

Copyright is owned by the Author of the thesis. Permission is given for a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of the Author.

ON THE BONES OF BATALA

Exploring the Colonization of the Tagalog Region
through Tabletop Role-Playing Game Design

An exegesis presented in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of

Master of Design

at Te Kunenga ki Pūrehuroa Massey University,
Te Whanganui-a-Tara Wellington, Aotearoa New Zealand

Ar-Em Bañas

2025

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to thank my family, partner, communities, and friends who supported me throughout the Master of Design (MDES) programme; my supervisors, Claire Hackett and Bo Moore, who shared their knowledge and guided me throughout the development of *On the Bones of BATALA* and this exegesis; and the Massey lecturers and staff who shared their time and wisdom with me, particularly Dr. Scott Wilson, Heather Galbraith, Dr. Catherine Hoad, Deb Cumming, Emma Fox, and Dr. Kendra Marston.

I also would like to respectfully acknowledge that I completed the MDES programme in Pukeahu and Te Aro, the unceded lands of the Muaūpoko, Ngāti Rangī, Ngāti Ira, Ngāti Toa Rangatira, and Taranaki iwi. As Filipino tauiwi, studying at Te Kunenga ki Pūrehuroa Massey University was only possible because of Te Tiriti o Waitangi. Toitū te Tiriti.

DEDICATION

Dedicated to all who came before me but especially my grandparents, Ramon Jarabas Bañas, Sr., Elena Suaviso Arcilla, Leonardo Alcantara Trinidad, and last but not the least, Dionisia Peñaranda Gonzales, who instilled in her children and grandchildren a deep appreciation for education.

ABSTRACT

The collaborative narrative space of tabletop role-playing games (TTRPGs) can create opportunities for the TTRPG designer, the Game Master (GM), and the players to engage in conversation about real-life issues such as the impact of colonialism in the Philippines. It can also be a vehicle for counter-hegemonic narratives (Scherff iii-iv) by allowing marginalized players to engage with their culture and folklore through anticolonial play within a fictional environment.

Growing up in Metro Manila, Philippines, which historian William Manchester described as the second most destroyed Allied city after Warsaw and “one of the greatest tragedies of World War II” (413), I found little space for Filipinos to discuss colonial violence and trauma specific to the Tagalog region. This project provides an avenue to address that need thereby offering the potential for creative expression and collective healing.

Reimagining the colonization of Metro Manila and the Tagalog Region through a folk-horror TTRPG allowed me to navigate and process its violent and traumatic history while offering an outlet for other Filipino players to explore their own feelings about colonialism. *On the Bones of BATALA* positions players as Katauhan, the human survivors in an alternate-history folk-horror setting. They survive on the Rotting Isles, an archipelago built on the corpse of the Tagalog supreme god, Batalang Maykapal, who was slain by the god-like colonizers. The game’s development was guided by the question, **“How do I recontextualize my experiences with colonial violence, trauma, and hegemonic narratives through tabletop role-playing game design to enable Filipino players to regain agency over their own experiences through play?”**

Through the Schema of Karunungan (transl. Knowledge) epistemology, Research-for-Creation methodology, D.I.Y. Punk Ethos and an iterative-reflective process, I developed a playable TTRPG starter kit which includes:

- 1) an illustrated rulebook with a premade scenario,
- 2) three pre-generated player character (PC) sheets,
- 3) three blank PC sheets,
- 4) five sets of handouts,
- 5) three boards with three sets of tokens, and
- 6) a six-sided die (d6).

KEY TERMS

precolonial Tagalog, Tagalog folklore, colonial violence, colonial trauma, hegemonic narratives, tabletop role-playing games

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgement	1
Dedication.....	2
Abstract.....	3
Glossary	6
Introduction.....	7
Who Am I?	7
TTRPGs: Game-ifying Difficult Conversations	7
<i>On the Bones of BATALA</i> Overview	8
Context Review	9
Tagalog History, Culture and Folklore	9
Colonial Trauma.....	10
Tagalog Folklore.....	11
Horror Genre	11
Body Horror	11
Punk Games: TTRPGs and Counter-hegemony.....	12
Case Studies	13
Gubat Banwa	13
<i>MÖRK BORG</i> and <i>CY_BORG</i>	14
Research Methodology.....	16
Schema of Karunungan Epistemology	16
Low-Risk Studies	18
Study A: Tagalog Deities and Folklore Study.....	19
Study B: Filipino Psychology and Colonial Trauma Study	22
Study C: Playtests.....	26
Research-for-Creation Methodology	28
Iterative and Reflective Design	29
Design Methodology	30
Transforming the Tagalog Region into the Rotting Isles	30
Output	30
Foundation Work	31
Design Pillars and Process.....	32
Design Work.....	33
Text	33
Worldbuilding	33
Writing.....	37
Play.....	39
<i>OTBOB</i> as an OSR TTRPG.....	39
<i>OTBOB</i> Mechanics as Metaphors	39
Visual	43
Concept Design.....	43
Illustration	46

Layout Design	66
Tactile Component Illustration	67
Material	67
Punk Game Framework and Paper-Based Components	72
Tactile Component Process	72
Further Development	72
Conclusion	73
Works Cited	74
List of Images	78
List of Tables	80
Appendix A	81
Study A: Tagalog Deities and Folklore	81
Low-Risk Approval Questionnaire	81
Call-for-Respondents	85
Participant Information and Consent Form	86
Survey and Interview Questions	87
Table of Responses	87
Appendix B	132
Study B: Filipino Psychology and Colonial Trauma	132
Low-Risk Approval Questionnaire	132
Call-for-Respondents	136
Participant Information and Consent Form	137
Interview Questions	138
Interviewee Information	139
Interviews	140
Appendix C	158
Study C: Playtest	158
Low-Risk Approval Questionnaire	158
Call-for-Playtesters	162
Participant Information and Consent Form	163
Playtest Schedule	164
Playtester Information	164
Katauhan Creation Playtest	165
Lambana Campaign Playtest	166

GLOSSARY

Colonial Trauma. “A complex, continuous, collective, cumulative and compounding” interaction of impacts related to the “imposition of colonial policies and practices” (Mitchell 75).

Hegemonic Narrative. “A discourse that attempts to legitimize one narrative or perspective over others, with the dominant narrative being intrinsically tied to existing systems of power” (Lombardo qtd. in Dwyer et al.).

Filipino and Philippine. Diverse peoples and cultures from the Philippines and the diaspora. This umbrella term is only used when “Tagalog” is inapplicable or inappropriate, e.g. referring to qualitative research participants who were from all over the Philippines and diaspora.

Tagalog. One of the many non-Indigenous ethnolinguistic groups in the Philippines (Philippine Statistics Authority). Throughout the exegesis, the term refers to the people, language, culture, and history of said group.

Tagalog Region. The Tagalog cultural region which includes areas in Central and South Luzon, the largest island in the Philippines (Odal).

INTRODUCTION

Who Am I?

Born and raised in the Tagalog region of the Philippines, specifically the capital city Metro Manila and Rizal Province, I view the world through a predominantly Tagalog lens despite my Bicolano, Ilonggo, and Filipino-Chinese heritage. All my research and design decisions were influenced directly and indirectly by this.

My Tagalog biases are partially due to the standard education I received in Metro Manila. As a student, I was taught a Metro Manila-centric version of history which downplayed the modern nation-building contributions and perspectives outside of the region (*What's Wrong With Philippines Studies?*, sc. 32:21; Sugbo 496-97; Veloso) while simultaneously encouraging the misappropriation and commodification of their cultures¹.

Moreover, I was taught of the benevolence of our colonizers, particularly the “gifts” of democracy, capitalism, Catholicism, and the English language (Constantino 9). It is only when I pursued self-led research that I discovered the extent of the violence wrought on our land and people; including land theft, human zoos, concentration camps, public executions, bombings, genocides, and rapes. Worse, I discovered that colonial violence was in my blood in the form of my progenitor, a Spanish priest. One can imagine how he came to be in my family tree.

The isolation and grief I felt as I learned more about my family, regional, and national history were immense. I wanted to create a space where I could regain control over my own narrative and have conversations about colonial violence, trauma, and the hegemonic discourses that hide them, with other Filipinos who might feel the same way. I wondered how I could encourage these conversations to happen naturally while minimizing retraumatization. This led me toward TTRPGs, which facilitate player-led decision-making and could be used as a framework to feature counter-hegemonic themes, marginalized cultures and folklore, and through play, encourage conversations about difficult topics.

TTRPGs: Game-ifying Difficult Conversations

TTRPG is a type of game often played between two to six players and with two roles: one Game Master (GM) and multiple Player Characters (PCs). Each player controls a single PC, while the GM controls the environment and the Non-Player Characters (NPCs). TTRPGs are traditionally analog, using a rulebook, character sheets, and a die. TTRPGs prioritize immersion, which allows players to embody their PCs during roleplay, and facilitates agency via giving players the ability to influence the narrative (Amauger), which is essential when exploring difficult topics like colonial violence during play. This shifts the narrative creation from “telling” to an active conversation between the players and the GM, creating space for all to share and control their stories. This led me to create a tabletop role-playing game (TTRPG) inspired by the pre- and colonial histories, cultures, and folklore of the Tagalog region: *On the Bones of BATALA*.

¹ For example, the misappropriation and commodification of Indigenous Igorot cultures (Laltoog 45-47).

On the Bones of BATALA Overview

On the Bones of BATALA (OTBOB) was developed with Filipinos (specifically, Tagalog) players in mind. I chose to focus on Tagalog folklore and history as the primary narrative influence as I am more confident to speak on the Tagalog views on history, culture, and folklore given my heritage, language, and location growing up.

OTBOB aims to provide a platform for conversations about the violent colonization of the Tagalog region and to critique colonial hegemonic narratives. During play, the GM plays as death personified, Kamatayan, and the players play as Katauhan, the human survivors of the Rotting Isles. The setting is an archipelago built on the corpse of the Tagalog supreme god, Batalang Maykapal (or BATALA), who was slain by the god-like colonizers, the KADAYUHAN.

Players begin with two handouts: Secret, which provides brief information about their ancestry, and History, a historical retelling of their settlement. These handouts are incorporated in the TTRPG character creation process, allowing players to develop their PC's background. Additionally, it functions as metaphors for hegemonic narratives and biases one learns from their environment, mirroring my education in Metro Manila. The goal of *OTBOB* is to encourage discussion between players while they struggle to survive the harsh social and environmental factors. Players collect more Secrets and Histories during play; these can either support or counter the hegemonic narrative, and players are encouraged to question, challenge, and discover the truth. Once PCs gather enough information, they must decide: fight the KADAYUHAN, accept their lot, or create a different path.

CONTEXT REVIEW

Tagalog History, Culture and Folklore

“[Colonialism] turns to the past of the oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures, and destroys it. This work of devaluing pre-colonial history takes on a dialectical significance today.” (Fanon et al. 149)



Figure 1. 1734 map of the Philippines. (A Hydrographical and Chorographical Chart of the Philippine Islands).

Before colonization, the archipelago now known as the Philippines was composed of different polities. Across the archipelago, these polities and regions had differing cultures, histories, and religious beliefs but were forcibly merged into a single nation and dubbed “Felipinas” after King Philip II of Spain (Eadie 61-62).

The Philippines was then subjugated by imperial powers for over 300 years, the most well-known being Spain (1565 to 1898), the U.S. (1898 to 1946), and Japan (1942 to 1945). During this period, many atrocities were committed in the Tagalog region alone.

Table 1. Atrocities committed in the Tagalog Region.

Spanish Colonization	American Colonization	Japanese Occupation
<p>Enforced the <i>encomienda</i> and <i>repartimiento</i>, systems of forced labor (Eadie 63)</p> <p>Publicly executed natives they deemed threats, e.g. the novelist and propagandist, Dr. Jose Rizal (Eadie 66-67)</p> <p>Spanish friars committed numerous abuses against the natives (Eadie 64)</p>	<p>Used torture such as the water cure (Constantino 5; Ablett 25-26)</p> <p>Created concentration camps in Batangas (see Figure 2).</p> <p>Bombarded Manila in 1945 to flush out Japanese soldiers (Dvorak-Stocker 54)</p>	<p>Bombed Manila in 1941 despite it being declared an “Open City” (Dvorak-Stocker 18)</p> <p>Abused comfort women, a euphemism for victims of forced prostitution (Dvorak-Stocker 28-29)</p> <p>Committed numerous atrocities during the Rape of Manila in 1945 (Dvorak-Stocker 50)</p>



Figure 2. Concentration camps in Batangas (University of Michigan).

Colonial Trauma

The connection between colonial violence or oppression and trauma is evident. Psychiatrist and critical theorist Frantz Fanon dedicated an entire chapter of his book, *The Wretched of the Earth*, to mental disorders in colonized Algeria (Fanon et al., ch. 5). Resmaa Menakem, an African-American mental health professional, connected the violent history of Black slavery in the U.S. with intergenerational trauma and how it manifests in African-American bodies as stress disorders such as “post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), learning disabilities, depression and anxiety, diabetes, high blood pressure, and other physical and emotional ailments” (Menakem). Moreover, Menakem explains that unprocessed intergenerational trauma compounds, saying, “trauma decontextualized in a person looks like personality; trauma decontextualized in a family looks like family traits; trauma decontextualized in people looks like culture” (Fragoso and Menakem).

Unfortunately, there is limited literature focusing on colonial trauma among Filipinos (much less Tagalogs) but its presence is hinted at through the renaming and restructuring of the National Mental Hospital in 1946 and the founding of the Philippine Mental Health Association in 1949, implying the need for psychiatric support following WWII (Samaniego 105-106). I also conducted a small-scale and low-risk mixed methods study in an attempt to understand how colonial trauma manifests among Filipinos today (see Research Methodology).

Tagalog Folklore

Folklore is important to people and culture because of how it connects the present with the past by providing insight into the cultural identities, values, beliefs, and/or practices from before (Eslit 9-10; Sugue and Reyes 329-30). The continued practice of folklore through new media is important to support connections with past, present, and future generations, allowing space for folklore to evolve with the people.

Moreover, folklore is used to hint at colonial violence, such as the Tagalog legend of Maria (or Mariang) Makiling, the guardian of the stratovolcano, Mount Makiling. During Spanish colonization, Philippine national hero Dr. Jose Rizal transcribed her oral traditions: Maria Makiling was in love with a young man who chose to marry another to avoid conscription (Rizal). In other versions such as in the *Andong Agimat* graphic novel, her lover was a Philippine revolutionary who was killed by the colonizers. Heartbroken, Maria Makiling disappeared, never to be seen again. In this sense, colonialism *is* horror and serves as key inspiration for the folk-horror in *OTBOB*.

Horror Genre

The horror genre is commonly used as a metaphor to explore difficult topics or societal issues. Moreover, it has also been used as a counter-hegemonic lens for many forms of media as it “[contests] the status quo” (Guillermo Del Toro on *The Horror Genre*). Del Toro’s 2006 film *Pan’s Labyrinth* blends folk-horror with the violence of the fascist Francoist period in Spain; Peele’s *Get Out* uses horror tropes to metaphorize racism in the U.S.; Matti’s *Seklusyon* utilizes Catholic horror to criticize the Filipino clergy; and Dagatan’s *In My Mother’s Skin* draws parallels between folk-horror and violence during the Japanese occupation of the Philippines. In Old School Renaissance TTRPGs, *Karanduun* blends Catholic horror with anticolonial themes and Metro Manila-centered narratives; *Horse Girl* employs body horror as a metaphor for abusive relationships; *CY_BORG* demonstrates anticapitalist themes through ecohorror, body horror, and cyberpunk aesthetics; and *Eat the Reich* combines vampires with antifascist narratives. Horror helps players contextualize real-world power structures through a fictional lens, returning power to the individual by providing agency.

Body Horror

Body horror describes a “type of fiction [...] where corporeality constitutes the main site of fear, anxiety and sometimes even disgust for the characters and, by extension, the intended readers/viewers” (Reyes 393). In *OTBOB*, body horror becomes a metaphor for how colonialism transformed the Tagalog region via the “inscription of horror onto the human body by virtue of a change, or series of them, that transforms the perceived ‘normal’ body into a negatively exceptional and/or painful version of itself” (Reyes 393). However, the body horror in *OTBOB* is more of a narrative tool than a spectacle, embodying the genre through player engagement and their personal connection with colonial history and trauma rather than visual mechanisms.

Punk Games: TTRPGs and Counter-hegemony

TTRPGs can be a vehicle for counter-hegemonic narratives (Scherff 11-14). TTRPG design on its own can even be considered counter-hegemonic as a medium when compared to the much larger and more “commodified” video game industry (Costa 19-20).

One way to apply counter-hegemony in TTRPG design is through D.I.Y. Punk Ethos, a “set of principles rooted in anti-establishment, [do-it-yourself mindset], counter-cultural, direct action and promotion of individual freedom in local scenes” (Costa 19). With these principles alongside the framework of “ethos, action, and scene,” Punk Games are made.

Table 2. Punk Game Framework application.

	Ethos	Action	Scene
Definition by Costa (20)	“[Direct action] against the established game industry’s expectation of commercial success.”	“Approaching new creative themes, mechanics, platforms and other facets that work together to position the game to oppose trends and popularity.”	“Act at local scenes to provide real support for the growth of an independent game making field.”
OTBOB Application	<p>Using TTRPG design</p> <p>Developing for a Filipino target audience</p> <p>Exploring anticolonial and counter-hegemonic themes</p>	<p>Developing own Old School Renaissance (OSR) system instead of reskinning mainstream TTRPG systems, e.g. D&D 5E</p> <p>Developing paper-based components for the Starter Kit to prevent cost barrier from deterring player engagement</p> <p>Drawing inspiration from precolonial Philippine and Southeast Asian cultures for starter kit components, e.g. sungka board and manuscripts</p>	<p>Playtesting with Filipino TTRPG players</p>

CASE STUDIES

Gubat Banwa

Adapting Precolonial Southeast Asian and Philippine Cultures in TTRPGs



Figure 3. Slide from the *Gubat Banwa* Design Document.

Gubat Banwa (transl. War Realms) is a war drama TTRPG set in a “fantasy Southeast Asia by way of porcelain era Philippines” (Sword Isles Studios). It was successfully crowdfunded through Kickstarter, showing that there is a market for #RPGSEA (“Across RPGSEA”) or Southeast Asian-made TTRPGs.

Gubat Banwa delves into class stratification, class struggle, and the impact of imperialism as early as the character creation through its Life Events and Social Class prompt tables (see Figure 4 and Figure 5). Not only did this influence the Katauhan Creation in *OTBOB* (see Design Work: Play), it also influenced my creative decision to pre-generate and depict *OTBOB* Katauhan from three different social classes for the starter kit.

12

Your family was forced to settle in Virbanwa after its conquest displaced you. You know what it's like to not feel like you belong anywhere at such a young age.

16

You realize that you no longer remember the tongue that your family used to speak in before they chose to settle here. Your family refuses to teach you, *for your own good*, they say.

Figure 4. Sample Life Events from *Kadunganan Creation True First Edition*.

Social Class. Pick or Roll a D6.

1	Undesirable. <i>Cast away even from the fringes of society, to the Lakanate you are worth nothing. You are not nothing.</i> GAIN +1 TO ALL WORKER SKILLS	4	Freeman. <i>You are told that what's yours is yours, and the world is for you to see. Does that make you truly free?</i> GAIN +1 TO ALL FREEMEN SKILLS
2	Chattel. <i>Virbanwan society declares that you are property, closer to currency than you are tawo. Should your labor fail to be sold, you risk becoming Undesirable.</i> GAIN +1 TO ALL WORKER SKILLS	5	Sage. <i>You are the reason of your community, the guiding hand privy to knowledge most folk cannot have. The kind that the church and state seeks to stamp out.</i> GAIN +1 TO ALL WISEFOLK SKILLS
3	Peon. <i>It is upon your back that Virbanwa's promise is built. Your work is your datu's, never yours.</i> GAIN +1 TO ALL WORKER SKILLS	6	Community Leader. <i>Nobility of the blood or coin is nothing to the nobility of action. You are your community's heart, not the Aristocracy.</i> GAIN +1 TO ALL ROYALTY SKILLS

Figure 5. Sample Social Classes from Kadungganan Creation True First Edition.

