao people thought the Arimaonga was trying to eat the sun or the moon. The word "arimaonga" might have originated from the Malay word "harimau," which means tiger. Arimaonga is revered in Maranao/Meranaw mythology and is said to live in the skies above Ranao (Lanao region).

(3) Kedu/Ketu: it is a gigantic, dark-scaled serpent with a gem on its head of Magindanaw mythology and lives in the flood plains of the Maguindanao region. It is said to be the twin of Rahu/Lawu, another giant serpent. The Maguindanawans once believed that



the eclipse was caused by the monstrous serpent Kedu swallowing either the sun or the moon. The belief in the Kedu is a Hindu influence, which proliferated in some parts of Mindanao before the arrival of Islam.

(4) Lawu/Rahu/Laho: it is a gigantic pale-skinned serpent-bird-crocodile hybrid. Lawu is revered in Kapampangan mythology and is said to live in Indûng Kapampáŋan, commonly known as the Kapampangan homeland. It is said to be the twin of Kedu/Ketu, another giant serpent. It was a huge serpent that caused the eclipse by swallowing the sun or the moon.

(5) Sawa: it is a gigantic serpent that looks like a Philippine reticulated python. Sawa is revered in Tagalog mythology and is said to live in Taga-arog (Calabarzon region). In other Tagalog lore and in the myths of the Ati of Panay, Sawa is a giant serpent that swallows the sun and causes eclipses.

(6) Minokawa: it is a gigantic bird-dragon hybrid that has a beak and talons of steel, eyes like mirrors, and tough sharp feathers. Minokawa is revered in Bagobo mythology, it is responsible for the lunar eclipse. It was believed that this island-sized bird always

tried to swallow the moon. It is said to live "outside the sky (space?), at the eastern horizon" (Timug Laut = Pacific Ocean, specifically the Davao Gulf area).

(7) Olimaw: it is a gigantic, phantom, winged dragon-serpent hybrid. Olimaw is revered in Ilocano mythology and is said to live in Samtoy (Ilocos region). The name Olimaw is cognate to the modern Filipino word "halimaw," which means monster.

(8) Tambanakaua/Tambanakua/Tambanokawa/Tambanokua: it is a gigantic scorpion-spider hybrid. Tambanakaua is revered in Manobo mythology and is said to live in Mantuvu (Caraga region). The Manobo people believe the Tambanokawa is a huge spider or scorpion that attacks the moon once in a while in an attempt to eat it.

(9) Tambanokano: it is a gigantic crab that can create lightning by simply batting its eyes. Tambanokano is revered in Mandaya mythology and is said to live in Davohaha (which means fire; it is an area around Davao Oriental). The Mandaya and the Bukidnon people once believed that the lunar eclipse was caused by the Tambanokano. Aside from lunar eclipse, it was also believed to create the sea's tides and big waves by scuttling around. The Bukidnon people believe this huge crab from the mountains caused the great deluge by plugging the world's navel in the sea.

(10) Bawa/Baua/Bauta - it is a gigantic bird of Kinaray-a mytholo-



gy that lives in Calulundan, a cave in the sky covered in blue smoke that is said above Panay Island. It flies out and swallows the moon when the food is scarce.

All of the aforementioned Celestial Eaters are notorious for their desire for the shiny objects of the heavens above: The Sun/Moon. They all have attempted or had eaten celestial objects like the Sun or Moon causing an eclipse. Tales of such an event end in the same fate. Where the pre-colonial Filipinos rattle their metal wares to produce a loud noise to force a Celestial Eater to disgorge the Sun/Moon, as it retreats from where it came from, averting the crisis. Although all Celestial Eaters are distinct in appearance and have different ethnic origins, they resonate the same message for all of pre-colonial Filipinos as a constant reminder, that greed for the mere things that shine will end up miserably for anyone.





A Sarimanok is a magical, mythical flaming bird from Maranao Mythology. It brings good luck to anyone who are able to catch it. Others believe that a sarimanok is a pet of Engkantos. Its name came from the word "sari" and "manok". "Sari" means cloth or garment which is generally assorted colors and "manok" means chicken.

Creating Art Inspired by Philippine Mythology

By Jimuel Villarosa Miraber

My name is Jimuel Villarosa Miraber, and I am a self-studied digital artist. Aside from creating digital arts, I am also a traditional artist and I also do painting, sketching and drawing. I don't limit myself when it comes to arts, that is why I also do art crafts, costumes, song compositions and even short stories. All of my skills as an artist only came from determination and experiences as I never got the chance to study in college due to lack of financial support.

