

Masked: A Visual Representation of Philippine Mythological Guardians as Traditional Masks Using Animal Symbolism in Commemoration to Philippine Roots

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Abstract

Filipino culture has slowly been fading, often overshadowed by other cultural trends. This project aims to introduce and commemorate how Filipino predecessors lived their lives pre-colonization through visual representation. I utilized Philippine mythology, a form of Filipino folklore, as my topic to uplift Filipino culture. I wanted people to know that these myths were not made just for entertainment but to make sense of the unexplainable during the early times. As a Filipino artist, I want to be one of the people boosting Philippine mythology as part of our culture in a way I know best. I chose to execute my project as traditional masks, a symbol to reveal rather than conceal. I researched inside the network to look for different deities and guardians that indigenous people worshiped during ancient times. Utilizing the theory Semiotics, I will discuss the creative approaches and techniques I plan to tackle in creating this project, including the masks and animal symbolism representing the chosen mythological beings.

Keywords: Philippine mythology, Filipino culture, commemoration

Introduction

Recently, I have developed a strong passion for crafting one-of-a-kind mask designs. My creative journey began with replicating Japanese mask designs but has evolved into designing masks inspired by various animals. Seeing how this project is an opportunity for me to bring my sketches to life, I quickly took the chance to create a study about what I commonly notice in the Philippines.

As a Filipino, I have noticed how our once culture-rich country is slowly fading. Since the colonization, Americans and the Spaniards have heavily influenced our culture. The thought of this engaged me in a deep thought, leading me to think of how it was for us during pre-colonial times. Curiosity as an artist has driven me to look into our traditions. I wanted to find something deep-rooted within our heritage that could be interesting enough to the modern generation. Then I found out about Philippine Mythology and how it dates back to the very beginning. This intrigued me as an artist and

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a Filipino, I was hungry to learn how these stories began. Myths are often ideas that are not entirely true but are not false at the same time (Goldman, 2019).

In an article written by Daniel Goldman (2019), he stated that myth is narrative. It is a story written to be truthful about ourselves. Creating a position for us in the world, our little corner. Myths are written with sincerity to achieve the connection between the past and the present (Goldman, 2019). Philippine Mythology plays a significant role in maintaining our culture while introducing a part of ourselves that we never knew before.

I chose this topic as a commemoration to our Philippine roots, while also uplifting local mythologies as part of Filipino culture. Even if there are numerous people conducting or making studies about Philippine mythologies, it is still in the shadows compared to other mythologies like Greek, Norse, Roman, etc. I want to be part of the creators to raise Philippine mythology further. Not only that but also to give a sense of identity to Filipinos who struggle to identify their place in the world due to the influences of different countries. Often times we look back at our past and discuss about the beginning of Filipinos during colonial times, but rarely talk about what it was like pre-colonial time, therefore creating this capstone will be a form of introduction of how ancient Filipinos lived during their time.

As an artistic approach, I chose to mix the deities and guardians with animals associated with their roles. I will be incorporating different art styles and techniques to create these masks mixed with animals that are native to the Philippines in the form of symbols. Symbolism is a form of Art or practice that uses symbols to express profound meaning, allowing artists to express themselves by representing complex ideas, emotions, and narratives through visual representations (Patel, 2023), using animals as symbols to show a variety of attributes, from emotional to religious, as humans grow more conscious of their inner selves (artfilemagazine, 2023). This will give us a broader connection to the world, seeing how animals still surround us as we live our daily lives. Through the creation of this capstone, reimagining Philippine Mythological Guardians as animals provides a unique opportunity for modern Filipino citizens to explore and celebrate our cultural identity.

As for my medium, I chose to execute this project in the form of traditional masks to introduce to people that using masks does not only conceal but also reveal. However, the concept of masking in psychology involves presenting oneself in a way that conceals authentic emotions and conforms to societal norms (Team, 2023). Masks also provide a visual form of something inside us that cannot be seen by the naked eye (Wingert, 2023). Our ancestor's past is an integral part of our culture and identity, and I will use masks as my symbol to showcase that these beliefs, no matter how ancient, are still part of us and our heritage.

The material I will be using to build the masks is EVA foam (Ethylene-vinyl acetate copolymer foam) and foam clay. I chose this material because of its lightweight body and durability that can be used in a number of applications (Eva Foam Supplier, Manufacturer, Converter & Supplier, n.d.). This material is commonly used by cosplayers for their props, making it easy for the wearer to carry and or perform with. In addition to the entirety my project, I will also be providing a photograph of each mask being worn in modern time.