Sword Isles Studios conducted in-depth research on precolonial Philippine and Southeast Asian cultures; their player-facing “Gubat Banwa Design Document” reflects a research-for-creation methodology. The studio also encourages a culture of resource-sharing through publicly sharing their design documentation.



Figure 6. Slide from the Gubat Banwa Design Document.

MÖRK BORG and CY_BORG

Texture, Color, and Violence as a TTRPG Visual Language

MÖRK BORG is set during the final days of a medieval-esque apocalypse, while CY_BORG is set in a hyper capitalist dystopia. Illustrated by Johan Nohr, both TTRPGs incorporate coarse textures and bold yet minimal colors to depict the violent setting. Their visual language influenced the use of textures and a minimal color palette for OTBOB.



Figure 7. MÖRK BORG cover.



Figure 8. MÖRK BORG illustration.

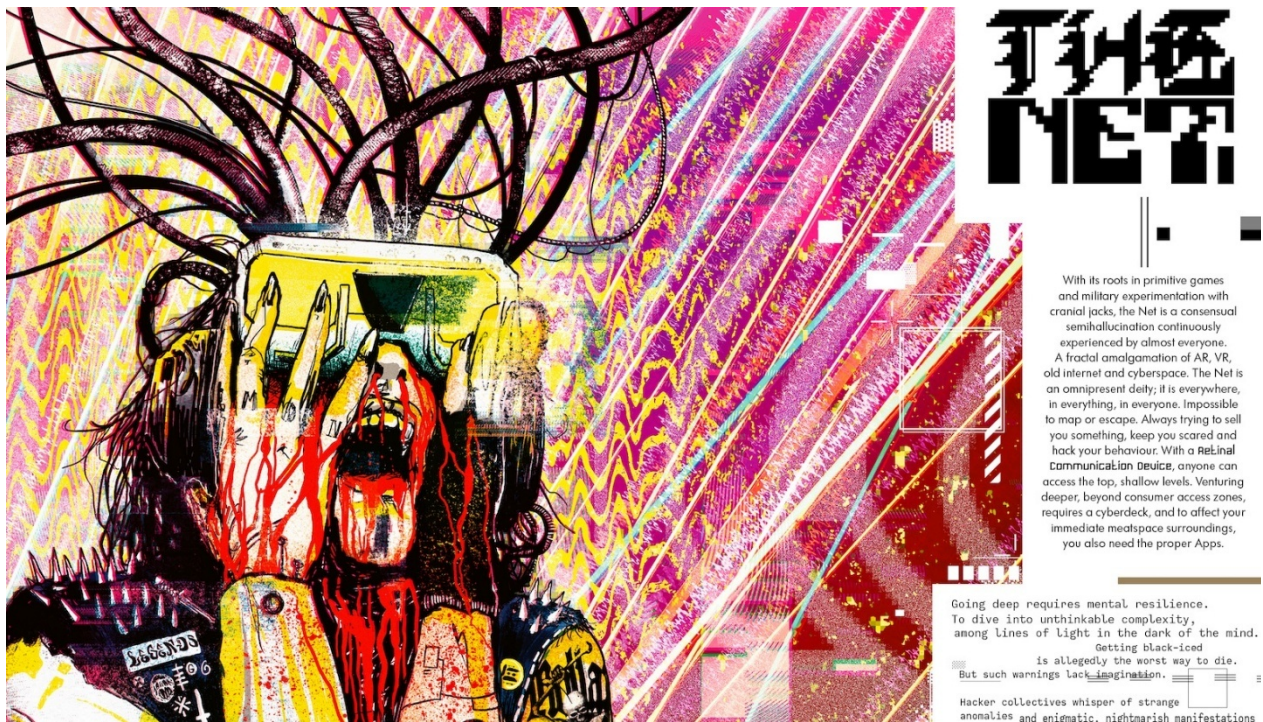


Figure 9. CY_BORG spread.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

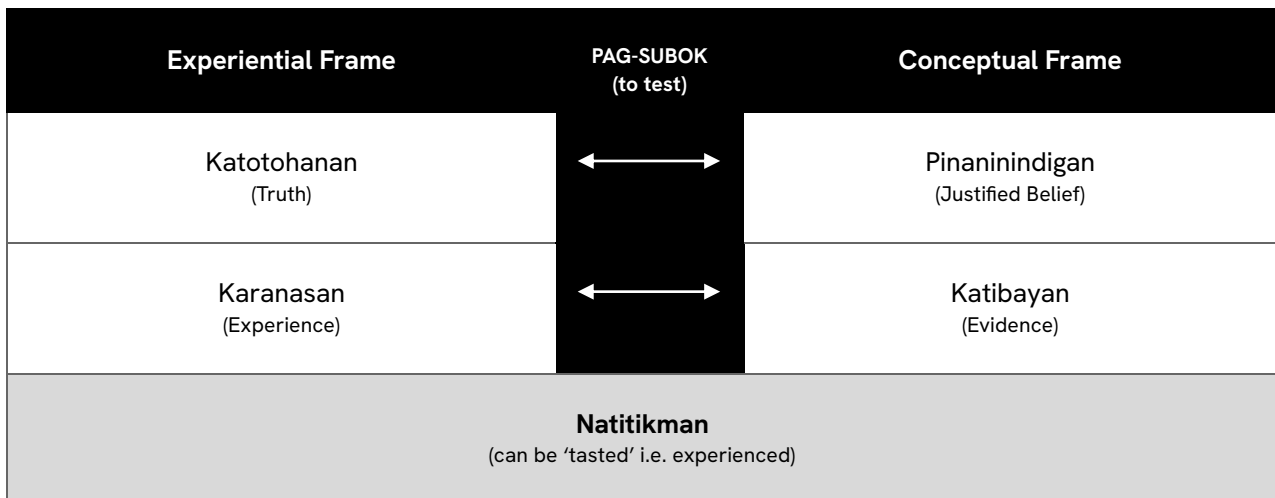
To review the research question, this study asks, "How do I recontextualize my experiences with colonial violence, trauma, and hegemonic narratives through tabletop role-playing game design to enable Filipino players to regain agency over their own experiences through play?"

To answer this question, I undertook a mixed-mode research practice using surveys, interviews, and playtesting, which were all granted low-risk ethics approval (see Appendices), as well as the Schema of Karunungan epistemology, Research-for-Creation Methodology, and an Iterative and Reflective Design Process. It should be noted that the participant responses in the Appendices have been included with their consent due to their valuable content for future researchers but have had any identifying comments removed to ensure anonymity.

Schema of Karunungan Epistemology

OTBOB's research and project development were guided by the Schema of Karunungan (transl. Knowledge) which was proposed by Dr. Perseville Mendoza during the inaugural colloquium of Pag(m)ulat: Philippine Studies Series (Mendoza).

Table 3. Schema of Karunungan.



The Schema is a "visceral" epistemological framework that attempts to explain how Filipinos process knowledge. It emphasizes a person or collective's experiences, convictions, and continuous testing when seeking new knowledge.

While it isn't strictly a step-by-step process, it often begins with "natitikman" or something that the researcher, or anyone, can "taste" or experience. This is then tested ("pag-subok") to see if the experience and/or evidence remains consistent. If it does, the experience becomes a truth-claim ("katotohanan") and the evidence becomes a justified belief ("pinaninindigan").

Through my research, I applied the Schema by pursuing qualitative research such as semi-structured interviews, surveys, and playtests where I focused on the participants' experiences and opinions in their

pursuit of knowledge. While further testing is necessary for the data to become truth-claims and/or justified beliefs, the conducted studies could be considered as evidence which other researchers and designers could test and/or expound on in the future.

Applying the Schema into my design practice was as simple as asking, "What design processes worked before? Can they work again?" For most of *OTBOB's* development, I tested out my firsthand experiences by using processes from creative projects I have undertaken previously. I also asked participants and peers how they felt about the illustrations and tactile components to gain feedback and observe their reactions.

Low-Risk Studies

I conducted the following studies to expand my knowledge, gain inspiration for project development, and playtest *OTBOB* as a TTRPG. It should be noted that the names of the interviewees were changed to preserve their anonymity.

Table 4. Low-Risk Studies Overview.

	Study A Tagalog Deities and Folklore	Study B Filipino Psychology and Colonial Trauma	Study C Katauhan Creation and Lambana Campaign Playtests
WHAT	Semi-structured interviews conducted in-person and/or Zoom (lasted one to two hours per interview), and Google surveys.	Semi-structured interviews conducted via Zoom. Lasted one to two hours per interview.	Playtests conducted via private Discord servers. Lasted four to five hours per playtest session (minimum three sessions).
HOW	Posted call-for-respondents ² through personal social media accounts: Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter/X.		Posted the call-for-playtesters ³ in private Filipino Facebook groups and Discord servers. Also reached out to TTRPG designers, GMs, and players who expressed interest to play during <i>OTBOB</i> 's development.
WHEN	Middle of project development.		Nearing the end of project development.
WHO	Mainland and diasporic Filipinos who are familiar with Tagalog folklore. Surveyed eleven and interviewed eight respondents.	Mainland and diasporic Filipino mental health professionals. Interviewed five respondents.	Mainland Filipino TTRPG players. Conducted one Katauhan Creation session and four campaigns for a total of eleven playtesters.
WHY	To hear anecdotes about folkloric creatures and divinities to compare what I heard growing up with fellow Filipinos so I have a better grasp on how to depict them in <i>OTBOB</i> .	To get deeper insight into how Filipinos process colonial trauma and death-related grief compared to the West; what is the importance of discussing such topics; and how I could apply Trauma-Informed Care Principles to <i>OTBOB</i> .	To see if the worldbuilding and mechanics function as an avenue through which Filipino players can gain agency over their shared historical experiences.

² Included links to a pre-interview PDF and Google Form containing participant information, consent form, an option to view the list of questions for interviewees, and my contact details.

³ Included brief overview document about *OTBOB* and a Google Form that contained participant information and consent form.

Study A: Tagalog Deities and Folklore Study

The interview and surveys were divided into three parts: The Creatures, Maria Makiling, and The Deities. I asked the respondents about the appearance, habitat, and abilities for each creature, character, and deity, which influenced their creative depiction in *OTBOB*. I also asked where the respondents learned about the information they shared (which helped me differentiate which folklore were Tagalog and which weren't) and whether or not they still believed in them. This was to compare the respondents' anecdotes with the folklore I heard growing up. Furthermore, I wanted to know if the respondents still have a personal if not spiritual relationship with Tagalog folklore and not simply repeating information they found in academic resources or online websites.

Key Findings

Initially, I set out to depict the following divinities, characters, and creatures in *OTBOB*.

Table 5. Complete *OTBOB* Divinities and Creatures.

	Lambana	Maka	Kasamaan
Divinities	(Maria or Mariang) Makiling	Laho	Sitan
Creatures	Bungisngis Lamanlupa Nuno Sa Punso Tigmamanukan Tikbalang Tiyanak	Bangungot Nangangatok Siyokoy	Aswang

However, due to the short timeframe, I opted to focus on Lambana and prioritized the creatures that had the most participant responses in the study: nuno sa punso, tikbalang, and tiyanak.

Prevailing Folklore: The Creatures and Maria Makiling

Stories, beliefs, and even practices about the folkloric creatures remain active based on the interviews, e.g. several respondents shared family oral traditions and personal experiences. I paid attention to common descriptors and observations and then applied it to the illustrations (see Design Work: Visual). However, since there were some visual descriptions that differed from each other, I filtered through the data by juxtaposing my personal experiences with the responses, e.g. some respondents said that the nuno sa punso lived on anthills while others said termite mounds; however, since I grew up associating the nuno sa punso with termite mounds, I depicted them as such instead. I made this creative decision as a designer who grew up with Tagalog folklore and was similarly impacted by colonialism as the respondents. I also found it easier to put my own spin on the creatures because despite the many stories and descriptions about them, their core remained the same: the nuno is a dwarf-like creature on a mound; the tikbalang is half-horse and half-human; the tiyanak appears as a baby.

While not as well-known as the creatures, Maria Makiling's story lives on as well. I took a similar approach to her creative depiction except I added a detail in one of the *OTBOB* Histories (based on one of the interviewee's personal anecdotes) to imply that Maria Makiling was originally from Bicol. While the story is uncommon, I decided to include it since it reflected my Bicolano heritage and family's history (leaving Bicol for Aurora Province and Metro Manila).

Forgotten Folklore: The Deities

Unfortunately, there were very few responses for the Tagalog deities, most of which were taken from recent internet sources, e.g. Wikipedia, The Aswang Project, illustrations online. None of the stories and descriptions came from spiritual practices or family oral traditions. My lack of personal experiences with the deities also made it impossible to filter through the respondents' answers.

Unlike the creatures and Maria Makiling where their core characterization remained consistent, there was (and still is) a lot of uncertainty about who the deities are, what they look like, and where their domains are. Because of this lack of data, especially with visual descriptions, I decided to depict the destruction of the deities' altars in the premade Lambana scenario, mirroring the loss of spiritual connection and knowledge in real life.

Importance of Precolonial Tagalog Research and Representation

One interviewee lamented about how Tagalog deities were either depicted as the Filipinized Greek pantheon or depicted with aesthetics from non-Tagalog cultures (e.g. Indigenous Yakan wedding paints, and/or precolonial Visayan, Indigenous Kalinga or Polynesian tattoos), venturing into misappropriation. They said, "There was probably a point prior to Islam reaching Lusong⁴, that we probably had [tattoos or something similar]. But I don't think [the Tagalog deities] would have Visayan tattoos" (Study A, Jules).

This reiterated the importance of researching and sharing more information and resources on precolonial Tagalog culture and aesthetics. Hopefully, when there are more readily available resources, it could improve precolonial Tagalog representation and prevent the misappropriation of other cultures.

Unearthing the Deities through the Tagalog Language

One interviewee recommended The Pinay Writer blog for information on Tagalog deities. Written by Ligaya Cabballes, her research method revolved around historical (precolonial and early colonial) records including the first Tagalog dictionary, *Vocabulario de la Lengua Tagala* (Caballes). While it seemed obvious in hindsight, reading through the blog made me realize that the Tagalog deities may be more related to the language than I thought. For example, Amansinaya is considered the goddess of the sea by some accounts (Clark). However, if one breaks down their name (Ama-ni-Sinaya), then it translates to Father of the First Catch which explains the association with the sea or ocean. Through this language-based research method, it may be easier to distinguish which divinities are Tagalog and which are from a different culture, e.g. divinities with names that don't translate into Tagalog may have been adopted from other Philippine cultures.

⁴ Lusong is the land around Manila Bay which was associated with the Tagalog and Kapampangan people and had close ties with Sulu, Malacca, and Brunei (Scott 191-95, 244).

Using this method, I included a list of deities in the *OTBOB* rulebook. I kept the list short since I didn't have enough time to conduct a thorough study on the connection between Tagalog divinities and the Tagalog language during the MDES. However, this is a research venture that I would like to undertake (and encourage other researchers to undertake as well) in the future.

Deities to Divinities

One of the interviewees explained how precolonial Tagalog beliefs may have influenced Filipino Catholicism. One is how *Batalang Maykapal* was the supreme being, akin to the Christian God, while the rest were lesser divinities, akin to saints who interceded for the devout faithful. They also recommended F. Landa Jocano, a researcher who referred to the deities as "divinities" in "Notes on Philippine Divinities" (Jocano). To avoid mistakenly calling an intercessor a deity and vice versa, I opted to follow Jocano and used the term "divinities" instead.

Study B: Filipino Psychology and Colonial Trauma Study

Overview

I conducted the study focusing on the differences between Filipino and Western psychology when dealing with colonial trauma and death-related grief, as well as seeking insights on how to apply Trauma-Informed Care Principles when developing and playtesting *OTBOB*. I conducted this study since I had little access to literature that focused on Filipino perspectives on colonial trauma. Moreover, it was important to me that *OTBOB* playtesters (and eventual players) were comfortable during play despite potentially sensitive topics. Because of this, I sought out Filipino mental health professionals who worked with Filipino clients instead of historians or anthropologists.

Key Findings

Professional and Personal Perspectives

The Filipino mental health professionals interviewed shared anecdotes, nation-wide observations, and their personal thoughts on trauma and grief. There were even a few who openly discussed their own experiences about their communities and families.

Sense of Place

While analyzing the interviews, I realized how important it was to contextualize a person's experience based on their location. I noticed differences between respondents who were based in the Philippines and those who were based in Aotearoa, e.g. when given the term 'West,' respondents based in the Philippines defaulted to the U.S. while those in Aotearoa defaulted to Pākehā culture. This was affirmed when one of the respondents discussed acculturation, explaining that as a 1.5 generation Filipino in Aotearoa, they would discuss colonial trauma differently from their parents. Similarly, two respondents recommended asking about where an individual is from before broaching topics relating to colonial trauma. Elias, one of the interviewees, said, "The Philippines is an archipelago, and there's that hegemony. There's Imperial Manila versus local experiences outside Manila. So maybe it would be good to ask local, contextual experiences to include everyone in that space."

Not only did this impact my analysis of the other studies, it also influenced my decision to prioritize playtesting with Filipino TTRPG players based in the Philippines. I found it important to spend more time playtesting the themes, mechanics, and worldbuilding of *OTBOB* instead of explaining the content (e.g. translating Tagalog words, explaining Tagalog colonial history and folklore). Furthermore, even though players from different cultures *can* play *OTBOB*, it was created to allow Filipinos (specifically Tagalog) to engage meaningfully with a narrative that mirrors their own experiences, hence the decision.

Trauma and Grief

Shame, Stigma and Avoidance

There is a lot of shame and stigma around trauma among Filipinos. Some respondents connected this with capitalistic systems (e.g. "grief as unproductive") and a fear of standing out. However, this avoidance may also be tied to survival mentality wherein Filipinos (especially the underprivileged) don't perceive their experience as traumatic but only as a consequence of survival.

Despite the shame, stigma, and avoidant tendencies around trauma and grief, it was considered more acceptable to grieve socially or collectively than to grieve by oneself, e.g. being very expressive with grief during funerals, grieving while drinking with friends, etc.

Death and Spirituality

Some respondents observed how Filipinos have a more spiritual view on death and loss, e.g. superstitious beliefs, prayers, etc. Moreover, the respondents didn't shy away from sharing their own experiences with death. These spiritual and personal perspectives (as well as my own experience dealing with death-related grief during the MDES) influenced *Kamatayan's* characterization and design, shifting their depiction from a responsible yet indifferent psychopomp to a Divinity who grieves alongside the *Katauhan*.

Risk of Retraumatization vs. Potential for Healing

When asked about how to avoid retraumatization when discussing colonial trauma, the respondents explained how it was impossible to avoid it.

- ❖ "To be honest, it's hard to tell whether you're going to be retraumatizing a person in general" (Study B, Isla).
- ❖ "I'm not sure [that retraumatization is] something that can be entirely eliminated" (Study B, Andrea).
- ❖ "You cannot avoid [historical or colonial trauma]. It's everywhere. There are [historical] markers in the country where these [events] happened but I think it's not really to avoid the trigger but to *manage* these triggers" (Study B, Elias).
- ❖ "I don't necessarily think that avoiding triggering people is the most helpful thing because then you probably don't end up talking about the thing that you need to talk about" (Study B, Beth).

They instead emphasized on the potential for healing that comes from having these discussions and the importance of facilitating spaces where these discussions could safely take place.

Collective Healing

The respondents emphasized the importance of healing colonial trauma collectively instead of individually, e.g. discussions with trusted friends, one-on-one therapy sessions, finding supportive communities. Beth, one of the interviewees, said, "I think healing can only really happen within community." This led to the inclusion of the Aid mechanic in *OTBOB*, which, when paired with the difficult Challenge Ratings (dice rolls), made solo play impossible.

Creative Expression

While the respondents emphasized the importance of working with a mental health professional, they also recommended creative expression as a form of healing. Jane, one of the interviewees, explained collective grieving through creative expression via dramatic Philippine media, saying, "[When Filipinos watch soap operas], they can cry over someone else's problems, and they can cry about [their own problems] at the same time. I'm pretty sure [that's our way of] grieving." For this reason, I added the Reflection mechanic, where the players reflect and write about their *Katauhan's* journey at the end of the play session, then review and report back their reflections to the play group at the start of the next session.