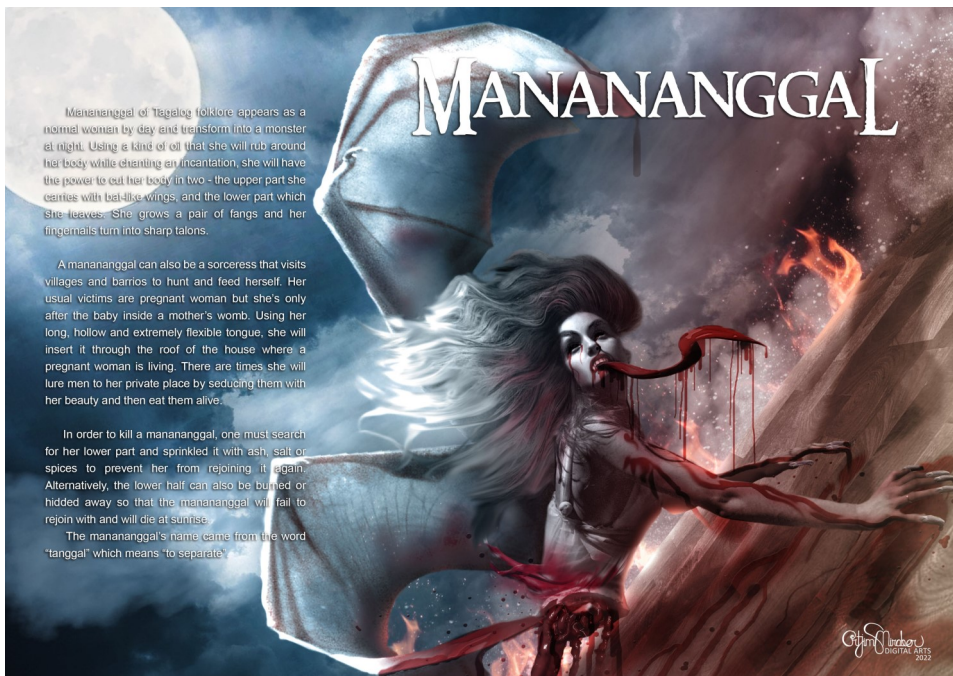
At the age of six, I already showed skills in making drawings through sketching religious images on scrap of woods, and due to lack of encouragement, I never got the chance to develop my skills during my elementary days. My family could not afford art materials so instead of making art, I joined singing contests. During high school, I joined a poster-making contest in my third

year and in my fourth year, one of my teachers chose me to compete in a mural-painting contest.

My journey as a digital artist started in 2008. Using a free graphic arts program installed in my netbook, I started learning making vexel arts. I just keep on practicing until I could do a decent artwork. In 2013 I started accepting commissions. My first artworks were mostly logos, event posters and digital caricatures until my netbook gave up after five years. In 2018 a month after my netbook broke, I bought a second-hand CPU from my brother-in-law and started learning Photoshop. I didn't struggle that much, but I still went through hard times figuring things. But eventually, I came to what my artworks are today.

My interest in mythology showed when I was 15 years old and it was about Greek mythology. I had to borrow encyclopedias from my classmate just so I can list down names of gods and goddesses from it. I also made drawings of them and kept them until today.

I only started noticing Philippine mythology when I was trying to write a novel about a school of shamans or *babaylan*. I finished the story, but was not satisfied so I set it aside. But that was when I became more curious about Philippine mythology. I



declared myself as a Philippine mythology enthusiast because although I have an above-average knowledge about it, I am not an expert nor have I actual sources of where I got that knowledge from. I only made my research through the internet, printed them and compiled them as my references. I'm just careful not to stumble on fake articles, although sometimes, I couldn't avoid falling into ones without resources, but widely known and accepted now as Modern Philippine mythology.

My focus in Philippine mythology is the deities of ancient Tagalog mythology, but I also love creating digital depictions of mythical creatures and beings from different mythologies of the Philippines. One of my dreams is to publish a book with all of my digital depictions of Philippine mythological creatures and my main goal is to make Filipinos become able to recognize the creatures' origin and not just the name of it. I believe that by doing so, Philippine mythology will become one. With all those mythologies in our country, I believe that what will make them one is not by collecting them and call it all Philippine, but by learning and understanding each of them and having them become recognizable without the need of long explanations.