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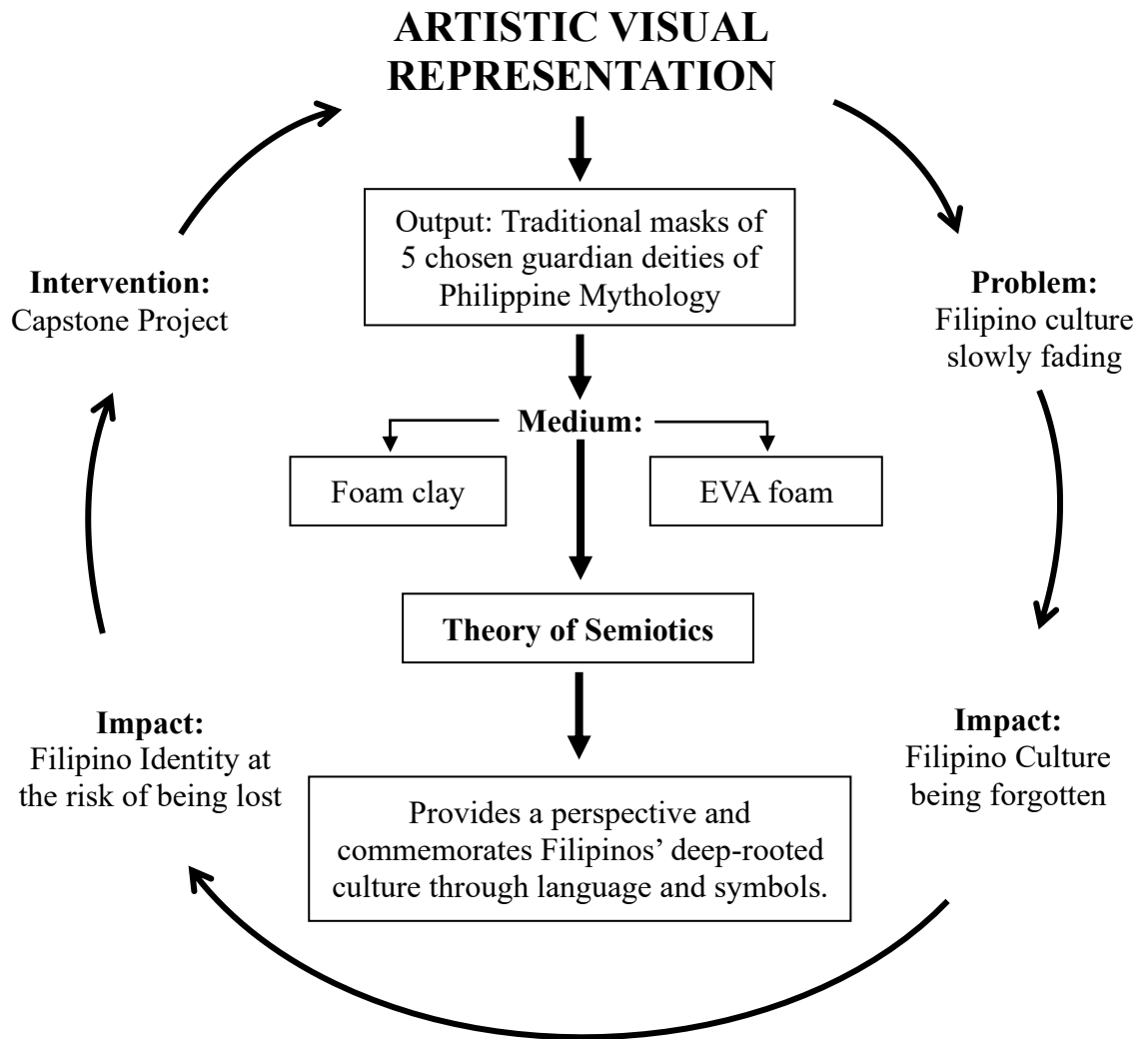


Figure 1 Framework of the Visual Representation of the Overall Concepts and Methods of the Project: Masked

The creative framework I chose for this project will highlight the significance of my topic and provide information about Philippine mythology during the pre-colonial times in the Philippines while also utilizing symbolic meanings in my work using semiotics. This part of the paper provides an in-depth visual summary of the project regarding the concept, symbols, theories, problem, impact, and the origin of the topic idea. The following sentences discuss the creative framework and research design based on the context of the study.

Upon observation, I noticed how Filipino culture is deprived slowly of attention compared to other cultures. Since I have chosen my medium, I must find a connection between masks and culture to uplift our culture using the Filipino's mythological beings.

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After gathering significant information regarding my topic, I confirmed that Filipino predecessors worshiped deities and guardians during ancient times. I also incorporated the chosen Philippine mythological guardians with animals, giving them an intriguing appearance.

As for the theory, I chose to incorporate it with the semiotics theory since I chose a symbolic approach to the visual representation of my project. According to Griffin (2012), The goal of semiotics, as stated by Roland Barthes, was to explain the verbal and nonverbal application of signs. His focus and interest in the theory was on the nonverbal side, acknowledging the possibilities of the varieties of unique and significant elements or features it can have, constantly waiting to be interpreted. Initially, Barthes defined his semiotic theory simply as an explanation of myth. The ideological idea that signs carry was the *connotation*, a word choice closest to conveying his concern. To make sense of the connotative theory, one must first understand Barthes' view on the structure of signs.

There are three (3) types of signs: The icon, the index, and the symbol. The icon resembles the actual sign. The index refers to signs pointed to or suggests a meaning not closely related to the signifier but by the signified (the attached meaning), and lastly, the symbols, where signs are traditional and culturally specific.