TTRPGs in general can be a form of creative expression since it allows players to create and collaborate on a story. In the case of *OTBOB* playtests, some playtesters went further and created art and song playlists for their *Katauhan*.

Furthermore, *OTBOB* was my form of creative expression. Not only did its development offer a space for me to navigate through my grief around Tagalog colonial history, it also allowed me to mourn the recent death of a loved one and incorporate it into my design work, e.g. used hand-painted textures I made after my grandmother's passing for my illustrations, and using numbers divisible by four (associated with death) for the layout and TTRPG component designs. Finally, it allowed me to express the grief through playtests, even without explicitly telling the playtesters what I was going through. In a sense, *OTBOB*'s development became my form of prayer and honoring those who came before me.

Trauma-Informed Care Principles

In the study, I defined being trauma-informed as "changing interactions, policies, and environments to prevent the possibility of re-traumatization" (Buffalo Center for Social Research) with the expectation that the respondents would focus on one-on-one interactions and immediate environments. While they mostly agreed to the definition and provided recommendations for individual interactions, a few of them emphasized how changing the system was necessary.

- ❖ "In order for us to care for people who experience trauma, we need to change policies. [...] it's not really helpful for the people who experience trauma to be constantly going to therapy then [experience the] same systems, same structures [outside]" (Study B, Elias).
- ❖ "To an extent, I do agree [being trauma-informed] is bigger, wider [in scope]. it's not just the responsibility of the person, but it's everyone's responsibility. Because in the first place, how did that traumatic event happen? It happened because of the environment. It's because of the system" (Study B, Isla).
- ❖ [On the importance of third spaces and collective healing] "I do think it's less about Western psychology and one-to-one therapy and professionals, and more about a redistribution of wealth [to create spaces for] healing relational trauma. [...] I think that systems have to be broken. I mean, they are [already] broken. I think they need to be dismantled, or we should spend our energy building these third spaces" (Study B, Andrea).

While counter-hegemonic themes were present in *OTBOB* long before the study, hearing these perspectives from the respondents encouraged me to emphasize it further, e.g. taking inspiration from the Philippine Revolution and making the goal more explicitly about liberation.

Trauma-Informed Care Principles in TTRPGs

As mentioned before, TTRPGs prioritize player agency, e.g. the usage of TTRPG safety tools which allow players to inform the group of their potential triggers, set boundaries, give feedback to the GM, and fluidly give or withdraw their consent to play. While safety tools aren't intrinsically part of TTRPGs, their usage is encouraged to discuss game content and set expectations within the group (GRAIL Gaming Research and Investigation Laboratory).

Alongside the safety tools, I also incorporated the respondents' recommendations around living contracts and brave spaces when conducting the playtests.

Table 6. Trauma-Informed Care Principles definition and OTBOB application.

	Living Contracts (For Session Zero onwards)	Brave Spaces (For Session One onwards)
Definition	Agreements that are based on mutual trust and evolve according to the needs of the parties involved.	A space where individuals are "encouraged to explore new ideas, respectfully challenge each other's assumptions, and make mistakes" (Brion-Meisels).
Application in OTBOB Playtests (based on study recommendations)	<p>Setting Expectations. Shared the call-for-playtesters post and OTBOB overview which included a list of trigger warnings.</p> <p>Clarifying Boundaries. Going through the Lines and Veils safety tool (Reinbold) as a group before the campaign.</p>	<p>Safety Tools Reminders. Reminding players about the safety tools they could use (e.g. Lines and Veils, X-Card (Stavropoulos)) before each play session.</p> <p>Proactive GMing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Asking open-ended questions during roleplay, e.g. "What do you feel in this moment?" ❖ Checking-in outside of roleplay, e.g. "Would you like me to describe the Sacrifice or should we fade to black?" ❖ Paying attention to body language and/or vocal cues during play. <p>Feedback and Check-In</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Ended each play session with, "How are you feeling?" ❖ Asked for feedback using Stars and Wishes safety tool (Quade). <p>Reflection and Debrief</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Offered space for in-character reflection pre- and post-play session. ❖ Non-verbally⁵ offered space for players to raise any topics they want to discuss (anywhere from fifteen minutes to an hour depending on capacity).

⁵ I didn't ask if there was anything people wanted to discuss, I simply stayed post-playtest to see if anyone wanted to debrief or converse further.

Study C: Playtests

Overview

Playtests were conducted to see if the lore and mechanics worked as intended, determine which illustrations were needed to aid players when exploring *OTBOB*'s setting and contextualize the colonial violence and trauma in its worldbuilding, and finally, assess if the content was too retraumatizing. Retraumatization would have defeated the intended purpose of the TTRPG, namely giving Filipinos space in which to take agency of their historical experiences. Additionally, I was also curious if there would be unprompted conversations on colonialism, hegemonies, etc. during or after play.

When seeking playtesters, I opted for private platforms because I could only accommodate a small group during the MDES. The provided participant information was loosely based on the focus group template from Te Herenga Waka Victoria University of Wellington because of the following statement: "You can withdraw from the focus group at any time before the focus group begins. You can also withdraw while the focus group it (sic) is in progress. However, it will not be possible to withdraw the information you have provided up to that point as it will be part of a discussion with other participants" (Victoria University of Wellington). While not a focus group, withdrawing from a playtest was similarly complicated because of its collaborative nature so it was important for playtesters to be aware of the potential risk before consenting.

Katauhan Creation Playtest

There were a total of eleven playtesters for the Katauhan Creation.

Pre-Katauhan Creation

When asked about what they expect from *OTBOB* based on the overview, one playtester observed, "[Regarding the Rotting Isles], there's already a sort of loss that happened with the people. There is a whole calamity that created orphans. There is loss within the culture, or the culture [itself] is built on loss. [But regarding the Lambana venture], there is a lot of rebuilding. We're trying to take back what was ours (what was taken from the Rotting Isles). There's a call-to-action so there's still hope despite the calamity."

Two playtesters also brought up the "colonization as the apocalypse" metaphor.

Post-Katauhan Creation

Five players remarked that even when rolling randomly, the Katauhan they created felt appropriate in the *OTBOB* setting. They also found it helpful for several reasons: the prompts give players a "jumping-off point" when creating their Katauhan; it expands on the worldbuilding during the creation itself; it also explains why their Katauhan are venturing out of their comfort zones. One playtester said, "It felt like I was slowly uncovering who my [Katauhan] is for the game."

Two playtesters also pointed out how the Katauhan Creation worked as an equalizer especially when rolling for choices, e.g. while it was possible for a player to roll for the wealthiest Settlement, it was equally possible that they roll for the poorest Social Class. One playtester said, "I like how you can't avoid [the violent] setting through the Scars and Loss. Even if you're on top, like being from Kadatuan or having Maginoo social class, your life is not good."

Three players liked the Secrets and Histories mechanic. One observed that by giving a Katauhan a starting Secret and History, they are given a unique “life path” or starting point, which made Katauhan Creation more interesting for them.

Feedback Application

Based on feedback, I prioritized illustrations that show the Rotting Isles and the KADAYUHAN. I also emphasized through writing that *OTBOB* is Tagalog, since at least two playtesters gravitated towards precolonial Visayan cultural references and aesthetics (another Philippine culture and region).

Lambana Campaign Playtest

Of the eleven Katauhan Creation playtesters, eight proceeded to complete the three to four-session campaign playtests. One group had four playtesters, and the remaining two groups had two playtesters each. There was a limited number of playtesters because of timezone and scheduling issues. Moreover, *OTBOB* was designed to be a long campaign and needed at least three four to five-hour-long sessions to complete a campaign. Given the short MDES timeframe, it was unfeasible to have more than three campaign playtests.

To gain playtesters’ feedback, I used the Stars and Wishes safety tool developed by Lu Quade at the end of each play session. Each playtester shared at least one Star (anything they liked or enjoyed about the session) and one Wish (anything they would like to see in a future session) (Quade).

Key Findings

Worldbuilding and Play Experience

Playtesters enjoyed the setting and worldbuilding of *OTBOB*, e.g. the story between Makiling and the First Son. Two playtesters even described that it would be a great way to teach Tagalog folklore. They also enjoyed the Katauhan Creation process as well as the mechanics, particularly Secrets and Histories (especially around Makiling), GM as Kamatayan, Connections (with both PCs and NPCs), Reflection, and Aid (paired with the Difficult Challenge Ratings). A lot of the improvements noted were on refining the mechanics, the Katauhan Sheet, and development of more GM-facing tools.

Representation

One playtest group admitted that they had a hard time navigating the world without relying on Western fantasy tropes because the TTRPGs they played before were all Western fantasies. I also observed how a few playtesters defaulted to precolonial Visayan aesthetics or cultural practices for their Katauhan as early as Katauhan Creation. This may be due to the lack of information and resources on precolonial Tagalog culture⁶ in general. Either way, this propelled me to be more explicit about *OTBOB*’s Tagalog influences, e.g. including Social Norms in the rulebook.

⁶ Since the Tagalogs were among the first to encounter Western colonization, it may explain why the precolonial erasure is more severe compared to the rest of the archipelago.

Horror as Catharsis

The *OTBOB* play experience was not reported as retraumatizing despite the depiction of colonial violence, death-related grief, and body horror. None of the playtesters used the X-Card. In fact, several playtesters asked for more horror, e.g. at least two playtesters indirectly and one playtester explicitly asked that I emotionally torture their Katauhan more.

One playtester whose Katauhan descended from Makiling and the First Son said, "We went through so much but it was for this great love story that continues until now. I can do something with that despite my pain, my sacrifices [because] this love story gave birth to all of us."

Another playtester from a separate campaign said:

"I wish we felt the consequences of failed rolls a bit more (in terms of really letting us feel it and settle, even permanently sometimes), and a cap on the opportunities to gain Omens to make the different mechanics more seamlessly integrated with the narrative direction. I say this because I was working under the assumption that we were playing a horror genre-oriented TTRPG system [...] where the narratives and mechanics work to balance the feeling of powerlessness against forces beyond the Player Character's control and the feeling of having just enough power (literal and figurative) to make a change (even if it's not always the kind of change they want to make)."

To several playtesters, it was because of the horrific aspects of the narrative that the revelations and ending were cathartic. Horror, when rooted in one's culture, can provide a "cathartic sense of relief while reminding us of [...] our culturally unique anxieties" (Shaw 93). By offering a fictional space where players can safely interact with these anxieties and express their emotions, they find a form of release.

Secondly, because of the nature of the genre, players want and expect to be scared or challenged. Doing otherwise may lead to an unsatisfying play experience.

Conversations about Real-Life Issues

The playtests led to commentaries on real-life issues, e.g. comparison of Kadatuan to Imperial Metro Manila; commentaries on class consciousness and radicalization; discussions on the importance of collective action or how the overarching story of *OTBOB* could be perceived as a criticism on capitalism and colonialism. I did not need to tell the playtesters my research. All I had to do was run the game, and that is what makes TTRPGs powerful.

Feedback Application

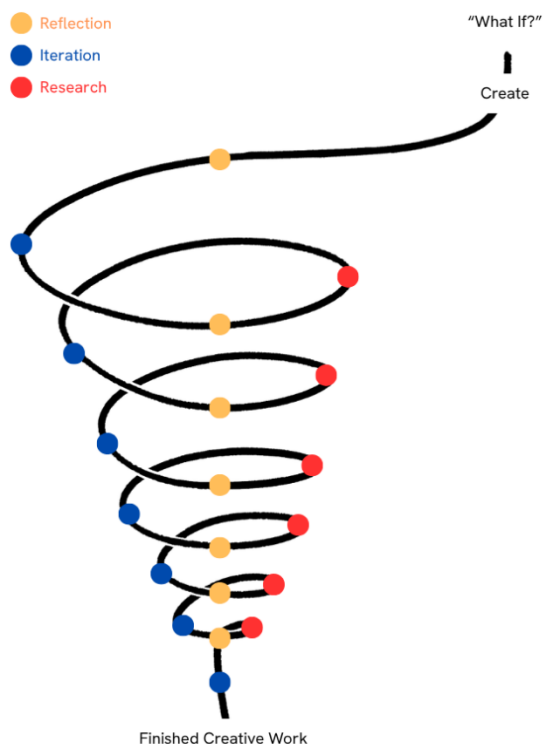
I received feedback on the mechanics which helped improve the rulebook and Katauhan Sheet. I also changed the Settlement illustrations to include Katauhan within the setting since I observed how the playtesters focused more on building Connections than exploring the Settlements.

Research-for-Creation Methodology

Research-for-Creation involves conducting research which would then be applied in the production of a creative work (Chapman and Sawchuk 15-16). Aside from the conducted studies mentioned above, the research for *OTBOB* consisted of studying other creatives' processes and their relationship with their art; reading through concept design and art books which influenced *OTBOB* character design; watching video tutorials on color and values which guided the environment illustration process; attending creative

workshops such as those facilitated by Asian Aotearoa Arts Hui and Beautiful Signals; playing TTRPGs and board games which provided inspiration for mechanics and tactile components; and most importantly, intensive data-gathering about precolonial Tagalog culture and aesthetics, colonial Tagalog history, and folklore which influenced every aspect of the design work. However, Chapman and Sawchuk warn that strictly following a research-before-creative-production approach may hinder the research-designer's creativity (16). Due to this, I also incorporated an iterative-reflective approach to my process.

Iterative and Reflective Design



My process often begins with a "What If?" question followed by developing an initial prototype during the creation phase. What follows is a cycle of research, including (but not limited to) data-gathering and playtesting, iteration or editing, and personal reflection. This cycle refines the project until its completion.

I began iterating *OTBOB* during the taught component of the MDES (Creative Research Practices) since I had foundation work (see Design Work: Foundation Work) as well as feedback from previous playtests, thereby accomplishing the "What If?", Create, and Reflection phases prior to the programme.

Figure 10. Iterative-Reflective Design Process.

DESIGN METHODOLOGY

Transforming the Tagalog Region into the Rotting Isles

After several iterations and reflections, I realized that one way to recontextualize my experiences with colonial violence, trauma, and hegemonic narratives was by using metaphors and transforming the Tagalog Region — both that which I grew up in and that which I came to understand through research — into the Rotting Isles of *OTBOB*. To apply the research into a playable TTRPG setting, I undertook several methodologies and processes such as the Schema of Karunungan Epistemology, Research-for-Creation Methodology, Iterative-Reflective Design, Concept Design, and Punk Game Framework.

Output

For *OTBOB*, I developed a playable TTRPG starter kit which included an illustrated rulebook with a premade scenario, *The Great Balete Tree of Lambana*; three pre-generated Katauhan player sheets and three blank Katauhan player sheets with Safety Tools; five Manuscripts (Secrets, Histories, Prologue, Reflection, and Blank); three Sungka Boards with three sets of tokens (Label, Blessing, and Judgment), and a six-sided die (d6).

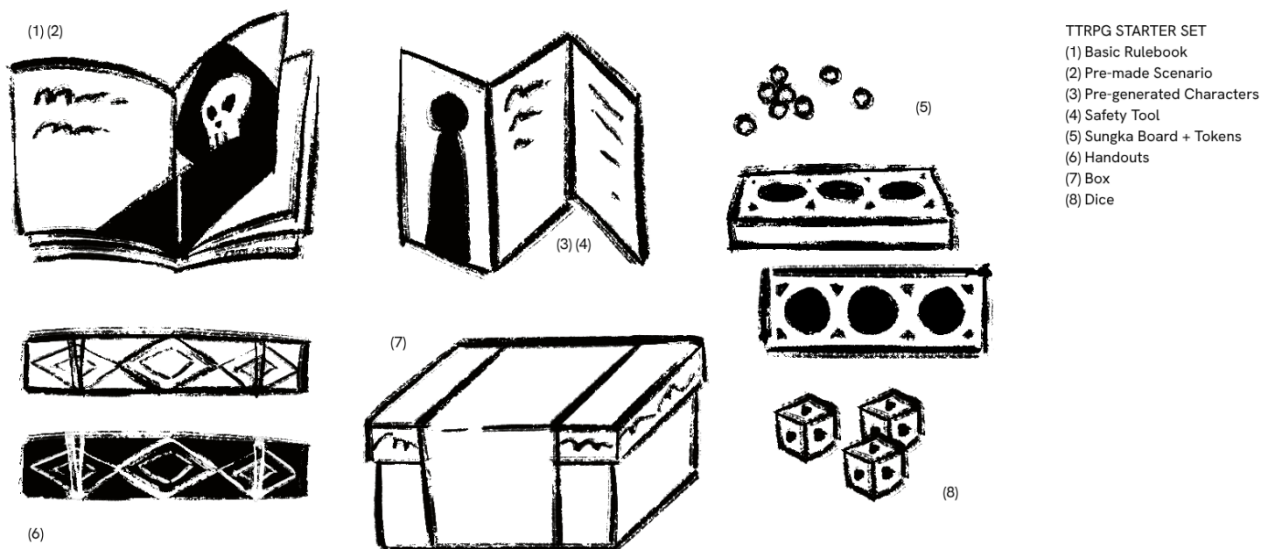


Figure 11. Initial sketch of OTBOB Starter Kit.

Foundation Work

OTBOB was originally created using the grimdark and apocalyptic *MÖRK BORG* TTRPG system for the FÖLK-LORE Game Jam on Itch (2021), which encouraged participants to “*MÖRK BORGify* [their] favorite folklore tale” (Kohn). While there are similar storybeats, the current iteration is narratively, thematically, and mechanically different from its earlier version.

Table 7. Comparison between original and current *OTBOB* iteration.

	Original <i>OTBOB</i>	Current <i>OTBOB</i>
Themes	Nihilism	Radical Hope
Play	<i>MÖRK BORG</i> system. Falls under the Old School Renaissance (OSR) play style or game design principles.	Original OSR system.
Text	Homogenized and misappropriated other Philippine folklore and cultures.	Focused on Tagalog culture, history and folklore.
Visual	Used <i>MÖRK BORG</i> visual language.	Developed own visual language based on precolonial Tagalog culture and handmade textures.
Material	Digital only.	Has tactile TTRPG components.

Design Pillars and Process

Since *OTBOB* is broad in scope, I separated the project into four phases, each with its own design pillars.

Table 8. Four Development Phases with Design Pillars.

Text	Visual	Play	Material
All about the written word, e.g. worldbuilding, finalized rulebook text, etc.	All about visual design, e.g. illustrations and layout.	All about game design and mechanics.	All about the physical TTRPG components, e.g. printed rulebook, sungka board, etc.
Design Pillars			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Fleshcore ❖ 16th Century Tagalog Aesthetics ❖ Class Stratification 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ OSR ❖ Social ❖ Reflects Filipino Cultural Values 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Accessible in the Philippines ❖ 16th Century Tagalog Aesthetics ❖ Uses Symbols⁷

I then incorporated the four phases into the design process I used from previous projects.

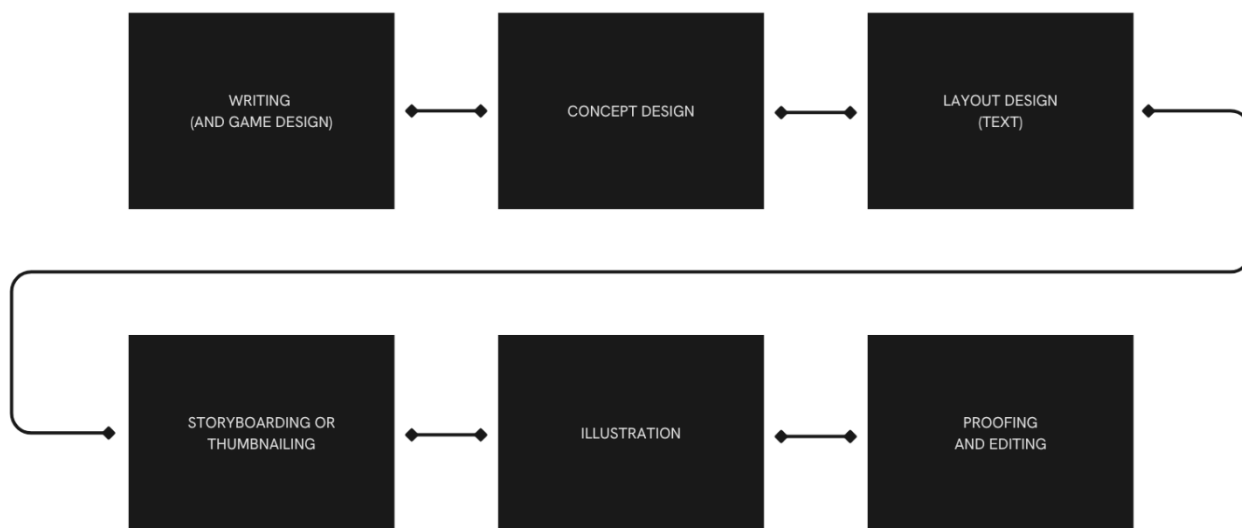


Figure 12. Design process from previous projects.