Review of Trese Volume I

By James Bacon

Trese created by Budjette Tan and Kajo Baldisimo, is an exceptional comic, a well-drawn and brilliantly told horror comic, mixing police procedural with wonderful elements of magic, myth, and the metaphysical. Action packed, thoughtful and mature, set in Manila where we follow our protagonist, Trese, as she solves specialised crimes.

Alexandra Trese is, erm, a consultant to the police, a consulting detective of the unexplained and magical, one might say, and she has a legacy. But Trese is called upon by the police when something is not at all right, when someone long dead is found freshly killed, or deaths that verge on the unexplained occur, and it sets Trese on her trail, seeking out those who would use mermaid bones to help kill someone, avenge their loved ones by taking on incredible powers, or break the rules and upset and take what should not be taken.

Everything about this comic, gives a real sense of both place and genre, the first story 'Murder on Balete Drive' places the reader into the noir crime genre smartly, and then we soon see within a few pages the abilities of Trese, whether it is calling on creatures to help her understand, or summoning bodyguard-like companions, the Kambal, with her phone; dedicated and brutal, who slaughter men who are child-eating monsters.

There is no need for overly lengthy tales here, crime stories are often best told short, though it requires much skill, and in comics, real ability, and here Budjette Tan and Kajo Baldesimo achieve this in an accomplished and polished way, fine practitioners in both art and story.

The underworld has a deeper darker meaning, but there is a something also very beautiful about how the first story twisted, the sadness and desperation of those involved is portrayed very sympathetically as there is a nice turn in direction, one expects more fantastical, and then we see a very human quandary, a really sympathetic and troubling tragic situation. So very thoughtful and an element which permeates the writing, and which demonstrates a truer understanding of humanity, something that great storytellers need.

In the first volume, we get four stories, and they are beyond brilliant. I was totally hooked by the neatness and yet complexity of the stories, enticing readers into a world, deftly drawing one in, but not overwhelming the reader with too much, or overkilling and making the stories feel too removed.

Manila felt amazing anyhow, and the reader gets a feel for the city, and also what one hopes is the cultural wondrousness of myth and story from there, leaving the reader to excitedly

ponder what influences and legends may have been drawn upon by the writer and artist.

There is a lovely balance to the stories and then we are treated with some typed pages from Professor Alexander Trese's journal, with some extra art, and this just adds so nicely, who is Alexander I wondered, and are the notes connected to actual legends of the Philippines. I went from pondering to excitedly seeking out information.

A quick search does indeed show that there is urban legend about Balete Drive and Philippines Insider has an article on the myths. It is noted that various legends and folklore have circulated since the 1950s that the street was haunted and that Filipino folklore, balete trees are believed to be a "home for spirits and mysterious creatures" and that the darkness and quiet of the area has contributed.

In rules of the race, we find that street racing has led to some unexpected occurrences, and Alexandra is called in, and

soon follows the tribal footprints that give her the hint she needs to seek out a magical youth gone slightly astray. Along the journey we meet two spirits, from the Abagat and Haiman tribes who really are quite different, and this is something I loved about the writing, we get a skewed, modern or local take on an aspect that one could imagine going a different way, and it adds to the freshness of the story telling.



I loved the brilliant skill of drawing racing cars that was demonstrated here. Racing is a genre in its own right and to have styles, the sense of speed and acceleration and action come across so well, was a lovely change of pace but expertly executed, and the vehicles looked spot on. I drifted and wondered whether Kajo Baldesimo could have drawn Nissan GT-R, Supra, Skyline, but they were right to have a Porsche and Ferrari in the final race, they are desirable cars everywhere, and so it all fits in really well, authentic, in the mechanicals as well as the mystical and magical.

The journal entry about the Tiklabang tribe and the Wind tribes, just added more insight and background to what was already a very exciting story.

Throughout the art is wonderful. The map is nice, I like maps in comics, it helps for placement, and each story starts with a map, and it is a real place. The artistic style is fabulous, a hint of manga, with a fine line, greys, white and hatching and use of black and white to a really exquisite level. I was well impressed with some of the ways Kajo Baldesimo uses outline to reframe the story, one in particular had the story happening within the outline of Trese, and was very pleasing and ran very well. This ability to be nicely unique and inventive with the art, yet balance it with a flow to the storytelling is difficult, and here is it accomplished brilliantly, always enhancing the story, adding to artistic delight to what could be a pedestrian moment.