The Semiotics theory has two orders of signification: *Denotation* (first order) and *Connotation* (second order). The first order of semiotics is the signification of *denotation* towards a sign that consists of a signifier and a signified. The *signifier* is the physical form of the sign the way one would recognize using their senses, like an image. The *signified* is the meaning linked or attached to the sign. Lastly, *the sign* is the blend of both the signifier and the signified. The second-order *connotation* is the extended order of the denotative wherein you associate the literal meaning and add an idea or feeling that a person can connect to the denotative.

About this study, I fully utilized semiotic theory not in a way people would understand what I intend them to interpret but because I want my potential audience to talk about my capstone. The semiotics and visual representation of the mask to reveal rather than to conceal is one of the many uses of semiology in this project but, in a cultural aspect, referring to the use of Philippine mythology. Mythologies can be an aspect of one's culture because this is how humans interpret the world and their purpose and identity. By acknowledging and appreciating ancient times, people can commemorate and value their culture more. With semiology, according to Barthes, "anything in culture can be a sign and send a specific message." And that myth is a form of interaction, therefore making it a communication system conveying messages, a means of communication. It means everything can be a myth so long as it has meaning or message (via cultural signs and icons). Since semiology in symbols differs based on the society or community (Hammouri, 2020), this brings the people together by talking and communicating about the meaning behind my work. Therefore, a space where people

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commemorate the narratives that Filipino ancestors used to worship will have a place in the modern world.

The **data gathering method** of this project revolves around the existing literary works of the selected deities and guardians of Philippine mythology. There are literary works about the said characters from various sources and they will be evaluated before incorporating them into the project. There are certain qualities I look for in choosing a deity or guardian to include in my list.

Firstly, they have to come from the Philippines. Secondly, besides from having stories, they have to be figures that were once or still worshipped by certain tribes in the Philippines. Stories can be influential, but I want the deities or guardians to have a history, showing that they are embedded in the lives and practices of Filipinos. Also, each character must fit the characteristics of a Philippine native animal, doing this will help the evaluation faster. A great deal of research will be done to find out about the characters before choosing them. I have scouted countless articles and have found similar descriptions and background of each deity (or guardian). After all of this has been established, everything will be documented and summarized, possible changes about the characters will also be documented as the project progresses.

Research Design

The research design for this project will be heavily stylized in several ways. Inspirations were taken from various sources, mainly Japanese masks, and totems, utilizing different shapes and forms. The Philippine Mythological guardians will be taking a form of masks blended with animals that symbolize their specialties and what they are known for.

For the deities, the following paragraphs will be the description of the chosen characters of Philippine Mythology to be reimaged and blended with Philippine animals in the making of this project.

Dalikmata

The first deity I chose for this project to commemorate is *Dalikmata*, a Visayan clairvoyant goddess of eye ailments. Filipinos in the ancient days used to believe that their health was in the hands of deities, *Dalikmata* was one of these deities, she is a sympathetic goddess who weep for the misfortune of the towns people, they believed that her weeping at night and her tears is the reason behind the morning dew, a signification of her presence on earth. They would collect the morning dews and use them in portions and healing creams for those who have vision problems and illnesses (Philippines, 2013). Besides being a goddess of health, it was said she is also a goddess who bestows the abilities of visions, premonition, prophetic dreams, clairvoyance, and the third eye, the babaylans revered her as a higher tier divinity. It was also believed she would pass these

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gifts to the few chosen infants at their birth, people who have moles in their eyeball hold these gifts, and the closer the mole to the pupil the greater the power of their premonitions and forces. Those blessed with these gifts were referred to as *babylans* or *ermitanyos* (*hermits*) and *surwanos* (*healers*).

For her appearance, *Dalikmata* was seen as a beautiful goddess with her body covered with thousands of eyes. Each eye signifies a person, and she could see all the good and bad they would do in their lives.

Ynaguinid

The second deity to be reimagined will be another Visayan goddess named *Ynaguinid*. In the writings of Goncayco Stephanie (2019), she is the goddess of war and poisons. She appears as a warrior with tattoos covering her body as a symbol of her victories and as a slayer of men. Her face is often streaked with blood, her teeth sharp like a predator, blackened with coal and herbs. *Ynaguinid* is one of the Bisayan gods that holds a significant role in the Bisayan community. She is one of the personifications of war and is an inspiration and role model for ancient Bisayans in warfare, sieges, and pillages. Rumors have it she appeared to a group of lost hunters and warriors as a beautiful woman in the forest and that she taught them the art of utilizing herbs and plants, mixing them to create poisons from floras *kayoos* or *kolot*, *makasala* and *kamandag* plants to smear on their weapons or use against their enemies. Other than poisonous herbs, she also taught these men how to use and get viper venom and mix it with herbal oils to create “*odto*” also known as “high noon” a poison mix used for war, and those affected with this poison were expected not to survive until noon (battles before were usually done early in the morning till afternoon).