⁷ Uses symbols like tripartite cosmological motifs and numbers (3, 4 and 7).

Table 9. Historical metaphors in OTBOB worldbuilding.

OTBOB Worldbuilding	Tagalog Colonial History
Katauhan	Colonized Tagalogs
KADAYUHAN	Colonial powers, specifically Spain, Japan, and the U.S.
Kawal	Colonial military and/or police force
The Void	Concentration camps, specifically during American colonization
Harvest	<i>Encomienda</i> and <i>repartimiento</i> (forced labor) systems during the Galleon Trade
Sacrifice	Public executions and torture

Precolonial and Current Class Stratification

In *OTBOB*, the Katauhan is divided into Social Classes inspired by the precolonial Three-Class System observed by historian William Henry Scott (219, 224, 239). The precolonial terms represent the current Income Class System (Ta-asan) — only including the KADAYUHAN as the hegemonic power — hence, functioning as metaphor for class stratification and wealth disparities in *OTBOB*.

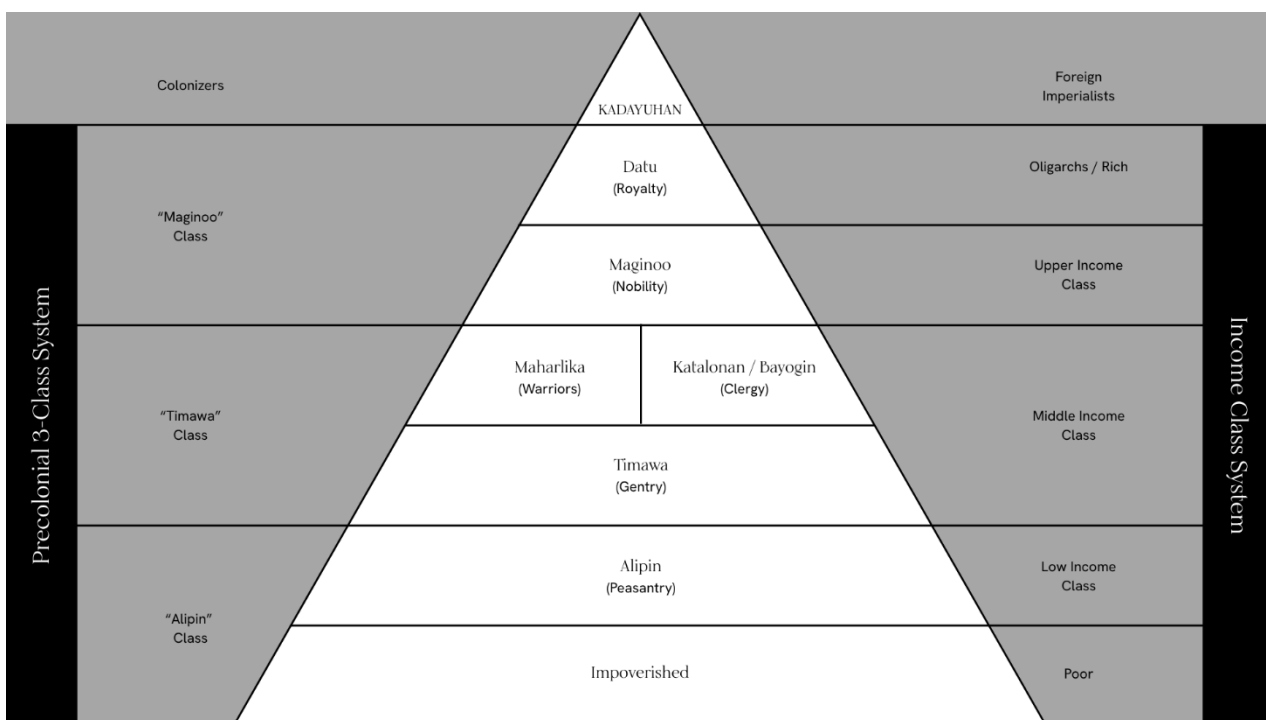


Figure 14. OTBOB Social Classes.

Precolonial Indigenous Beliefs and Folklore in the Rotting Isles

Finally, I used precolonial indigenous beliefs and folklore to further develop worldbuilding and the premade Lambana scenario.

The Three Realms

In *OTBOB*, the three realms of KALANGITAN, KALUPAAN and KAILALIMAN are based on the tripartite cosmology (Barretto-Tesoro 3).

Table 10. Three Realms and tripartite cosmological motifs.

Three Realms in <i>OTBOB</i>	Motifs (Lasco 143)
KALANGITAN (Skyworld)	Associated with the sky, e.g. "sun and bird"
KALUPAAN (Middleworld)	Associated with the land, e.g. "leaves, vines, flowers, bamboo, trees, and the silhouette of mountains"
KAILALIMAN (Underworld)	Associated with the water and underground, e.g. "fish, serpent and turtle"

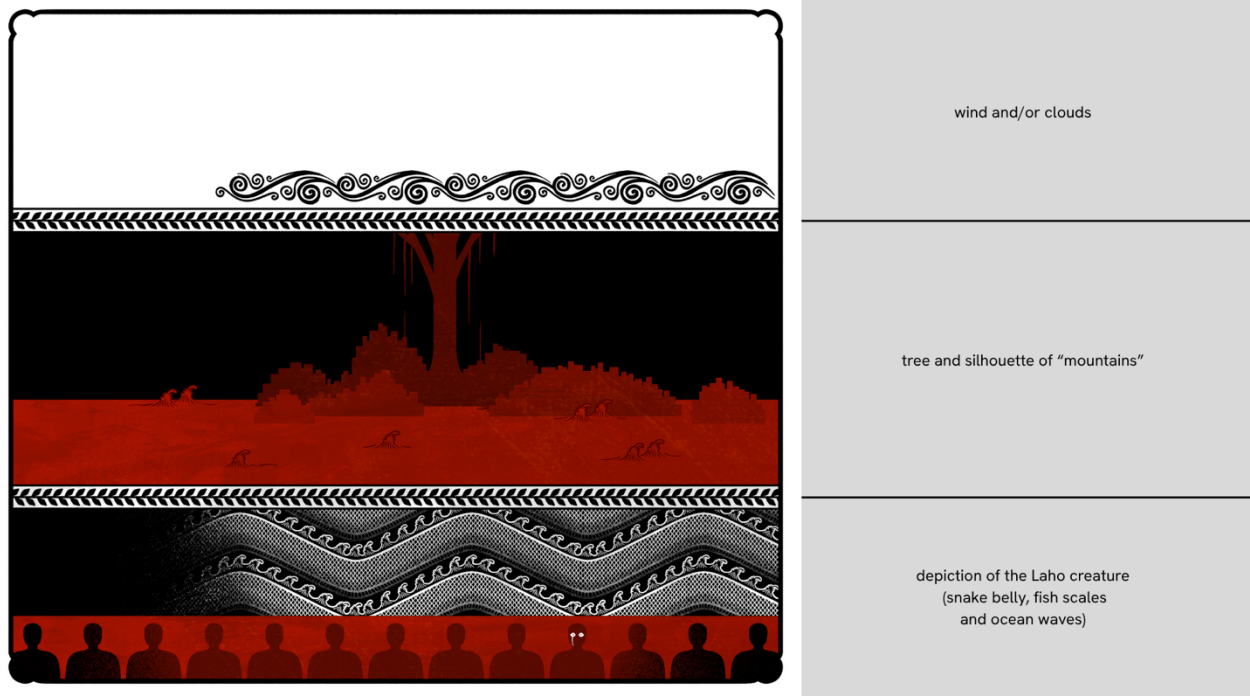


Figure 15. Motifs present in the Three Realms spread illustration.

The Rotting Isles

The Rotting Isles was inspired by the modern⁹ folktale of Felipe the Giant: while playing hide-and-seek with a friend, Felipe lays on his side and covers himself with mud to hide. Felipe either falls asleep or drowns because of rising waters; regardless, his friend searches for him, yelling, "Felipe, nasaan ka?" (transl. Felipe, where are you?) As humans migrated and settled on Felipe's body, all they could hear was "Felipenas." The human-shaped archipelago was then known as Filipinas, and later, Pilipinas.

Furthermore, the Rotting Isles was inspired by the animistic belief of revering the land as divine (e.g. the precolonial practice of offering food, drinks, and "words" to divinities for abundant harvests, good weather, safe travels through land and seas (Donoso et al. 67)) or at the very least, worthy of respect (e.g. modern practice of saying "tabi-tabi po" when venturing into forests). Therefore, the death of BATALA, the supreme Divinity in *OTBOB*, is the direct expression of the "land as divine" belief but pushed to a horrific extreme to showcase how colonialism not only violently affects the land but a people's indigenous beliefs.

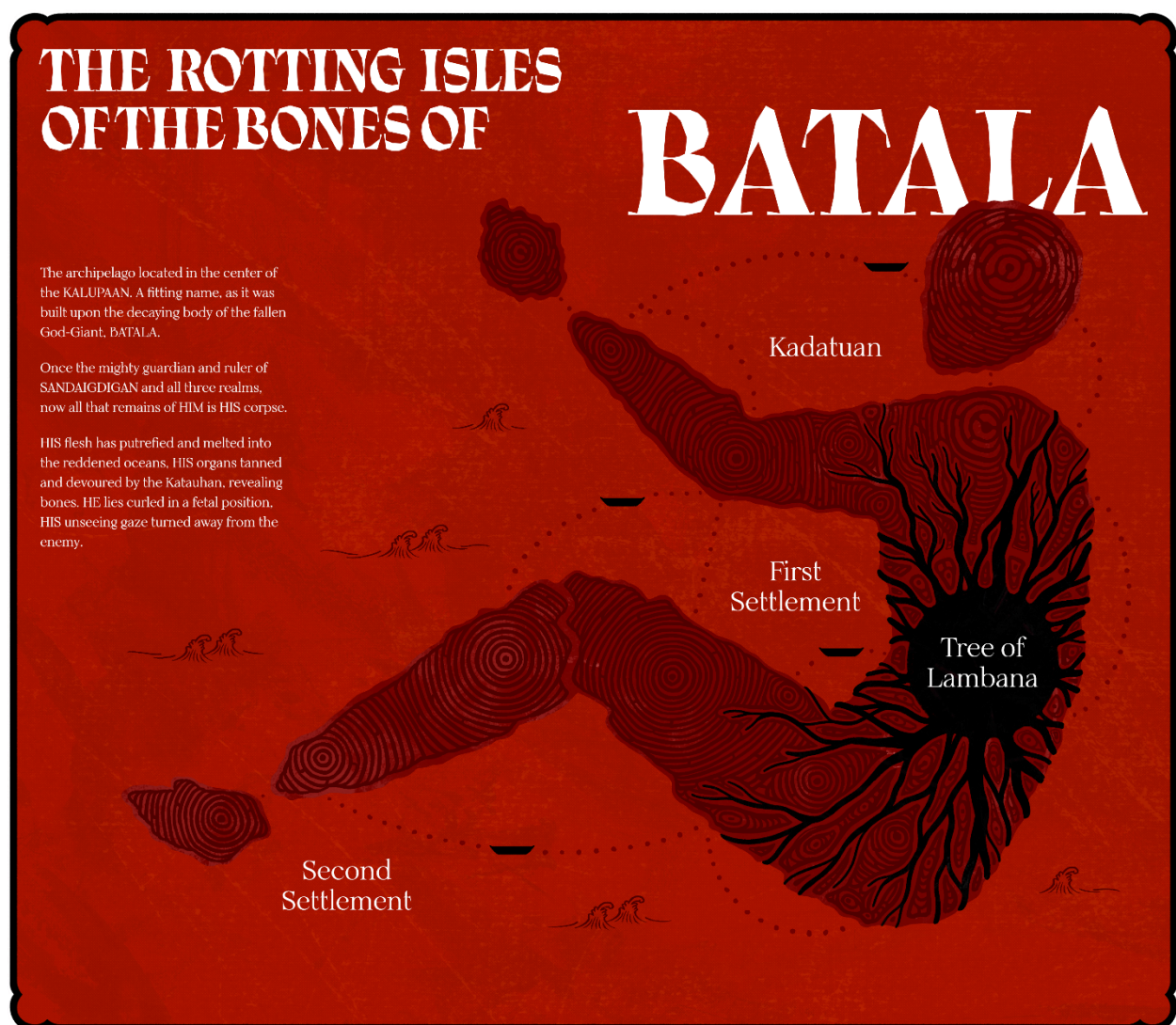


Figure 16. Rotting Isles spread illustration.

⁹ It is unlikely that the story is precolonial because of the Spanish name, and as mentioned before, the archipelago was once populated by different polities, only becoming known as the Philippines because of colonialism.

The Great Balete Tree of Lambana

Lambana, the setting for the premade scenario, takes inspiration from the balete or banyan tree, which are said to be homes of folkloric creatures according to respondents of the Tagalog Deities and Folklore study. It also takes inspiration from the Millennium Tree in Aurora Province, where my Tagalog family originated from. Finally, its name comes from the Tagalog word "dambana" (transl. altar) hence the Secret and History that Lambana was not only a bridge between KALUPAAN and KALANGITAN but also an altar to summon the Divinities for aid during the apocalyptic Arrival.



Figure 17. Millennium Tree photograph and Lambana spread illustration.

Makiling, the Divine Creator of Lambana

Makiling is an OTBOB NPC who haunts Lambana in search of Her deceased husband, the First Son of BATALA. She is based on Maria Makiling as referenced in Context Review: Tagalog Folklore. I redesigned Her to exhibit mental illness symptoms resulting from colonial trauma (see Design Work).

Writing

QT3K System

To write the text in the rulebook, I used QT3K, a writing system developed by Dr. Joem Antonio and utilized at Storywriting School. The acronym stands for "Question, Time Limit and 3 Key Terms." Dr. Joem Antonio explains that "the Question pushes us to look for an answer, the Time Limit discourages us from second guessing, and the 3 Key Terms reduce our choice paralysis" (Antonio). Editing only comes after the QT3K has been completed.

I used a system that relies on time limits so I did not spend too much time on one task. The QT3K is also similar to the Schema of Karunungan in a way that the system is all about experiencing or doing (writing) then testing (reflecting on the output and editing if necessary).

Table 11. QT3K example.

QT3K for Calamities
<p>Question: What does the reader need to know about Calamities? Time Limit: 5 minutes 3 Key Terms:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caused by KADAYUHAN • Flooding • Sacrifice
<p>Catastrophes caused by the KADAYUHAN.</p> <p>With the ability to bend reality to THEIR will, the cycles of seasons, day and night are subject to the KADAYUHAN’s every whim. It is possible for a day of flooding to be followed by a week of drought, or a month of fires followed by a year of ever-night.</p> <p>Appeasing the KADAYUHAN to prevent such Calamities is no easy feat. Hence, the implementation of the Harvest and Sacrifice.</p>

Capitalization and Hierarchy

Additionally, I used capitalization to show hierarchy within the text, e.g. the God-Giants, BATALA and the KADAYUHAN are in uppercase, similar to how the word “LORD” is in uppercase in biblical texts when referring to the Christian God. Meanwhile, the Divinities are only in title case since they aren’t as powerful as the God-Giants.

Table 12. Capitalization and hierarchy of people and locations in OTBOB.

Capitalization	People	Location
UPPERCASE (name and pronouns)	BATALA (HE/HIM), KADAYUHAN (IT/THEY/THEM)	KALANGITAN, KALUPAAN, KAILALIMAN
Title Case (name and pronouns)	Divinities (She/He/They)	Rotting Isles, Lambana, Maka, Kasamaan
Title Case (name only)	Katauhan (she/he/they)	

Play

OTBOB as an OSR TTRPG

OTBOB follows the Old School Renaissance (OSR) TTRPG play style or game design principles. While its exact definition is contested, as can be seen in OSR Survey conducted by Milton and Strejcek, OSR is generally understood to prioritize improvised rulings of the play group over fixed rules in the rulebook (Brander 10; Necropraxis). I chose the OSR style because I found “rulings over rules” tend to prioritize collaborative storytelling over non-OSR TTRPGs. Therefore, the OSR-style reinforces player agency.

OTBOB Mechanics as Metaphors

Many *OTBOB* mechanics function as metaphors for hegemonic narratives, colonial violence, and trauma. Some were also influenced by cultural values based on the Filipino Psychology and Colonial Trauma study.

Metaphor for Hegemonic Narratives

Secrets and Histories Mechanic

The Secrets and Histories mechanic is not only the core mechanic of *OTBOB* but also functions as a metaphor for hegemonic narratives. Each Secret and History that the Katauhan may receive could either support or contest the hegemonic narrative within the fiction, e.g. Secrets/Histories in the Kadatuan represents the hegemonic narrative since it is closely allied with the KADAYUHAN, meanwhile Secrets/Histories in the Second Settlement or Lambana tend to contest the hegemonic narrative since they are the most underrepresented and oppressed settlements.



Figure 18. Sample Secrets.

Settlements and Social Classes in Katauhan Creation

Metaphors about hegemony are also present in Katauhan Creation through the Settlements and the Social Classes (as mentioned in Text: Worldbuilding). Notice the wealth disparities and class stratification between the Settlements and Social Classes¹⁰ in the sample rulebook text below.

Table 13. The Three Settlements.

First Settlement	Second Settlement	Kadatuan
You come from the settlement founded by the First of the Three Sons of BATALA. Located at the center of the Rotting Isles, you live among the houses surrounding the Great Balete Tree of Lambana. You learned to tune out the screams coming from it.	You come from the settlement founded by the Second of the Three Sons of BATALA. Located at the southernmost part of the Rotting Isles, you live among the poorest of the three settlements. You and your people have resorted to eating the leather you created from the hide of BATALA HIMSELF.	You come from the settlement founded by the Third of the Three Sons of BATALA. Located at the northernmost part of the Rotting Isles, you live among the wealthiest and most powerful of the three settlements after mastering self-sustainability. But this comes at a price, and you bear the full attention of the KADAYUHAN.

Table 14. Samples of First Settlement Social Classes.

Maginoo. The Nobility.	Timawa. The Gentry.	Alipin. The Peasantry.
You and your family are of noble blood. Not that it matters since you are but puppets of the KADAYUHAN and THEIR Kadatuan allies. You oversee the food production in your settlement for the yearly Harvest, a responsibility you do not take lightly, for any deficiencies means punishment against your family. You do whatever means necessary to appease the KADAYUHAN, even to the detriment of the people in your settlement. How many poor souls did you betray for the sake of your family, Katauhan? Does their suffering keep you up at night?	The noble Maginoo call you and the Maharlika a free people, but you know this isn't true. You and your family serve the KADAYUHAN, after all. You work ungodly hours to contribute to the Harvest, preparing meals made of the skin and bones of BATALA to feed the KADAYUHAN and THEIR Kawal. In return, you are permitted to work on your chosen trade.	You and your family are forced to take roles others think dangerous or beneath them.

¹⁰ These Social Class examples are specific to the First Settlement. Each settlement has differing Social Class texts to further show disparities between the Settlements, e.g. the Maharlika from the Kadatuan and First Settlement function as a military or police force on behalf of the KADAYUHAN while the Maharlika from the Second Settlement function as underground revolutionaries.