Action is captured very well, as is the sense of movement and facial reaction is important to the comic, all elements that Kajo Baldesimo really draws well, the style is suited to the comic, it is not overly dark, but at the right times, we get immersed into a noir feeling, which sits very well.

As each story is told, we learn more, about the Kambal, loyal protectors who call Trese “Bossing,” about Trese who owns and runs a club called Diabolical, and about relationships between the worlds, and where as in here, they collide, sometimes with ferocity, and yet the stories and development of the character of Trese for readers is cleverly gentle and subtle, there are always human elements and it feels grounded. We see that

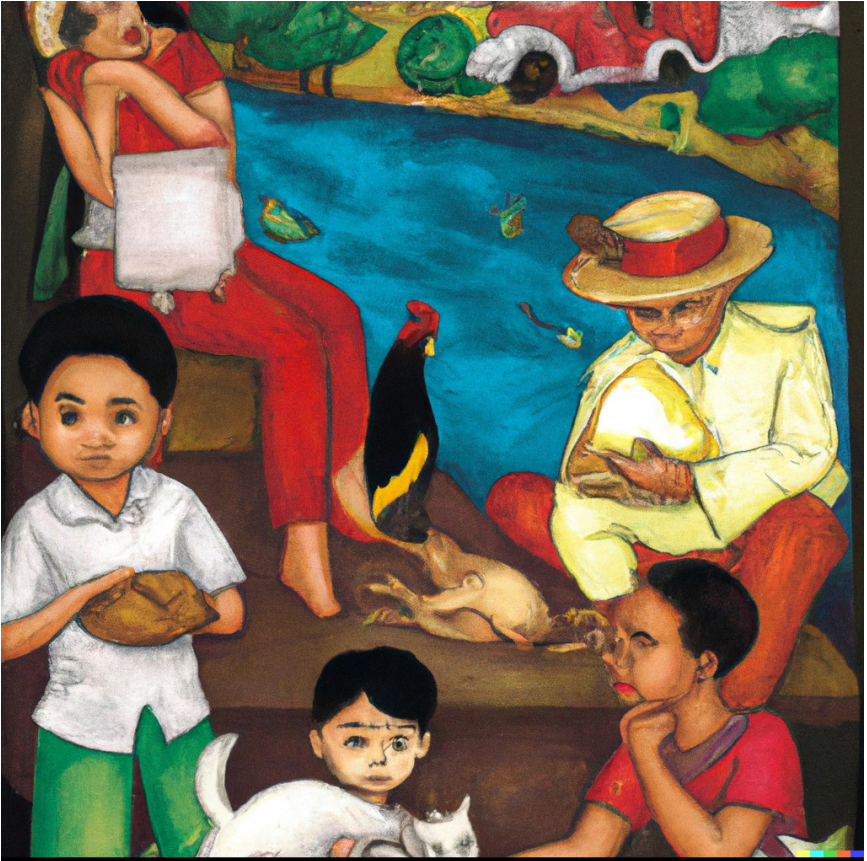
Captain Guerrero and Trese work well together.

The final story in Volume I really had me amazed, as it was again a contemplation of human tragedy, a terrible crime and how love drives on revenge, and how human is to be driven to anger and upset and also how horrendous humans are, and it is a harder story, but that shows its strength. My amazement was that in essence behind it, there was another genre here, the explanation in the journal notes shows the background: to the Adarna stone and it was amazing to find the link to the story of the “Ibong Adarna.” This is a fresh and different interpretation or progression however, and so we see Trese in a potential post-modern legendary super hero story and again, I was just so impressed and pleased, and it was yet sad and brutal.

The comic began as a self-published project between Ka-Jo Baldesimo and Budjette Tan in 2005, but they had a relationship for some time and had worked previously. It is amazing to see the journey this comic has been on, and how some have had great faith in it, thankfully, and that Ablaze brought it to readers.

There are four volumes to enjoy, and Ablaze the publisher produced a Free Comic Book Day Comic in 2021 and 2022, which can still be found, and definitely should be sought out. There is something very unique here, in an exquisite way, and these are thoroughly enjoyable comics.





Journey Planet 64 - August 2022

~Editors~

Jean Martin, Chuck Serface
James Bacon, Chris Garcia