Ancient Bisayans pray to *Ynaguinid* with the other gods of war to give strength to their warriors and hunters. In a book *Barangay: Sixteenth-Century Philippine Culture and Society* by William Henry Scott, he observed that the Bisayans would perform rites and rituals before war to gratify the god of war. “*Pagdaga*” was one of the rituals Bisayans did before they went into battle at sea, where they would smear the blood of their enemies on the front and back of their boats. Weapon smiths also pay their respects to *Ynaguinid*. Traditionally, they would offer prayers before and after building weapons. In the houses of the chiefs and head *babaylans*, ancient Bisayans would keep an image of the war gods they bring out during feasts, commonly at the beginning and end of a war to commemorate and celebrate their victors and warriors in their battles (Gancayco, 2016).

During the colonial period, Ancient Bisayans believed that the war deities like *Ynaguinid* blessed the warriors during their fight as they fought against the Spaniards while also protecting their lands and villages. As we all know, the Spaniards successfully conquered our land, so the powerful *Ynaguinid* who inspired hundreds and thousands of Ancient Bisayans in life and on the battlefield will remain a memory to the few who survived in the country. Their stories will

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be told for generations through storytelling from tribes who still preach to them (Gancayco, 2016).

Pili

The third is *Pili*, an Ifugao guardian and protector of towns people. In an article conducted by Pigeon Lobien (2019) saying there was not much visual presentation of Cordillera mythical creatures unlike the fearsome ones, *kapre*, *manananggal*, or *tikbalang*. They made a comic exploring other mythical creatures their ancestors believed in. Here they mentioned '*Pili*', guardian spirits who they call upon to guard them against thieves and trespassers. These spirits are often accompanied by dogs who are extremely loyal and protective, these dogs will bite anyone who threatens their home and their people. Their bite with the invocation of the spirits will swell and it is said that the only known remedy for *Pili*'s bite is a rite that calls for the sacrifice of a chicken.

Dumakulem

The fourth on my list is *Dumakulem*, according to a webpage called Old World Gods (2023) he is a god from Tagalog mythology and is known to be the god of hunting and protector of the mountains. He is seen as a powerful god who represents the strength and magnificence of a mountain. He holds a significant role of maintaining and sustaining natural environments. His figure was known to safeguard spirits that lives within the mountains. Ancient Tagalogs during the early times believed when earthquakes occurs when *Dumakulem* was creating mountains, which was shockingly scientifically correct. In the Philippines across many indigenous communities, like the other deities, people would hold rituals and ceremonies to honor *Dumakulem* in return of his blessings. Rituals for *Dumakulem* were often related to planting and harvesting, especially during their season, showcasing the relationship of man and land. He is often a figure to remind the people of the nature's importance, and that in a country prone to natural disasters, it is deeply rooted value that people must respect and care for the environment.

As a hunter-god, he personified the wild, primordial elements of the natural world and represented our predecessors' profound regard and veneration for the prey they hunted. But being the "guardian of created mountains," *Dumakulem* took on the duty of a defender of the natural world, which was his most important function.

In addition, Traditional healing methods are also influenced by *Dumakulem*, especially when it comes to treating ailments or injuries involving physical prowess. The healing process is thought to be aided by calling on *Dumakulem*, highlighting the god's complex involvement in the lives and wellbeing of the Filipino people.

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As for his appearance, is usually shown as a strong, muscular figure, which is fitting given his link with stamina and strength. He is frequently seen with a staff in hand, signifying his dominion over the mountains. His basic clothing, made of bark or leaves, symbolizes his intimate relationship with the natural world. Green is strongly related to *Dumakulem*, representing the verdant trees that frequently cover the mountainside. Furthermore, it symbolizes development and regeneration, highlighting the cyclical nature of both the Earth and life (Nair, 2023).

Bul-ul or Tinagtaggu

According to an article written by Drew (2019) on Igorotage, a Bulul is an Ifugao anthropomorphic figure carved from wood of the rice gods or guardian spirits. They are the symbols of fertility, and their wooden sculptures are said to house the spirits of their ancestors.

Bululs are a crucial component of the Ifugao people's agricultural system. It takes part in all the ceremonial parts of growing rice, from planting to harvest storage in rice granaries. The main purpose of the sculpture is to serve as a rice granary guardian.

A Bulul, whether male or female, is a simplified version of a human. It is made up of a torso, a head that has been simplified, two hands, and legs that are fixed to a platform for support. During rituals, it must be placed correctly in front of the rice produce. The female Bulul is positioned on the left, and the male is on the right. In a custom known as the tunod ritual, hands drenched in pig or chicken blood are used to touch the Bulul during the rice-planting season.

In practices, one or more Bululs (usually two) are used in big granaries, the size and number of the Bululs are in no question of how many they should be rather the handling in terms of transporting it into and out of the granary is considered. Bulus should be handled with care and respect and if treated otherwise, it is said to cause the spirits or ancestors to appear negatively as diseases and pestilence.

Now that I have a descriptive background of the deities and their origins, I will then assign the animals to their corresponding deity, which will be tackled in the design process of the paper followed by gathering the references needed for the design.

My main **target audience** for this project will be the Filipinos, specifically ages 13 and up. Initially, my target audience was supposed to be Filipinos in general, but seeing how the youth are more influential and are in the stages of their lives where they absorb information and incorporate them in their lives, I feel like they are the right audience to dedicate my project. To acknowledge the past and make sense of the present and future of Filipino culture and traditions.