Mechanics as Metaphors and Depictions of Filipino Perspectives

I transformed what I learned from the context review and the Filipino Psychology and Colonial Trauma study into playable mechanics.

Table 15. Mechanics as metaphors and depictions of colonial trauma and cultural values.

Mechanics		Metaphors for Colonial Violence and Trauma	
Scar in Katauhan Creation		A Katauhan's mental or physical ailment or disability, reflecting Fanon and Menakem's research on the effect of colonial violence and intergenerational trauma on a person's mind and body.	
Loss in Katauhan Creation		Loved ones the Katauhan lost to the KADAYUHAN, thus making the colonial trauma more personal.	
Depictions of Filipino Perspectives and Cultural Values			
Omens		Each Katauhan has an Omen pool, personalizing their relationship with Kamatayan and their ancestors, thereby reflecting the personal and spiritual way Filipinos process death-related grief.	
Healing and Aiding		Reflects the need for collective healing when dealing with colonial trauma. These mechanics make it impossible to play <i>OTBOB</i> individually.	
Pre- and Post-Session Reflection		In-game application of the importance of self-reflection and writing when working through colonial trauma.	

Visual

Concept Design

Image-Gathering

Moodboard and Palette

Keywords: Apocalyptic, Colonial, Dystopian, Grimdark, (Body & Catholic) Horror, Survival

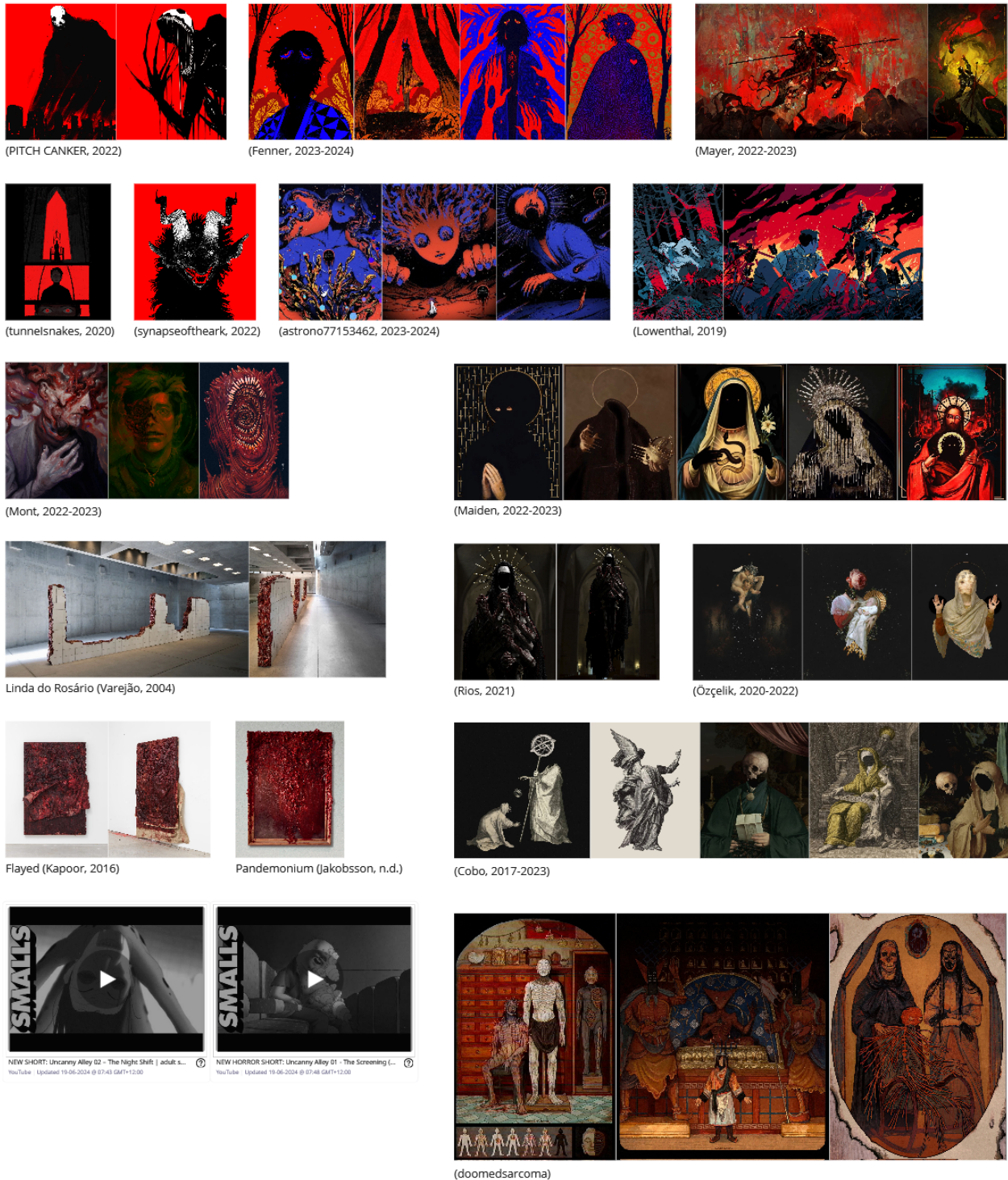


Figure 20. Initial moodboard.

At the start of project development, I collected visual inspiration using keywords I believed suited *OTBOB* at the time: apocalyptic, colonial, dystopian, grimdark, (body and Catholic) horror, and survival (see Figure 20). I then selected a minimal palette of red, black, and white based on my mood boards.

Table 16. *OTBOB* palette.

Red	Black	White
blood, viscera	dark skin, hair, shadow, rot	pale skin, bone, teeth, eyes, maggots

Historical and Cultural References

I gathered historical and cultural images, initially for inspiration but some were used as references for the thumbnails and/or final illustration.



Figure 21. *Boxer Codex* illustrations (Donoso et al.).

Thumbnails

Inspired by *The Skillful Huntsman*, where a majority of the designers' work were in the thumbnailing and early iteration phase (Le et al.), I applied the QT3K System (see Design Work: Writing) for concept design. Similarly to the writing process, I started with the question, "What does this character look like?" then answered using three key terms and set a 10 to 15-minute timer for sketching.

However, having a large visual library is vital for QT3Ks and I found mine lacking. To remedy this, I developed the QTR System which stands for Question, Time Limit and (Image) Reference. Instead of key terms, I selected an image then encircled three points of interest to reference when sketching. Through the QT3K and QTR Systems, I developed around 400 character design sketches and over 200 storybeat or environment sketches (see Figure 22 and Figure 23).



Figure 22. Character thumbnails.



Figure 23. Storybeat thumbnails.

Having a lot of thumbnails helped since if a design or illustration wasn't working, I could simply use another thumbnail instead of starting from scratch.

After reflecting on the thumbnails, I selected those that I had an emotional connection to and that served the text or narrative of *OTBOB*. I then refined it into an illustration and asked for feedback from supervisors and peers before another set of research, iterations, and reflections. I cycled through this process until I finished the design.

Illustration

Characters from the Rotting Isles

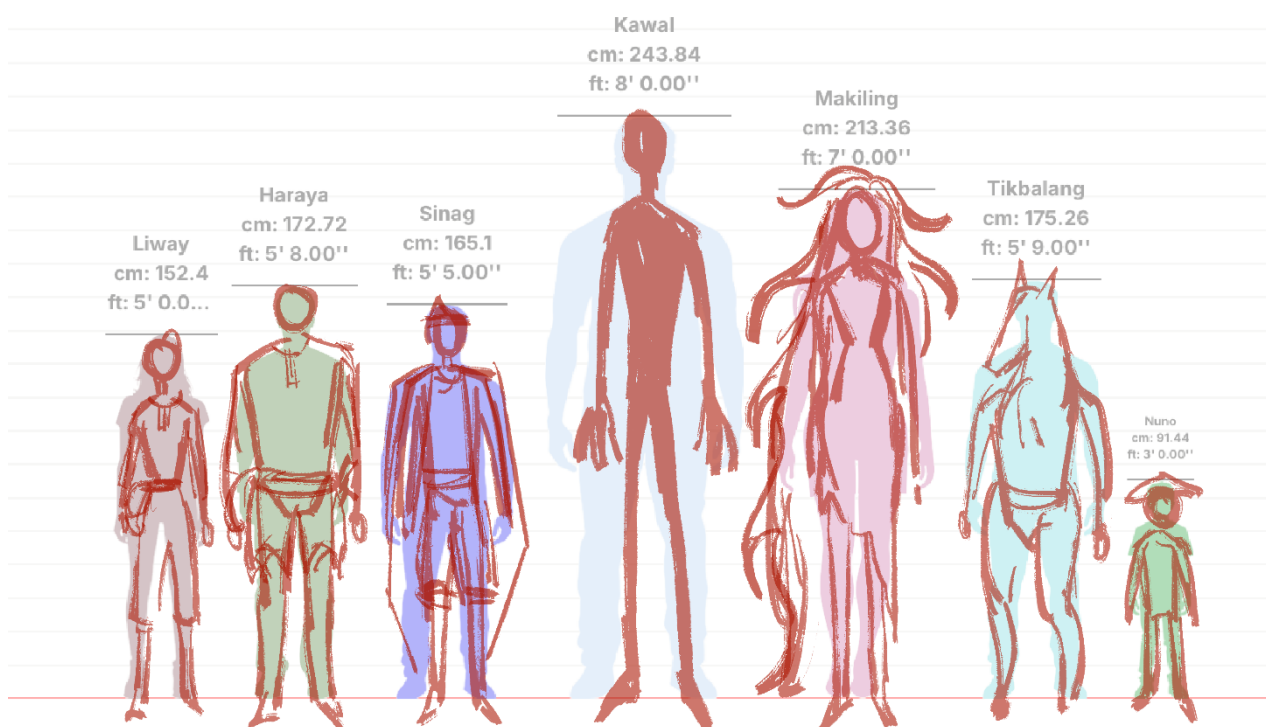


Figure 24. Character line-up sketches.

Pre-generated Katauhan

While I was more lenient with colors for props and environments, I was particular with the characters' skin color. I wanted to depict colorism in relation to colonialism since the three Philippine colonizers were paler than Filipinos. To do so, I reversed the "white is good, black is bad" trope so only characters with malicious or questionable intent are depicted with pure white skin, e.g. KADAYUHAN.

I used the color white to also show class stratification, particularly the wealth disparities between the three pre-generated Katauhan, e.g. the paler their skin or more white items they wear, the wealthier they are. However, only the Katauhan's eyes are pure white (jewelry and weapons are a darker shade) to provide contrast around their face but to also show that their perspectives are influenced by hegemonic narratives and/or colonial trauma and violence. I emphasized this further with the inclusion of scars and bandages.

I also hinted at the Islamic influence on precolonial Tagalogs through their designs, e.g. no tattoos, modest clothing, and short hair on Haraya and Sinag.



Figure 25. References and sketches of Liway, a Tree Roots Gatherer Alipin from the First Settlement.



Figure 26. References and sketches of Haraya, a Bone Smith Timawa from the Second Settlement.



Figure 27. References and sketches of Sinag, a Maginoo from the Kadatuan.



Figure 28. Pre-generated Katauhan illustration.



Figure 29. Kamatayan references and sketches.

Kamatayan, Death Incarnate

Kamatayan is the only Katauhan ally depicted with pure white “skin,” hinting that They are not as “good” as They seem since They are willingly leading the Katauhan to die for the sake of liberation. To balance this out, I added a crack along Their skull to emulate tear tracks to show Their grief.

They also have a missing tooth because in *OTBOB*, Kamatayan used to have gold embellishments on Their teeth (based on the Bolinao Skull (National Museum of the Philippines, “Bolinao Skull with Gold Dental Ornamentation”). They scraped the gold off to give it to a Katauhan in need but ended up removing Their tooth in the process.

I hinted at Their nonbinary identity by depicting Them in a yambong (unisex long-sleeved robes (Samonte) worn by men in the Boxer Codex illustrations) while wearing a talukbong or shawl with Liway’s striped tapis pattern.

They wear a veiled salakot inspired by the Chinese weimao hat which I drew with four torn veils, representing the Filipino-Chinese association with death and the number four.



Figure 30. Kamatayan in the X-Card.

KADAYUHAN

For the KADAYUHAN, I referenced Spanish, Japanese and American military uniforms and armor for the design. THEY are stoic and faceless to prevent the players from empathizing with THEM instead of the Katauhan.

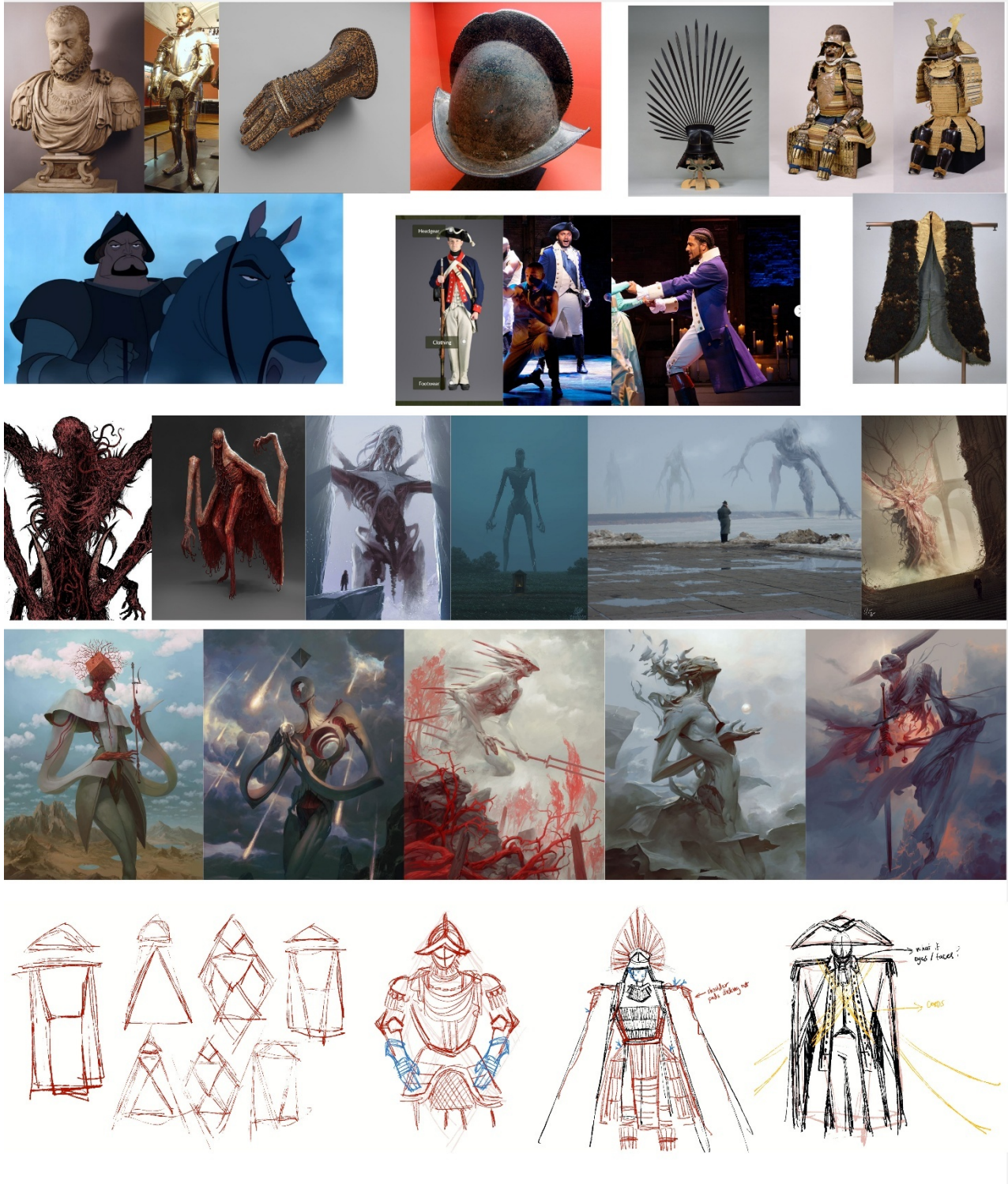


Figure 31. KADAYUHAN references and sketches.



Figure 32. KADAYUHAN spread illustration.

Kawal

The Kawal is implied to come from the KADAYUHAN hence why I based the Kawal design on THEM. It also meant that the Kawal swam across the blood-red seas to reach the Rotting Isles hence the inclusion of red corals on their skin, as inspired by the character designs from *Pirates of the Caribbean*.

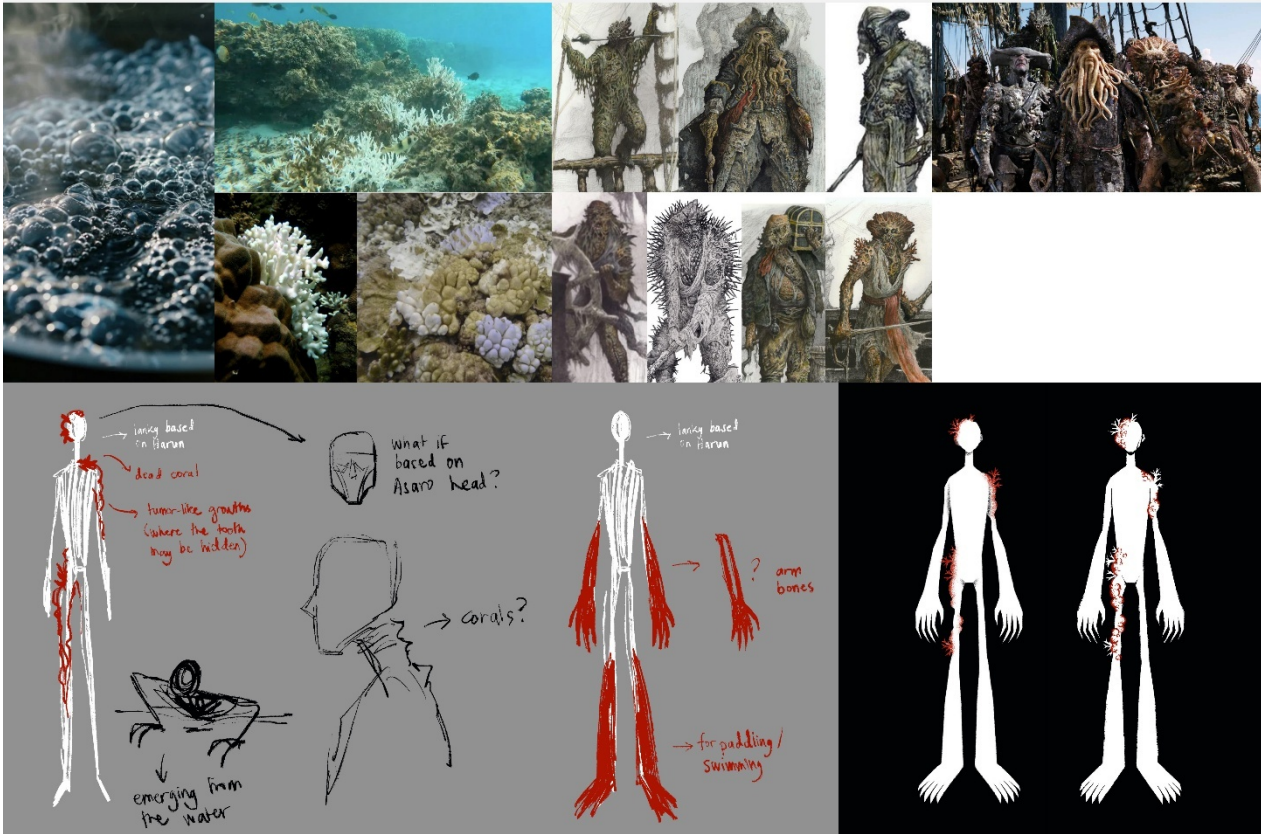


Figure 33. Kawal references and sketches.



Figure 34. Kawal spread illustration.

Locations in the Rotting Isles

I struggled to illustrate environments, so I created clay dioramas of the Rotting Isles then drew on top of them. I then used subtle anatomical designs for the illustrations, e.g. neuron- and vein-like designs for the Rotting Isles map.



Figure 35. Rotting Isles illustration process.