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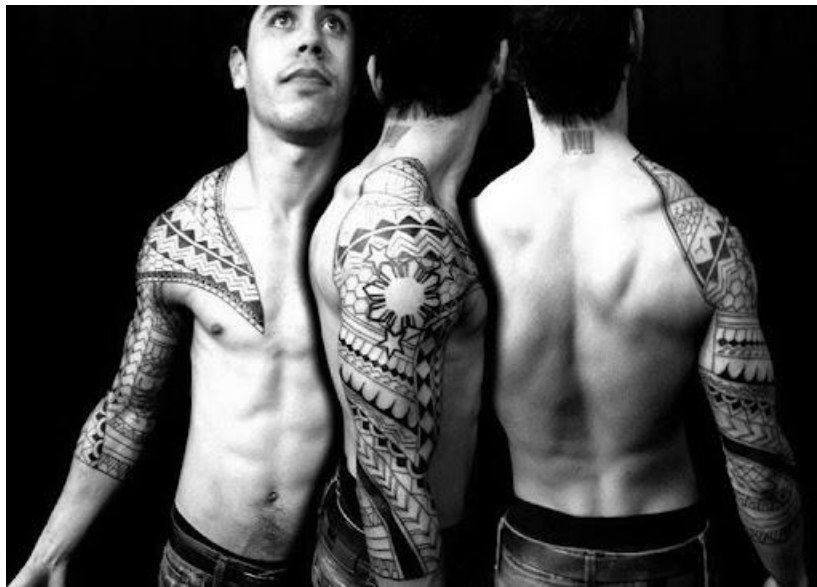
The **design process** of this study started by looking back at my past works in 2021. At first, I was not so sure how I would design them. I mentioned that the inspiration for these masks came from the cultural traditions of Japan, and I decided to incorporate animal symbolism with them. During my research, I have seen various masks that seemed bulky in shape since most of them are made from wood. For this project, I will be using a softer material than wood and will most likely be built from nothing, than carving it into something. The masks' sizes will vary depending on their designs, but their measurements will be based on the average way masks are sized, one thing for sure, they should be wearable.

The style of these masks will depend on the feeling I want them to look. I have mentioned before that the masks will be blended with animal features of the animal they are associated with (e.g. Dalikmata having hair made of feathers, signifying the Philippine eagle).

It's a work in progress of how I want them to look. They will vary from one another like how Japanese masks are to each other, completely embodying their differences. The texture of the design will be accounted for to bring authenticity to the details they will have. These masks will also have details corresponding to their origins, like the use of patterns on their clothing and tribal tattoos.

Figure 2

Filipino tribal tattoos.



Note. Source image is from One Tribe family, proudly reviving and sharing awareness about Filipino Tribal tattoos

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Figure 2.1

Samuel Shaw Filipino tattoos



Note. Image source is from samuelshawtattoos.com

In term of the details, designs, and patterns I incorporated in the masks, they all took inspiration from ancient traditions and tattoos (see figure 2). People always have a past and sometimes they use their experience and journey a part of them to remember, for tribal tattooing “People who receive a tattoo have to be of Filipino heritage. The artists work closely with their clients to research their family histories and life events to create a design.” (Lowe, 2014). Each design will be derived from their place of origin and identity, while also having my rendition to their designs modernizing them. Another tattoo artist I took inspiration from Filipino tribal tattoos is Samuel Shaw from Kulture Tattoo Kollektive he also took inspiration from Filipino Tribal tattoos and revived them in his own style (see figure 2.1).

Figure 3

Ifugao weaving patterns

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Note. Image source is the hero banner of [Ifugao Weaving Symbols – Ifugao Nation](#)

Ifugao weaving patterns was also one of my design choices that I implemented in my work, knowing I have a couple of the Philippine mythological guardians from the Ifugao tribes, it is only necessary to incorporate them within the masks' design. These patterns or symbols signify meaning showcasing their status and belief during the early times.

Figure 4

Ifugao weaving patterns



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Note. Image source is from of [fugao Weaving Symbols – Ifugao Nation](#)

These weaving patterns are more than just design, to the Ifugao people they signify as a form of connection to their gods. Each symbol has its own stories to tell, some symbols are woven to the clothing of the rulers and warriors, and some for commoners. They implement these patterns in their clothing to seek protection from evil or ask for their blessings.

As for the animals of the character representation, here is the provided list of the Philippine animals with their description and explanation of their symbolism and relation to the deity (or guardian).

1. **Philippine Eagle as Dalikmata.** Upon researching Dalikmata and her origin, I have stumbled upon numerous animal symbols that are associated with her. Philippines Luzviminda (2013), mentioned in her article how Dalikmata is most commonly associated with Eagles and Hawks, they are known to have great eyesight, helping her see broadly through the archipelago. Seeing how the Philippine Eagle is the country's National Bird declared by President Fidel V. Ramos in 1995 (Legazpi, 2022), I saw this as an opportunity to also uplift local animals in my work.
2. **Asong Gubat (Forest witch Dog) as Pili Guardians.** *Asong Gubat* are dogs said to be a potential “National Breed” of the Philippines (Cordero, 2023). People are having a petition to introduce this breed as an official National Breed of the Philippines by the Federation Cynologique Internationale (FCI). These dogs are not street dogs that we all commonly called “*askal*” but rather a completely different breed on their own. They are wild and brave breeds that are known to be good hunters, said to be procreating only with the same breed keeping their bloodline pure and alive. Fascinated by this news, I chose to use this breed as a symbol for the dogs accompanying the Pili Guardians in fulfilling their duties as protectors of their people.
3. **Tamaraw (small water buffalo) as Bulul.** In an article by United Nations Development Programme Together for Tamaraws. Tamaraws are native breeds and are endemic only to the island of Mindoro. I chose the Tamaraws to