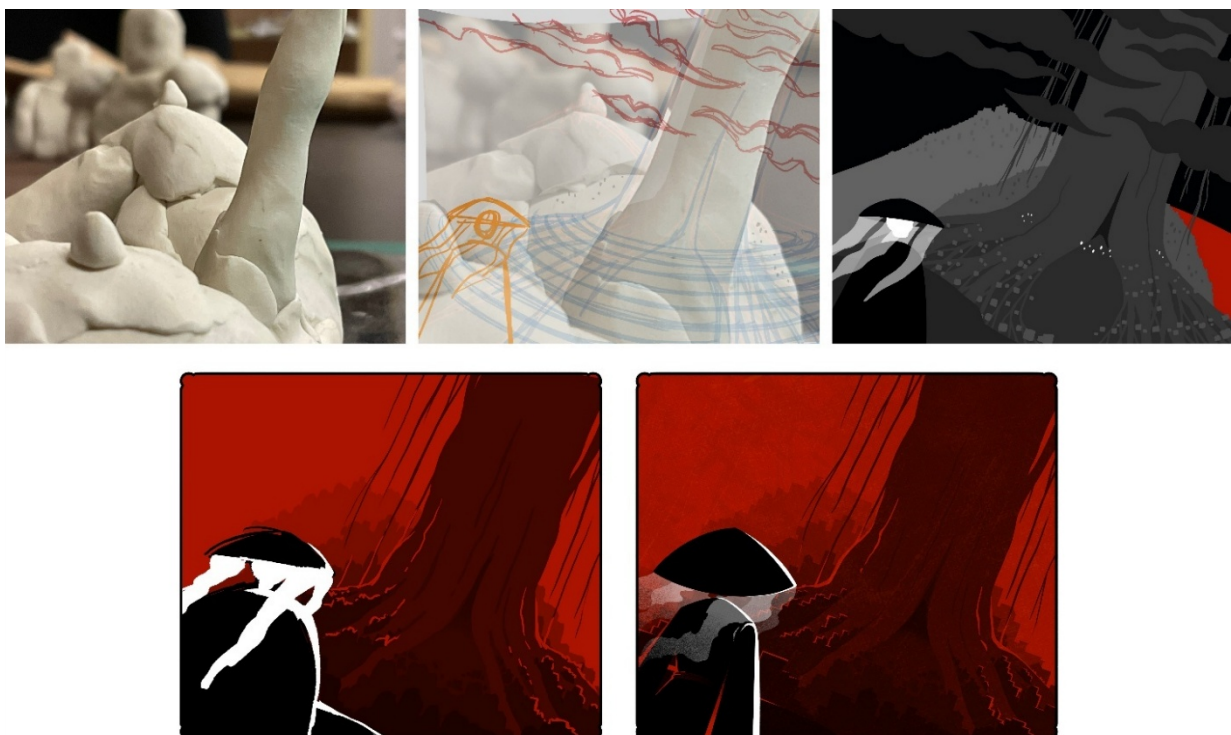


Figure 36. Lambana illustration process.

Storybeats in Lambana

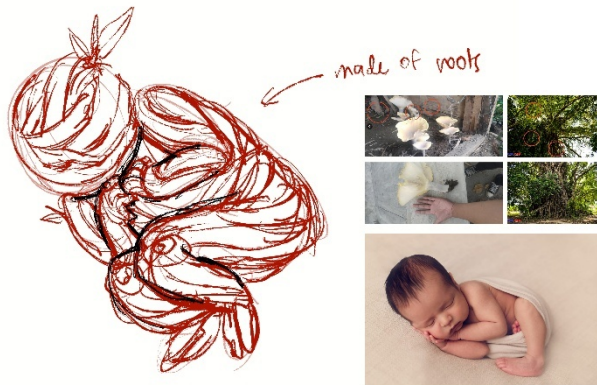


Figure 37. Tiyanak references and sketch.

I designed the Lambana NPCs using the common descriptions from the Tagalog Deities and Folklore study except for the tiyanak since many of its folktales (as well as the ones I heard growing up in the Tagalog region) say that the tiyanak was an unborn or aborted baby. This retelling is likely postcolonial as pointed out by one of the interviewees "because precolonial people didn't care about that sort of thing. Abortion was very common" (Study A, Cheese). In *OTBOB*, the tiyanak is instead Makiling's failed attempt to recreate Her child in Lambana.



Figure 38. Tiyanak spread illustration.

For the nuno sa punso and tikbalang, I implied their experiences with colonial violence and trauma by including scars, injuries, tattered clothing, and white eyes similar to the Katauhan. For the storybeat illustrations, I wanted them to look neutral in the sense that they could be perceived as either threats or potential allies.



Figure 39. Nuno sa Punso references and sketches.



Figure 40. Nuno sa Punso spread illustration.



Figure 41. Tikbalang references and sketches.



Figure 42. Tikbalang spread illustration.

Makiling has two storybeat illustrations: one as a threat (which fits the hegemonic narrative that She is hostile to Katauhan and must be killed) and the other as a victim of colonial violence (She is just searching for Her deceased husband).



Figure 43. Makiling references and sketches.



Figure 44. Pre-healing Makiling spread illustration.

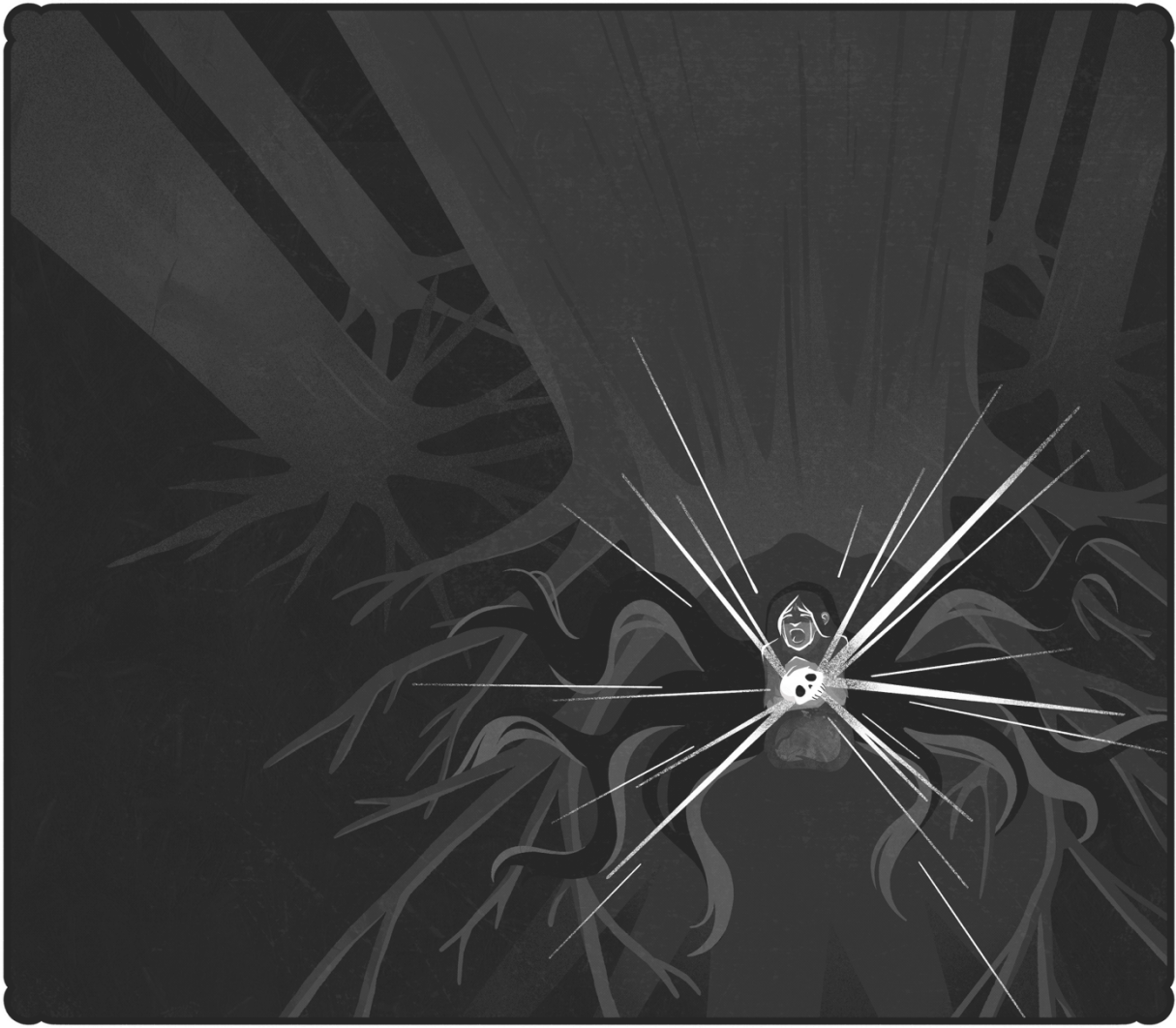


Figure 45. Post-healing Makiling spread illustration.

Grief and Texture

I developed my own textures through automatism (Tate). These were completed in December, months after the Filipino Psychology and Colonial Trauma study and a week after my grandmother passed away in the Philippines. It was strange to research death-related grief only to experience it myself during the MDES. I poured a lot of my emotions into these paintings then incorporated it into *OTBOB* by overlaying it on the illustrations.



Figure 46. Sample hand-painted textures.

Layout Design

For the layout, I used numbers divisible by 3, 4 and 7 for page size, grid, margin, etc.

- 3 represents tripartite cosmology (Barretto-Tesoro 3).
- 4 is associated with “death” to many Filipino-Chinese communities because its Cantonese and Mandarin pronunciations sound like death (Tse 6; Crossman 189).
- 7 is the sum of 3 and 4 but also represents the seven afterlives (Donoso et al. 79-81).

I also used Filipino-made typefaces, specifically those that reflect *OTBOB*’s themes.

Table 17. *OTBOB* fonts.

<p>BALETE Display</p>	<p>Balete means “banyan tree” in many Philippine languages, and Lambana is a banyan tree. The typeface also features glyphs of baybayin, the precolonial Tagalog script.</p>
<p>Vengeance Serif Serif (for worldbuilding)</p>	<p>Its sleek and narrow design works well with the Balete typeface. Moreover, its name ties with <i>OTBOB</i> themes (vengeance and/or revolution).</p>
<p>Hanken Grotesk Sans Serif (for mechanics)</p>	<p>Its rounded font looks very similar to round baybayin characters.</p>

Tactile Component Illustration

I designed the flat surfaces of tactile components using motifs and patterns based on the precolonial and indigenized beliefs practiced simultaneously in Lusong, e.g. tripartite cosmological motifs (see Text: Worldbuilding), Islamic arch-inspired frames, patterns from Buddhist archeological findings like the Flying Elephant Dish (National Museum of the Philippines, "Lena Shoal Shipwreck Objects").

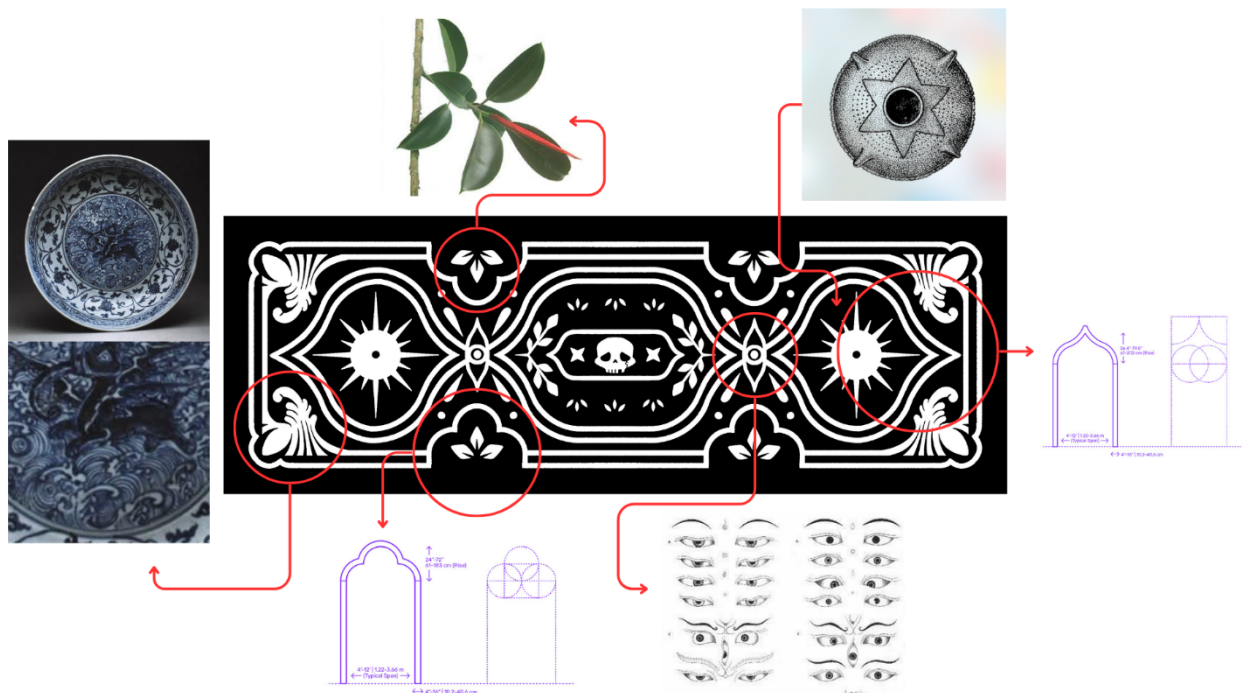


Figure 47. Motifs in manuscript cover.

Material

For the tactile component development, my first consideration was how to make *OTBOB* accessible to middle and lower socio-economic groups in the Philippines. Doing so lined up with the Punk Game Framework (see Context Review) as well as positioned the work as socially responsible and aware of its own context as a playable object, not just a vehicle for narrative.

My second consideration was how to evoke 16th Century Tagalog aesthetics through the components. This led me to the sungka board and palm-leaf manuscripts (items with precolonial roots) for inspiration when developing the starter kit.

Sungka Board, Tokens and d6



Figure 48. Sample sungka board.

Each player gets a board to keep track of their Physique, Sanity, and Omens. This is based on sungka (Philippine mancala), specifically the Bicolano (and less likely, Tagalog) design which featured a more rectangular shape (De Voogt 338-40).



Figure 49. AMNH Anthropology catalog # 70.1/9779ab, Sungka board.

The board was composed of three layers of corrugated board with illustrations referencing the tripartite cosmology: waves at the bottom (KAILALIMAN), leaves in the middle (KALUPAAN), and a frame inspired by Islamic arches at the top (KALANGITAN).

The Blessings and Judgment tokens were designed with KAILALIMAN imagery (e.g. ocean waves) since the GM gives or deducts tokens and represents Kamatayan and the Katauhan's ancestors, both associated with KAILALIMAN. This contrasts the KALANGITAN imagery for the die design since neither players nor the GM has control over the rolls.



Figure 50. Blessing tokens.



Figure 51. Six-sided die.



Figure 54. Palm-leaf manuscript (Saint Louis Art Museum, Palm-Leaf Manuscript with Bamboo Covers).



Figure 55. Pattachitra painting on palm leaves (Prince).

Punk Game Framework and Paper-Based Components

Using the Punk Game Framework (Costa 20), I decided to use paper-based materials when developing the tactile components. Since I had no prior experience with physical TTRPG design, creating a paper-based TTRPG starter kit by myself was a time-consuming learning and development process. Still, I chose to develop the components this way because I wanted it to be possible to recreate in the Philippines where 3D printing, acrylic laser cutting, and custom wood carving are often expensive and inaccessible.



Figure 56. Process photographs of tactile components.

Tactile Component Process

I used corrugated boards for the manuscript covers, sungka board, and tokens since they are readily available in the Philippines. I also used weighted textured paper when printing the illustrated surfaces of the tactile components as a material way to show the heaviness of grief. I used a laser-cutting machine for most of the component pieces for efficiency, but I also experienced cutting by hand. Finally, I assembled the components.

FURTHER DEVELOPMENT

In the future, I would like to run more playtests and further develop *OTBOB*, e.g. complete Maka and Kasamaan scenarios, develop more GM-facing tools, create System Reference Document (SRD) for game designers, etc., to further explore different experiences and opinions of the Tagalog history, and create more opportunities for Filipinos to take agency regarding the vast experiences in our precolonial to neocolonial history.

CONCLUSION

To review, I wanted to regain control over my own narrative and have conversations about colonial violence, trauma, and hegemonic discourses with other Filipinos who are seeking similar spaces. I also wondered how to encourage these conversations to happen naturally while minimizing retraumatization.

To do so, I first recontextualized my feelings and experiences with colonial violence, trauma, and hegemonic narratives through TTRPGs utilizing metaphors, creative depictions of Tagalog culture, history, and folklore, and the Punk Game Framework. Adopting Trauma-informed Care Principles via brave spaces, living contracts, and safety tools, I then conducted playtests where Filipino players (and myself) explored and discussed real-life issues (e.g. colonialism) through the Rotting Isles, the body horror version of the colonized Tagalog Region. By doing so, no cases of retraumatization were reported despite the genre or sensitive content. Moreover, not only do TTRPGs provide the prospect for collective healing for players, but TTRPG design itself can be a form of creative expression that aids the designer through their healing journey as well.

The playtest results also displayed the potential for TTRPGs to take a role beyond the adventure of the game. By refining *OTBOB* further, I hope to not only expand on this potential but also to encourage more Filipino creators to take a similar approach to process uniquely Filipino experiences and gain new knowledge while furthering intra-community communication and facilitating conversations on how colonialist history still affects them to this day.

WORKS CITED

- A Hydrographical and Chorographical Chart of the Philippine Islands*. publisher not identified, 1 Jan. 1734. *Library of Congress Digital Collections*, https://www.loc.gov/resource/gdcwdl.wdl_10089/.
- Ablett, Phillip. *COLONIALISM IN DENIAL: US PROPAGANDA IN THE PHILIPPINE-AMERICAN WAR*.
- "Across RPGSEA." *Across RPGSEA*, 7 Feb. 2021, <https://across-rpgsea.com/about/>.
- Amauger, Christian. "The Power of Choice: Player Agency in Tabletop Role-Playing Games." *Medium*, 29 Jun. 2023, <https://medium.com/@camauger/the-power-of-choice-player-agency-in-tabletop-role-playing-games-446e0be16428>.
- Antonio, Joachim Emilio. "Storywriting Basics: Story Design." *Storywriting School*, <https://www.storywritingschool.com/courses/catalog/storywriting-basics-story-design>. Accessed 20 Jun. 2025.
- Arre, Arnold. *The World of Andong Agimat: The Mystery of the Talisman*. Tuttle Publishing, 2023.
- babblegumsam. *Horse Girl [Ashcan]*. 2021, <https://babblegumsam.itch.io/horse-girl>.
- Barretto-Tesoro, Grace. "A Local Discourse on the Early Belief System from the Philippines Using Evidence from the Guthe Collection | Isang Diskursong Lokal Sa Sinaunang Kosmolohiya Sa Pilipinas Gamit Ang Guthe Collection." *SPAFA Journal*, vol. 4, Dec. 2020. *DOI.org (Crossref)*, <https://doi.org/10.26721/spafajournal.v4i0.616>.
- Brander, Tommi. *Old School Renaissance as a Style of Play*. 12 Sep. 2020. *SocArXiv*, <https://doi.org/10.31235/osf.io/b2w36>.
- Brion-Meisels, Gretchen. "Step 3: Norm-Setting to Build Brave Spaces." *Harvard Graduate School of Education*, <https://instructionalmoves.gse.harvard.edu/inclusivity-and-belonging/step-3-norm-setting-to-build-brave-spaces>. Accessed 26 Jun. 2025.
- Buffalo Center for Social Research. "What Is Trauma-Informed Care?" *University at Buffalo*, <https://socialwork.buffalo.edu/social-research/institutes-centers/institute-on-trauma-and-trauma-informed-care/what-is-trauma-informed-care.html>. Accessed 5 May 2025.
- Caballes, Ligaya. "The Tagalog Deities. Who Are They?" *The Pinay Writer*, 12 Sep. 2020, <https://thepinaywriter.com/the-tagalog-deities-who-are-they/>.
- Chapman, Owen, and Kim Sawchuk. "Research-Creation: Intervention, Analysis and 'Family Resemblances.'" *Canadian Journal of Communication*, vol. 37, no. 1, Apr. 2012, pp. 5-26. *DOI.org (Crossref)*, <https://doi.org/10.22230/cjc.2012v37n1a2489>.
- Clark, Jordan. "AMAN SINAYA, the Fisherman's Deity." *The Aswang Project*, 10 Oct. 2021, <https://www.aswangproject.com/amansinaya/>.
- Constantino, Renato. *The Miseducation of the Filipino*. 1959.
- Cook, Monte, et al. *Dungeon Master's Guide v3.5*. Edited by Wizards of the Coast, Inc, Wizards of the Coast, 2003.
- Cornell University Library. *Palm Leaf Manuscripts*. <https://chinapreservationtutorial.library.cornell.edu/content/palm-leaf-manuscripts/>. Accessed 2 May 2025.
- Costa, Vitor Fiacadori. *Punk Games: DIY Punk in Game Making*.
- Crossman, Joanna. "Numerological and Related Superstitions." *Superstition, Management and Organisations: Irrationality, Randomness, and Chaos in Decision Making*, edited by Joanna Crossman, Springer Nature Switzerland, 2024, pp. 175-98. *Springer Link*, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-59020-7_9.
- De Voogt, Alex. "Philippine Sungka and Cultural Contact in Southeast Asia." *Asian Ethnology*, vol. 69, no. 2, 2010, pp. 333-42.
- Donoso, Isaac, et al., editors. *Boxer Codex: A Modern Spanish Transcription and English Translation of Sixteenth-Century Exploration Accounts of East and Southeast Asia and the Pacific*. 2nd edition, Vibal Foundation, 2022.
- Dvorak-Stocker, Kilian. *The Issue of Collective Trauma and Its Lasting Legacy: Manila and the Philippines in World War II*.
- Dwyer, Lauren, et al. "Media Framing of Dominant Ideologies in Explanatory Journalism Concerning Artificial Intelligence and Robotics." *Canadian Journal of Communication*, vol. 48, no. 4, Dec. 2023, pp. 715-42. *DOI.org (Crossref)*, <https://doi.org/10.3138/cjc-2022-0017>.