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represent the Bulul because they both are associated with harvest, while also reminding the fact that Tamaraws are slowly decreasing in population. Associating these two will not only uplift the Philippines heritage but also raising awareness about the decreasing population of Tamaraws.

4. **Samar Cobra as Ynaguinid.** As a goddess of poisons and a deity who uses poisons from vipers, I chose to associate Ynaguinid with than an actual snake that is native in our country and region. Samar Cobras are endemic to the Southern part of the Philippines and is listed as a Category 1 venomous snake species of medical importance by the World Health Organization (Palasuberniam et al., 2021). Since Ynaguinid is a Goddess known to have killed numerous enemies in war with her poisons, this animal association is fitting as her symbol for the representation.
5. **Visayan Leopard as Dumakulem.** Epidemic in the Philippines, Visayan Leopard cats are only found in the Islands of Negros, Cebu and Panay. These creatures lives in tropical forests and some are recorded in sugarcane farms. These cats are territorial and are great climbers, usually hunting and resting in trees (Briones, 2023). Dumakulem is a Tagalog god of hunt and although this creature does not showcase the appearance of Dumakulem in size, I chose to represent him in his role as a hunt god. These Leopards also solitary animals which I believe represents Dumakulem's love for nature and his eagerness to protect it. Another reason why I chose this animal is because they are also in the verge of extinction, which I believe by using them as a symbol for Dumakulem will help people be aware of Visayan Leopards' status quo in modern time.

Pre-Production

This part of the paper contains the Philippine mythological deities or guardians that will be used and represented in making this project while also discussing the creative approach on the details and techniques that is incorporated in designing the masks.

In preparation for my final output, I will be focusing on researching about the Philippines mythological guardians, intensively checking their backgrounds making sure the tribe or religion they belong to would not be offended by the purpose of this project. At the same time, I will research animals, specifically animals native to the Philippines, and their behavior and symbol to see which among them best fits the chosen five (5) guardian deities.

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Figure 5
Pili Initial Sketch



Figure 6
Dalikmata Sketch



Figure 7
Dumakulem Sketch



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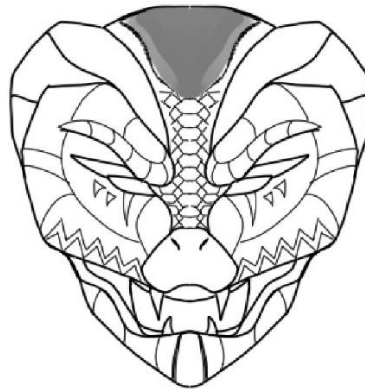
Figure 8

Bul-lul Sketch



Figure 9

Ynaguinid sketch



Production

During production, this phase will include several attempts and experimentation. I will create stencils or templates for the base structure, tracing them onto the decided material. The masks will be made individually using the design for a more focused approach. I will start with the overall base and then mold the parts and details of the mask into their desired shape before attaching it to its base. While waiting for the molding material to dry, I will set it aside while working on another mask. After the mold has dried within 24-48 hours, they are ready to be primed and painted before moving on to the next phase.

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Post-Production

For my post-production stage, this is where I will prime and paint the mask before applying a protective coat for a durable finish, retaining a beautiful finish that resists chips and cracks. Since these are wearable face masks, this is where I attach the straps to the masks. Each mask will include a photograph for the exhibition, they will be prepped and polished for a small photoshoot. These photographs will be in an A4 print and framed for the audience to see how the masks would look like when worn.

Review of Related Literature

In relation to my project, this chapter provides an overview of the related literature, articles, studies, and discourses surrounding Philippine Mythology, culture enrichment, and symbols. This section of the paper will also discuss how the history of the subject developed in the latter day and why it was created in the first place.

Mythology

Mythologies or Myths defined by historians are narratives made to accommodate distinct traditions of a culture or tribe (COMMONER, 2020). Myth is a literary genre of folklore, where stories told by our ancestors play a significant role in society about how the world came into place. Myths are stories explaining the origin of humans, deities, supernatural beings, and natural phenomena. These stories give a sense of comfort to one's ancestors, giving them a feeling of order and meaning in an unpredictable world (Mark, 2018). They have become a guide to one's ancestors as they navigate in an unpredictable world, carrying the power to influence and change individual comprehension through the influence of symbolic landscape, character, and theme. Although myths are ancient, they still reflect a modern audience because mythologies are written for individual interpretation, making people who have heard the narrative and interpreted the meaning of the story will be able to respond to it (Mark, 2018). Serving as a compass to navigate through generations, answering ageless questions.

Philippine Mythology

In an article by Diamante (2019), Filipinos are known for their share of numerous supernatural beings and their constant belief in them. These supernatural beings are viewed as gods and goddesses, behaving as a heavenly source and protectors to their people alongside creatures who cause unfortunate and inconvenience. In latter-days, many Filipinos still believe in various mythological creatures that surround us because of stories told by a person's grandparents of the aged folktale narratives in their younger years by the late generation.

Like the road in Iloilo, an article by Murga (2020) stated that the whole stretch was said to be Mari-it, meaning enchanted. The spirit dwellers were said to reside in the area, and if they were disrespected and uncared for, there would be undesirable consequences.

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According to Sugue and Reyes (2022), Philippine Mythology among Filipinos is sacred and usually revolves around life and death. Their beliefs range from deities and guardians to holy creatures and plants. In the provincial mountains, most myths are about death and rebirth. For others, their beliefs are about fending off nasty spirits by respecting and serving the spirits and mythological creatures. Mythology, especially one's own, is one of the treasures of cultural heritage. They represent various distinct creatures from each region. The status of myths in the faith of the Filipinos has been fading over time, and only the late generations are usually the ones reviving these narratives. So, for these myths to prosper, they must be told and shared as reminders of Filipino roots.

Philippine Mythology as Cultural Commemoration.

Sugue and Reyes (2022) find value in these mythological narratives essential to national culture. To maintain the cultural aspect and identity of mythologies, a person must be aware and familiar with the literary writings. These piles of myths assist people in discovering and finding out more about their creation and who they are, providing them guidance and clarity by using mythical beings. Often taking account of Philippine Mythology, this would gradually help and increase the chance of these myths and tales being reminisced as a narrative truth. These myths would revive a fundamental part of not only society but culture as well.

For Commoner (2020), knowing about these stories can help provide a better understanding of how Filipino ancestors think and how they lived their lives while also improving the self-comprehension of each Filipino. Their predecessors also believed that divinities occupy one's life daily. They dedicated their lives individually to communicating with spiritual beings during pre-historic times, often so that they would even seek approval from the nearest spirit residing in the area. To prevent the possibility of misfortune raining on them or their town. Utilizing folklore, Filipinos will have a chance to see what it was like for their ancestors to live during the pre-colonial times. It helped one's ancestors coherently view the questions of an unpredictable world with

Anthropomorphism

In an article written by Chrisél Attewell (2023), Anthropomorphism is the perception of objects, animals, nature, deities, or even events as having human characteristics. The term is derived from the Greek origins *anthropos*, which means "human," and *morphe*, which means "form," and refers to something nonhuman taking on human characteristics. Philosophers, psychologists, and artists were particularly drawn to anthropomorphism, claiming that it can provide valuable insight into the human psyche. The first person to anthropomorphize and write about it was Xenophanes, a Greek thinker and poet in his time (c. 560-c. 478 BCE). Xenophanes undermined the way people view gods, that they would give the gods human-like traits and personalities. This is also the reason people have a unique way of perceiving their gods in diverse cultures. Early philosophers like Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) believed that the reason people anthropomorphized was emotional reasons. This was to make the world around them feel

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less threatening and more empathetic. As for David Hume (1711-1776), he argued that people needed a reason to relate to and understand the unfamiliar so they did it in the best way they could to understand, and that is to use themselves as models.

Symbolism in Art

Symbolism has long been associated with art throughout time, from the ancient drawings of the hieroglyphics inside the cave walls to modern stories. Symbolism is a form of expression representing ideas or traits that go past their literal meaning (Baba, 2023). It is a visual language that assists the artist in sending messages that can generate an emotional response (Petel, 2023). Symbols have played an influential role in establishing their intentions to communicate their experiences when an artist wants to tell a personal story, to help them confidently uncover their truths using their philosophies and ideologies (Meyer, 2023). Moreover, this approach stops people in their tracks, making them think and evoke creativity. Symbols may differ for each person, creating a discourse about the artist's intended message and the people's interpretation of the symbols.

Animal Symbolism

Animals have been the stars of many stories, folktales, parables, and mythologies, typically portraying something difficult to understand. By understanding the fundamentals of symbolism, we increase our awareness of how art stirs up emotions and discussions, building links between the artist and the personal interpretations of the audience (Patel, 2023). Throughout human history, animals have been utilized as symbols in literary and artistic works to refer to a deeper understanding (Baba, 2023). Artists extend symbolic significance to the animals in their creations, and an animal influences the message the artist wants to convey. Symbolism in some artists serves as a bridge to give a deeper meaning to their artworks, making their audiences dive into their works and uncover the truths they wish to reveal.

Symbolism will play a significant role in this study, to make the output interesting and evoke discussion among the audience.

Review of Related Works

This part of the paper is a collection of creative works done by numerous artists around the world that have a correlation to the project and can further inspire, build, and explain the artist's outlook on the project. In addition, this section will also provide the medium and techniques that will be applied in the process of this project.