- Eadie, Pauline. "Locating Hegemony and Counter-Hegemony in Philippine Historical Experience." *Poverty and the Critical Security Agenda*, Routledge, 2005.
- ELDEN RING. Directed by Miyazaki Hidetaka and George R. R. Martin, FromSoftware, Inc. and BANDAI NAMCO Entertainment Inc., 2022, <https://en.bandainamcoent.eu/elden-ring/elden-ring>.
- Eslit, Edgar R. "Resilience of Philippine Folklore: An Enduring Heritage and Legacy for the 21st Century." *International Journal of Education, Language, and Religion*, vol. 5, no. 1, May 2023, p. 9. DOI.org (Crossref), <https://doi.org/10.35308/ijelr.v5i1.7504>.
- Fanon, Frantz, et al. *The Wretched of the Earth*. Grove press, 2004.
- Fragoso, Sam, and Resmaa Menakem. *How Do We Heal? (With Resmaa Menakem)*. 200, <https://talkeasypod.com/resmaa-menakem/>. Accessed 20 Jun. 2024.
- Get Out. Directed by Jordan Peele, Universal Pictures, Blumhouse Productions, QC Entertainment, 2017.
- GRAIL Gaming Research and Investigation Laboratory. "TTRPG Safety Tools." *GRAIL Gaming Research and Investigation Laboratory*, 20 Nov. 2024, <https://grailgamingresearch.wordpress.com/ttrpg-safety-tools/>.
- Guillermo Del Toro on The Horror Genre | "In The Labyrinth: A Conversation With Guillermo Del Toro." Directed by Oscars, 2024. YouTube, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A4SAKwPk3_s.
- Hooks, Bell. *Reel to Real: Race, Class and Sex at the Movies*. Taylor & Francis, 2012, <https://books.google.co.nz/books?id=wg2NZlo9QWwC>.
- Howitt, Grant, and Will Kirkby. *Eat the Reich*. Rowan, Rook and Decard, 2023.
- In My Mother's Skin. Directed by Kenneth Dagatan, Epicmedia Productions, Zhao Wei Films (I), Volos Films, 2023.
- Jocano, F. Landa. "Notes on Philippine Divinities." *Asian Studies: Journal of Critical Perspectives on Asia*, vol. 6, Jun. 1968, <https://www.asj.upd.edu.ph/mediabox/archive/ASJ-06-02-1968/jocano-notes-philippine-divinities.pdf>.
- Kohn, Rugose. "FÖLK-LORE." *Itch.io*, <https://rugose-kohn.itch.io/flk-lore>. Accessed 23 May 2024.
- Lasco, Lorenz. *Otherworldly Ornamentation*.
- Le, Khang, et al. *The Skillful Huntsman: Visual Development of a Grimm Tale at Art Center College of Design*. 1st ed, Design Studio Press, 2005.
- Manchester, William. *American Caesar, Douglas MacArthur, 1880-1964*. Boston: Little, Brown, 1978. Internet Archive, <http://archive.org/details/americancaesar00manc>.
- Menakem, Resmaa. *My Grandmother's Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending Our Hearts and Bodies*. 1st ed, Central Recovery Press, 2017.
- Mendoza, Perseville. *The Filipino as Researcher: Exploring the Significance of Filipino Concepts to Research Methodologies and Frameworks*. Auckland University of Technology.
- Mitchell, Terry. "Colonial Trauma: Complex, Continuous, Collective, Cumulative and Compounding Effects on the Health of Indigenous Peoples in Canada and Beyond." *International Journal of Indigenous Health*, vol. 14, no. 2, Aug. 2019, pp. 74-94. DOI.org (Crossref), <https://doi.org/10.32799/ijih.v14i2.32251>.
- National Museum of the Philippines. "Bolinao Skull with Gold Dental Ornamentation." Facebook, 16 Feb. 2021, <https://www.facebook.com/nationalmuseumofthephilippines/posts/the-nationalmuseumph-joins-celebrating-national-dental-health-month-through-toda/4026420934048861/>.
- . "Lena Shoal Shipwreck Objects." Facebook, 31 Aug. 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/nationalmuseumofthephilippines/posts/this-week-on-maritimemonday-at-the-nationalmuseumph-features-another-national-cu/3544201572270802/>.
- Necropraxis. "OSR Survey: Meaning." *Necropraxis*, 13 Dec. 2018, <https://necropraxis.com/2018/12/13/osr-survey-meaning/>.
- Nilsson, Pelle, and Johan Nohr. *MÖRK BORG*. Edited by Patrick Stuart, Free League Publishing, 2020, <https://morkborg.com/>.

- Odal, Grace P. "Lowland Cultural Group of the Tagalogs." *National Commission for Culture and the Arts*, <https://ncca.gov.ph/about-ncca-3/subcommissions/subcommission-on-cultural-communities-and-traditional-arts-scccta/northern-cultural-communities/lowland-cultural-group-of-the-tagalogs/>. Accessed 27 Apr. 2025.
- Pan's Labyrinth*. Directed by Guillermo del Toro, Tequila Gang, Estudios Picasso, Esperanto Filmoj, 2007.
- Paris Paloma. *Hunter*. 30 Aug. 2024. *genius.com*, <https://genius.com/Paris-paloma-hunter-lyrics>.
- Philippine Statistics Authority. *Ethnicity in the Philippines (2020 Census of Population and Housing)*. 3 Jul. 2023, <https://psa.gov.ph/content/ethnicity-philippines-2020-census-population-and-housing>.
- Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest*. Directed by Gore Verbinski, Walt Disney Pictures, Jerry Bruckheimer Films, Second Mate Productions, 2006.
- Prince, Mike. *Pattachitra Painting*. photo, 2 Jan. 2015. *Flickr*, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/mikeprince/16419923734/>.
- Quade, Lu. "Stars and Wishes." *THE GAUNTLET*, 22 Aug. 2018, <http://www.gauntlet-rpg.com/14/post/2018/08/stars-and-wishes.html>.
- Reinbold, Lotte. "Lines and Veils, and Other RPG Safety Tools, Open up Tabletop Roleplaying for Everyone." *Dicebreaker*, 29 Apr. 2021, <https://www.dicebreaker.com/categories/roleplaying-game/opinion/lines-and-veils-rpg-safety-tools>.
- Reyes, Xavier Aldana. "Abjection and Body Horror." *The Palgrave Handbook of Contemporary Gothic*, edited by Clive Bloom, Springer International Publishing, 2020, pp. 393-410. *Springer Link*, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-33136-8_24.
- Rizal, José. *Mariang Makiling*. 23 Nov. 1890, <http://www.theipps.info/Presentations/makiling.pdf>.
- Saavedra, Joaquin. *Karanduun*. 2020, <https://www.drivethrurpg.com/en/product/316970/karanduun>.
- Sahlen, Christian, and Johan Nohr. *CY_BORG*. Free League Publishing, https://freeleaguepublishing.com/games/cy_borg/. Accessed 11 Jul. 2025.
- Saint Louis Art Museum. *Palm Leaf Manuscript (Bai Lan)*. <https://www.slam.org/collection/objects/646/>. Accessed 2 May 2025.
- . *Palm-Leaf Manuscript with Bamboo Covers*. <https://www.slam.org/collection/objects/36469/>. Accessed 2 May 2025.
- Samaniego, René M. *The Evolution of Psychiatry and Mental Health in the Philippines*.
- Samonte, Xedric. *Pre-Hispanic Tagalog Clothing Guide*. <https://www.facebook.com/xedric.samonte/posts/pfbid02XwoDhzDFQnWg3PuFZNmpLQ2h4FQHH5HQ4m2db417zwcHURSmxdghRijesTbvABW1l>. Accessed 4 Jul. 2024.
- Scherff, Garrett S. *Gaming Against Adversity - Resistance in Tabletop Role-Playing*. 2024. Bowling Green State University, M.A. ProQuest, <https://www.proquest.com/docview/3100854341/abstract/F6D8F7E0CC6A4402PQ/1>.
- Scott, William Henry. *Barangay: Sixteenth-Century Philippine Culture and Society*. Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1994.
- Seklusyon*. Directed by Erik Matti, Reality Entertainment, 2016.
- Shaw, Thomas Leonard. "Haunted Churches, Wicked Schools, Addressing Postcolonial History Through Philippine Horror." *Contemporary Horror on Screen: An Evolving Visual Narrative*, edited by Sarah Baker et al., Springer Nature Singapore, 2023, pp. 93-109, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-99-4965-6_7.
- Stavropoulos, John. *X-Card by John Stavropoulos*. 1 Aug. 2013, https://docs.google.com/document/d/1SB0jsx34bWHZWbnNIVVuMjhDkrDFGo1_hSC2BWPII3A/edit?usp=embed_facebook.
- Sugbo, Victorio N. "Review of Ang Bayan Sa Labas Ng Maynila: The Nation beyond Manila." *Philippine Studies*, vol. 56, no. 4, 2008, pp. 496-98.
- Sugue, Alliah Samantha, and Mercedita Reyes. "Rediscovering the Value of Philippine Mythology for Philippine Schools: Literature Review." *International Journal of Language and Literary Studies*, vol. 4, no. 3, Oct. 2022, pp. 329-41. *DOI.org (Crossref)*, <https://doi.org/10.36892/ijlls.v4i3.1057>.
- Sword Isles Studios. "Gubat Banwa." *Itch.io*, <https://gubat-banwa.itch.io/>. Accessed 5 May 2025.
- . "Gubat Banwa Design Document." *Canva*, https://www.canva.com/design/DAFeck_l2es/0AmW0VNa3uROC8GDph8Rrg/view. Accessed 27 Jun. 2025.

- . "Gubat Banwa Kadungganan Creation True First Edition." *Itch.io*, 1 Sep. 2024, <https://gubat-banwa.itch.io/gubat-banwa-kadungganan-creation-true-first-edition>.
- Ta-asan, Keisha. "Who Are The Middle Class In The Philippines?" *Philippine Institute of Development Studies*, 19 May 2022, <http://www.pids.gov.ph/details/news/in-the-news/who-are-the-middle-class-in-the-philippines>.
- Tate. "Automatism." *Tate*, <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/a/automatism>. Accessed 28 Jun. 2025.
- Tse, Andrew Yau Hau. "To Be or Not to Be Superstitious-That's the Question." *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, vol. 208, Nov. 2015, pp. 5-12. *DOI.org (Crossref)*, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.11.175>.
- University of Michigan. *Reconcentrado Camp : Tanauan, Batangas*. <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/i/image/image-idx?id=S-SCLPHILIMG-X-1060%5DPHLF031>. Accessed 13 May 2024.
- Upadhyaya, Ashwini, and Sachin K. Sonawane. "Palmyrah Palm and Its Products (Neera, Jaggery and Candy)—A Review on Chemistry and Technology." *Applied Food Research*, vol. 3, no. 1, Jun. 2023, p. 100256. *ScienceDirect*, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.afres.2022.100256>.
- Veloso, Diana Therese M. "Of Counter-Hegemonic Narratives and Fragmented Identities." *Asia-Pacific Social Science Review*, vol. 14, no. 1, Jun. 2014. *DOI.org (Crossref)*, <https://doi.org/10.59588/2350-8329.1025>.
- Victoria University of Wellington. "Guidance and Resources for Ethics Applicants." *Victoria University of Wellington*, 11 Mar. 2025, <https://www.wgtn.ac.nz/research/support/ethics/human-ethics-approval/guidance-and-resources-for-ethics-applicants>.
- What's Wrong With Philippines Studies? Reflections from the Margins of the Nation-State*. Directed by UH Mānoa Center for Southeast Asian Studies, 2024. *YouTube*, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yFQwokhcZ_c.
- Zack Snyder's Justice League*. Directed by Zack Snyder, Atlas Entertainment, DC Entertainment, DC Films, 2021.

LIST OF IMAGES

Figure 1. 1734 map of the Philippines. (A Hydrographical and Chorographical Chart of the Philippine Islands).....	9
Figure 2. Concentration camps in Batangas (University of Michigan).....	10
Figure 3. Slide from the Gubat Banwa Design Document.....	13
Figure 4. Sample Life Events from Kadungganan Creation True First Edition.....	13
Figure 5. Sample Social Classes from Kadungganan Creation True First Edition.....	14
Figure 6. Slide from the Gubat Banwa Design Document. Reproduced according to NZ copyright Act 1994 s.42.....	14
Figure 7. MÖRK BORG cover.....	15
Figure 8. MÖRK BORG illustration.....	15
Figure 9. CY_BORG spread.....	15
Figure 10. Iterative-Reflective Design Process.....	29
Figure 11. Initial sketch of OTBOB Starter Kit.....	30
Figure 12. Design process from previous projects.....	32
Figure 13. Screenshot of top-down worldbuilding mood board. Reproduced according to NZ copyright Act 1994 s.42.....	33
Figure 14. OTBOB Social Classes.....	34
Figure 15. Motifs present in the Three Realms spread illustration.....	35
Figure 16. Rotting Isles spread illustration.....	36
Figure 17. Millennium Tree photograph and Lambana spread illustration.....	37
Figure 18. Sample Secrets.....	39
Figure 19. Sample History.....	40
Figure 20. Initial moodboard. Reproduced according to NZ copyright Act 1994 s.42.....	43
Figure 21. Boxer Codex illustrations (Donoso et al.).....	44
Figure 22. Character thumbnails.....	45
Figure 23. Storybeat thumbnails.....	45
Figure 24. Character line-up sketches.....	46
Figure 25. References and sketches of Liway, a Tree Roots Gatherer Alipin from the First Settlement. Reproduced according to NZ copyright Act 1994 s.42.....	47
Figure 26. References and sketches of Haraya, a Bone Smith Timawa from the Second Settlement. Reproduced according to NZ copyright Act 1994 s.42.....	48
Figure 27. References and sketches of Sinag, a Maginoo from the Kadatuan. Reproduced according to NZ copyright Act 1994 s.42.....	49
Figure 28. Pre-generated Katauhan illustration.....	50
Figure 29. Kamatayan references and sketches. Reproduced according to NZ copyright Act 1994 s.42.....	51
Figure 30. Kamatayan in the X-Card.....	52
Figure 31. KADAYUHAN references and sketches. Reproduced according to NZ copyright Act 1994 s.42.....	53
Figure 32. KADAYUHAN spread illustration.....	54
Figure 33. Kawal references and sketches. Reproduced according to NZ copyright Act 1994 s.42.....	55
Figure 34. Kawal spread illustration.....	56
Figure 35. Rotting Isles illustration process.....	57
Figure 36. Lambana illustration process.....	57
Figure 37. Tiyanak references and sketch. Reproduced according to NZ copyright Act 1994 s.42.....	58
Figure 38. Tiyanak spread illustration.....	58
Figure 39. Nuno sa Punso references and sketches. Reproduced according to NZ copyright Act 1994 s.42.....	59
Figure 40. Nuno sa Punso spread illustration.....	60
Figure 41. Tikbalang references and sketches. Reproduced according to NZ copyright Act 1994 s.42.....	61
Figure 42. Tikbalang spread illustration.....	62
Figure 43. Makiling references and sketches. Reproduced according to NZ copyright Act 1994 s.42.....	63
Figure 44. Pre-healing Makiling spread illustration.....	64
Figure 45. Post-healing Makiling spread illustration.....	65
Figure 46. Sample hand-painted textures.....	66
Figure 47. Motifs in manuscript cover. Reproduced according to NZ copyright Act 1994 s.42.....	67
Figure 48. Sample sungka board.....	68
Figure 49. AMNH Anthropology catalog # 70.1/9779ab, Sungka board. Courtesy of the Division of Anthropology, American Museum of Natural History.....	69
Figure 50. Blessing tokens.....	69
Figure 51. Six-sided die.....	69
Figure 52. Sample manuscripts.....	70
Figure 53. Palm-leaf manuscript (Saint Louis Art Museum, Palm Leaf Manuscript (Bai Lan)).....	70
Figure 54. Palm-leaf manuscript (Saint Louis Art Museum, Palm-Leaf Manuscript with Bamboo Covers).....	71

Figure 55. Pattachitra painting on palm leaves (Prince)	71
Figure 56. Process photographs of tactile components.	72
Figure 57. Study A call-for-respondents.....	85
Figure 58. Study B call-for-respondents.....	136
Figure 59. Study C call-for-playtesters.....	162

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Atrocities committed in the Tagalog Region.....	9
Table 2. Punk Game Framework application.....	12
Table 3. Schema of Karunungan.....	16
Table 4. Low-Risk Studies Overview.....	18
Table 5. Complete OTBOB Divinities and Creatures.....	19
Table 6. Trauma-Informed Care Principles definition and OTBOB application.....	25
Table 7. Comparison between original and current OTBOB iteration.....	31
Table 8. Four Development Phases with Design Pillars.....	32
Table 9. Historical metaphors in OTBOB worldbuilding.....	34
Table 10. Three Realms and tripartite cosmological motifs.....	35
Table 11. QT3K example.....	38
Table 12. Capitalization and hierarchy of people and locations in OTBOB.....	38
Table 13. The Three Settlements.....	41
Table 14. Samples of First Settlement Social Classes.....	41
Table 15. Mechanics as metaphors and depictions of colonial trauma and cultural values.....	42
Table 16. OTBOB palette.....	44
Table 17. OTBOB fonts.....	66
Table 18. Study B interviewee information.....	139
Table 19. Study C playtester information.....	164

APPENDIX A

Study A: Tagalog Deities and Folklore

Low-Risk Approval Questionnaire



Massey University

Te Kuenga ki Pūrehuroa

**SCREENING QUESTIONNAIRE
TO DETERMINE THE APPROVAL PROCEDURE**
(Part A and Part B of this questionnaire must both be completed)

<p>Name: Ar-Em Bañas Project Title: On the Bones of BATALA: Exploring Philippine Historical Distortions and Trauma through Tabletop Role-Playing Games</p>

This questionnaire should be completed following, or as part of, the discussion of ethical issues.