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Figure 10

Philippine Mythological Creatures



Note. Eight (8) Philippine mythological creatures reimagined by Mari Hosalla

In an article written by Mari Hosalla and CNN Life Philippines (2018), they reimagined 8 Philippine mythological creatures within the Philippines. They created how the characters would look and equipped them with stylish garbs from where they originated. They illustrated eight (8) different mythological creatures from various parts of the country. The following deities they reviewed are Haliya, Dalikmata, and Lakapati. As for the creatures, it was the Bakunawa, Kapre, Mananangal, Tikbalang, and Berbalang. Some mythological creatures are commonly known, while others could be added information. But this reveals that the recognition of Philippine mythology across the country uprising.

I would also like to recreate and resurface some deities and spirits that our ancestors worshipped. I plan to reimagine them in my medium as Masks that can be worn and used as a prop or decorative item, at the same time commemorating the way Filipinos lived in pre-colonial times.

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Figure 11

Brother Bear (2003)



Note. The screenshot is from the Brother Bear Film (2003).

The movie revolves around a young Alaskan boy named Kenai who dislikes bears because one killed his brother. As he pursues and kills a bear, the Spirits become furious by this unnecessary killing and transform Kenai into a bear as punishment. Kenai must journey to a mountain where the Northern Lights touch the earth to be human again.

Brother Bear is an example of anthropomorphism, wherein they implemented human emotions and feelings into animals. Besides that, this film also utilized animal symbolism in their totems: The Eagle of Guidance, the Wolf of Wisdom, and the Bear of Love. Doing this made the characters distinct and notable, which will help me incorporate each animal that symbolizes the deity or guardian while also giving them a distinctive look of their own from one another.

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Figure 12

Japanese Masks



Note. The image source is from Eiyo Kimono.

The habit of wearing masks is one of the most well-known and recognizable characteristics of Japanese culture. The beginning of using masks in Japan started in the 1870s, making it 153 years ago today. They showcase their culture by using eye-catching visual communication.

Wearing masks is deeply rooted and are integral part of Japanese culture. These masks are used variously, from traditional theatres in festivals and carnivals, religious rituals, protection from evil spirits, and lastly as fashion accessories for daily use. Aside from wearing them for anonymity and warding off bad spirits, another reason people from Japan wear masks was to honor their ancestors and showcase their patriotism.

Figure 12.1

Fukumen



Note. The black masks workers used at the mines and factories. Image from web-japan.org

The first recorded masks were black masks that people used at coal mines and factories. Since this is where people worked at that time, they wore black masks to protect them from dust and for the dirt to not be noticeable due to its color. The oldest mask in Japan can be found at a location known as a World Heritage Site being used by

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miners in Iwami Ginzan Silver Mine. They called these masks *Fukumen*, a wordplay meaning “lucky masks” in Nihongo (Masks in Japan Are Everyday Items, n.d.).

Figure 12.2

The Role of Japanese Masks



Note. Image source from Japanese Oni Masks

In Japan, masks are highly stylized, each having its purpose and extraordinary meaning that represents various characters in traditional Japanese theatre, plays, or Noh. These masks convey emotions, feelings, and traits a character is experiencing or signify a whole character. Most of their masks are representations of deities, demons, animals, or widespread mythological creatures from their country (Story of Every Japanese Mask, n.d.).

Japanese masks can play a significant role as a part of their heritage, worn in their daily lives as a prop for a costume or simply just for decoration, but commonly seen in theatres or religion. People also use them to express themselves individually and creatively as a form of escape from reality. Even in modern times, you can see these masks worn as a fashion accessory, mostly to display respect or admiration for someone. Regardless of how they used masks, they evoke a strong reaction to the people with their mysterious and remarkable uniqueness.

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Figure 13

Getting started with EVA foam



Note. Screenshots from Kamui Cosplay YouTube Channel

URL: <https://www.youtube.com/@KamuiCosplay>

Svetlana and Benjamin Schwarz are the creators of Kamui Cosplay, they are husband and wife from Germany who work together on creating props for their cosplay. They also create tutorials on YouTube, sharing their step-by-step process with the world on how they make props.

Their videos and their channel will guide me in the process of making my output. They provide videos on their YouTube channel that would greatly help in producing my masks. From picking the right foam, cutting, bending, priming, to painting and polishing the finished product.

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Figure 14

EVA Foam Masks



Note. Screenshot from SKS Props on YouTube URL: <https://youtu.be/0LKYCmaZ2uE>

The mask shown in Figure 14 is one of the various works of Steve from SKS Props. Steve is a multi-award-winning professional Cosplay fabricator in St. Louis Missouri. He is known in the Cosplay community for making builds for Cosplay with incredible detail from popular video games and pop culture media. Steve uses high-density EVA foam products for his props. This video will be my reference that will guide me in the process of building the masks specifically. Incorporating the basic and integral steps of making the mask have a proper base for the details.

Figure 15

Foam Clay



Note. Screenshot from Kamui Cosplay on YouTube. URL: <https://youtu.be/1PPA8IUFrRo>

Another video reference from Kamui Cosplay. In this video Svetlana, the woman in Figure 15, explains how foam clay works. The time of drying and what other uses it could do. She explained how long it takes for foam clay to dry and how it could maintain

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its form better for longer use. Utilizing this video will help with process of adding details to my work and how I could extend the lifeline of these masks for continuous use.

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