Part A

The statements below are being used to determine the risk of your project causing physical or psychological harm to participants and whether the nature of the harm is minimal and no more than is normally encountered in daily life. The degree of risk will then be used to determine the appropriate approval procedure.

If you are in any doubt, you are encouraged to submit an application to one of the University's ethics committees.

Does your Project involve any of the following?

(Please answer all questions. Please circle either YES or NO for each question)

Risk of Harm

1. Situations in which the researcher may be at risk of harm.	YES <input type="radio"/> NO <input checked="" type="radio"/>
2. Use of questionnaire or interview, whether or not it is anonymous, which might reasonably be expected to cause discomfort, embarrassment, or psychological or spiritual harm to the participants.	YES <input type="radio"/> NO <input checked="" type="radio"/>
3. Processes that are potentially disadvantageous to a person or group, such as the collection of information which may expose the person/group to discrimination.	YES <input type="radio"/> NO <input checked="" type="radio"/>
4. Collection of information of illegal behaviour(s) gained during the research which could place the participants at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to their financial standing, employability, professional or personal relationships.	YES <input type="radio"/> NO <input checked="" type="radio"/>
5. Collection of blood, body fluid, tissue samples or other samples.	YES <input type="radio"/> NO <input checked="" type="radio"/>
6. Any form of exercise regime, physical examination, deprivation (e.g. sleep, dietary).	YES <input type="radio"/> NO <input checked="" type="radio"/>
7. The administration of any form of drug, medicine (other than in the course of standard medical procedure), placebo.	YES <input type="radio"/> NO <input checked="" type="radio"/>
8. Physical pain, beyond mild discomfort.	YES <input type="radio"/> NO <input checked="" type="radio"/>
9. Any Massey University teaching which involves the participation of Massey University students for the demonstration of procedures or phenomena which have a potential for harm.	YES <input type="radio"/> NO <input checked="" type="radio"/>

Informed and Voluntary Consent

10. Participants whose identity is known to the researcher giving oral consent rather than written consent (if participants are <u>anonymous</u> , you may answer No).	YES <input type="radio"/> NO <input checked="" type="radio"/>
11. Participants who are unable to give informed consent.	YES <input type="radio"/> NO <input checked="" type="radio"/>
12. Research on your own students/pupils.	YES <input type="radio"/> NO <input checked="" type="radio"/>
13. The participation of children (seven (7) years old or younger).	YES <input type="radio"/> NO <input checked="" type="radio"/>
14. The participation of children under sixteen (16) years old where parental consent is not being sought.	YES <input type="radio"/> NO <input checked="" type="radio"/>
15. Participants who are in a dependent situation, such as people with a disability or residents of a hospital, nursing home or prison or patients highly dependent on medical care.	YES <input type="radio"/> NO <input checked="" type="radio"/>
16. Participants who are vulnerable.	YES <input type="radio"/> NO <input checked="" type="radio"/>
17. The use of previously collected information or biological samples for which there was no explicit consent for this research.	YES <input type="radio"/> NO <input checked="" type="radio"/>

Privacy/Confidentiality Issue

18. Any evaluation of Massey University services or organisational practices where information of a personal nature may be collected and where participants may be identified.	YES <input type="radio"/> NO <input checked="" type="radio"/>
--	---

Deception

19. Deception of the participants, including concealment and covert observations.	YES <input type="radio"/> NO <input checked="" type="radio"/>
---	---

Conflict of Interest

20. Conflict of interest situation for the researcher (e.g. is the researcher also the lecturer/teacher/treatment-provider/colleague or employer of the research participants or is there any other power relationship between the researcher and the research participants?).	YES <input type="radio"/> NO <input checked="" type="radio"/>
--	---

Compensation to Participants

21. Payments or other financial inducements (other than reasonable reimbursement of travel expenses or time) to participants.	YES <input type="radio"/> NO <input checked="" type="radio"/>
---	---

Procedural

22. A requirement by an outside organisation (e.g. a funding organisation or a journal in which you wish to publish) for Massey University Human Ethics Committee approval.	YES <input type="radio"/> NO <input checked="" type="radio"/>
---	---

Part B

The statements below are being used to determine if your project requires ethical approval by a Regional Health and Disability Ethics Committee. The statements are derived from the document, "Guidelines for an Accredited Institutional Ethics Committee to Refer Studies to an Accredited Health and Disability Ethics Committee", prepared by the Health Research Council Ethics Committee.

(<http://www.hrc.govt.nz/assets/pdfs/policy/ReferralGuidelines.pdf>)

In situations where you are not sure whether the research needs approval by an HDEC, you should seek an opinion from the Administrator of the relevant HDEC.

(<http://www.newhealth.govt.nz/ethicscommittees/>)

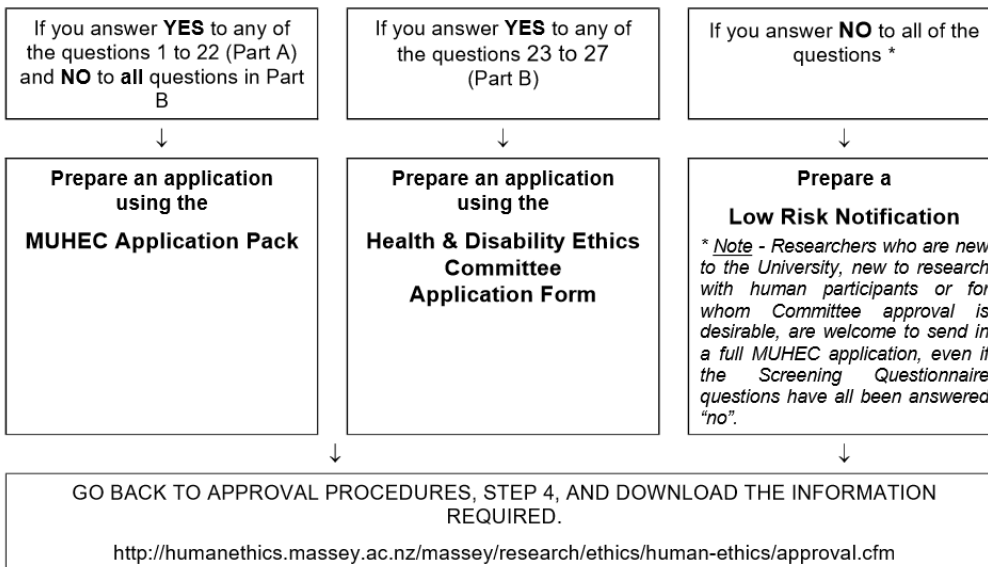
Include a copy of your written response from the Administrator with your application.

Does your Project involve any of the following?

(It is important that you answer all questions. Please circle either YES or NO for each question)

23. The use of staff or facilities of a District Health Board.	YES <input type="radio"/> NO <input checked="" type="radio"/>
24. Support, directly or indirectly, in full or in part, by District Health Board funds.	YES <input type="radio"/> NO <input checked="" type="radio"/>
25. Participants who are patients/clients of, or health information about an identifiable individual held by, an organisation providing health services (for example, general practice, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, sports medicine), disability services or institutionalised care.	YES <input type="radio"/> NO <input checked="" type="radio"/>
26. Requirement for ethical approval to access health or disability information about an identifiable individual held by the Ministry of Health, or held by any public or private organisation whether or not that organisation is related to health.	YES <input type="radio"/> NO <input checked="" type="radio"/>
27. A clinical trial which: requires the approval of the Standing Committee on Therapeutic Trials; requires the approval of the Gene Technology Advisory Committee; is sponsored by and/or for the benefit of the manufacturer or supplier of a drug or device.	YES <input type="radio"/> NO <input checked="" type="radio"/>

Determine the type of approval procedure to be used (choose one option):



Call-for-Respondents

Call for Respondents

Interview on Tagalog Deities & Folklore

Do you know the **aswang**? **Maria Makiling**?
The goddesses **Hanan**, **Mayari** and **Tala**?

If you answered **YES** to any of these questions, please consider answering a survey or doing an interview with me!

Who can participate?

Participants must be...

- * at least 18 years old
- * of Filipino descent
- * has some knowledge about Tagalog (or general Philippine) folklore

How can I participate?

You can answer the survey or do an interview.

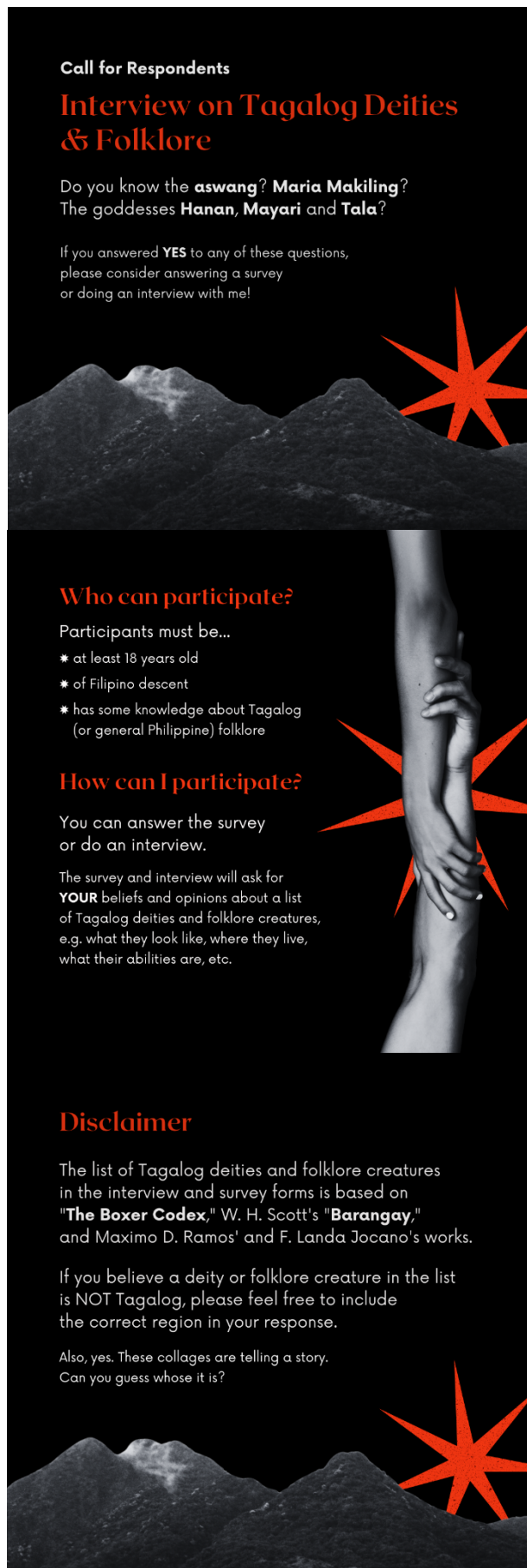
The survey and interview will ask for **YOUR** beliefs and opinions about a list of Tagalog deities and folklore creatures, e.g. what they look like, where they live, what their abilities are, etc.

Disclaimer

The list of Tagalog deities and folklore creatures in the interview and survey forms is based on "**The Boxer Codex**," W. H. Scott's "**Barangay**," and Maximo D. Ramos' and F. Landa Jocano's works.

If you believe a deity or folklore creature in the list is NOT Tagalog, please feel free to include the correct region in your response.

Also, yes. These collages are telling a story.
Can you guess whose it is?



Who are you?

I'm **Ar-Em Bañas**, a writer and illustrator born and raised in the Philippines.

I'm currently studying Master of Design at Te Kunenga ki Pūrehuroa Massey University in Aotearoa New Zealand.

What is this for?

The survey and interview are for my master's exegesis / thesis project, "**On the Bones of Batala**."

Inspired by Tagalog folklore and precolonial history, it's a horror tabletop role-playing game (TRPG) that delves into historical distortions and trauma caused by the colonization of the Philippines.

Please scan the QR Codes to access the Google Forms.

Interview
forms.gle/4BDt6iwoFR5n77h9

Survey
forms.gle/3p3UndJufJnGmt136

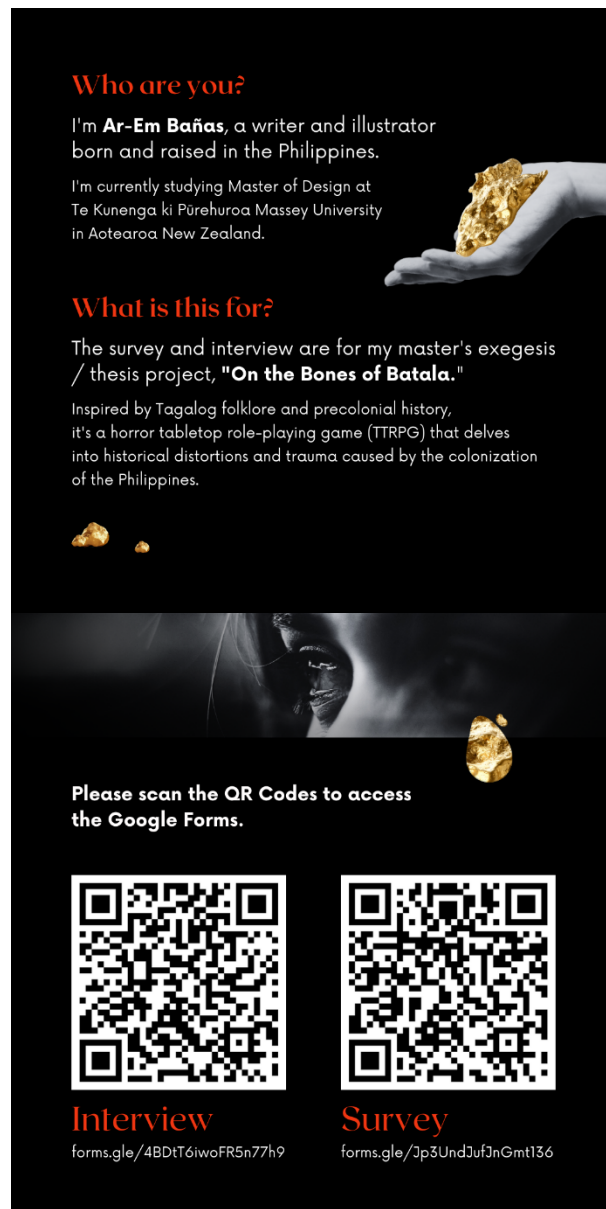


Figure 57. Study A call-for-respondents.

Participant Information and Consent Form

On the Bones of Batala is a practice-based research project that offers a critical investigative contribution to the decolonization discourse in game studies and concept design. Inspired by Tagalog folklore and precolonial history, it is a horror tabletop role-playing game (TTRPG) that delves into historical distortions and trauma caused by the colonization of the Philippines.

You are invited to participate in a study about Tagalog deities and folklore.

Participant Information

Who is conducting the research?

Ar-Em Bañas is a Master of Design student at Te Kunenga ki Pūrehuroa Massey University in Wellington, Aotearoa New Zealand. Prior their postgraduate studies, they worked as a freelance illustrator, writer, story writing coach, and game designer in the Philippines.

Who can participate in the interview?

Respondents must be at least 18 years old, of Filipino descent and has some knowledge about Tagalog (or general Philippine) folklore.

What will happen during the interview, and how will it be conducted?

The interview will be semi-structured and may take from 1 to 2 hours. The time, date and location if done in-person* will be discussed through email prior the meeting. If online, it will be conducted over Zoom.

Depending on the deity or folklore creature, sensitive topics may come up during the discussion, e.g. discussing the manananggal may bring up topics of body horror, graphic violence, miscarriage or child death.

You may be provided with a list of questions prior the interview upon request, however, additional clarifying questions may be asked during the interview. You are welcome not to answer any questions you do not wish to.

All interviews will be recorded.

* NOTE: In-person meetings will only be available for participants in Wellington, Aotearoa New Zealand.

Will I be paid if I participate?

For in-person interviews, you will be provided with snacks and a bottle of water. You will not be paid for participating in the study.

What will happen to the information I have provided for this research?

The interview recordings will be kept in a password-protected folder on my personal computer. It will be deleted after two years or after I graduate, whichever comes first. Participants will also be allowed to opt out for up to two weeks. If they choose to do so, their data will be deleted immediately.

The information provided will be anonymized in the exegesis. In case of direct quotations, a pen name of your choosing will be used.

Can I access the results of the research?

Yes, the completed exegesis will be available through Te Kunenga ki Pūrehuroa Massey University. You may have a link or a digital copy of the exegesis upon request.

Do I have to participate?

No, you do not have to participate if you would not like to. You may also withdraw from the study for up to two weeks after the interview.

Who can I contact for questions or concerns I have about the study?

For questions or concerns, please email Ar-Em Bañas at arembanas@gmail.com.

Consent Statement

I, _____, have read and understand the information above. Any questions I have asked were answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this research, knowing that I can withdraw from further participation without consequence any time prior the interview or two weeks after the interview. I have been given a copy of this form to keep.

Do you consent to participate in an online or in-person interview about Filipino psychology and colonial trauma?

Yes

No

How would you like to hold the interview?

- Online through Zoom
- In person (only in Wellington, Aotearoa New Zealand)

Do you consent to the interview being recorded?

- Yes
- No

What pen name would you like to use?

Would you like to receive a copy of the questions ahead of the interview?

- Yes
- No

Survey and Interview Questions

For Folkloric Creatures:

NOTE: Depending on the creature, sensitive topics may come up when answering the question, e.g. the manananggal may bring up topics of body horror, graphic violence, miscarriage or child death.

Where did you learn about this creature? (e.g. family, friends, school, personal experience, academic text, etc.)

What does this creature look like? (e.g. has one eye, has large bat wings, has claws, etc.)

Where does this creature live? (e.g. rivers, baletre trees, etc.)

What can this creature do? (e.g. casts spells, hears from afar, has supernatural strength, etc.)

Do you still believe in this creature? Why or why not?

For Maria Makiling:

Where did you learn about Maria Makiling? (e.g. family, friends, school, personal experience, academic text, etc.)

What does Maria Makiling look like? (e.g. has long black hair, wears a saya, etc.)

Where does Maria Makiling live? (e.g. mountains, forests, etc.)

What can Maria Makiling do? (e.g. protects animals, etc.)

Do you still believe in Maria Makiling? Why or why not?

For Deities:

Where did you learn about this deity? (e.g. family, friends, school, personal experience, academic text, etc.)

What does this deity look like? (e.g. has long black hair, has a scar on one eye, etc.)

Where does this deity live? (e.g. mountains, oceans, etc.)

Which domain does this deity rule over? (e.g. god of war, god of fertility, etc.)

What can this deity do? (e.g. raises the sun, protects harvests, summons tsunamis, etc.)

Do you still believe in this deity? Why or why not?

Table of Responses

There were no responses for Mankukutod and Uwinan Sana.

INTERVIEWEE PEN NAME	RESPONDENT LOCATION	APPEARANCE	HABITAT/LOCATION	ABILITIES	ORIGIN	BELIEF	ADD INFO
	Bicol			Diwata who protects the Sierra Madre and the forests. Prevents people from being harmed by typhoons or landslides. Punishes anyone who abuses the forest such as miners, illegal loggers, and poachers.			
	Cagayan Valley	Beautiful maiden with long, flowy black hair. Portrayed wearing Tagalog colonial attire (baro saya).	She lives in the mountains (hence the mountain named after her [Mount Makiling]).	Protects the earth but isn't quite a "Mother Earth" figure opposed to a more demigod / minor god.	Read about her in school textbooks.	I like the legend but never believed in her.	
	CALABARZON						
Jules	CALABARZON	Dalagang Filipina. Has long hair; some portray her with white hair. Wears a kimona. Motherly.	Mount Makiling	Can cast curses and turn ginger into gold.	From growing up in Southern Tagalog		Cursed a former lover, a revolutionary, for abandoning her so that he and his line can't come up the mountain without bad things happening to them. Some say that Oryol, the serpent-woman, became Makiling after being driven from Ibalnong (Bicol).
	Central Luzon	Beautiful woman		Will offer food and help to those who get lost in the forest, but captivates them so they never want to leave.	From grandmother	No	
Pando	Central Luzon	Fair-skinned. Wears a white dress. Has long hair.	Mount Makiling	Is the guardian of the mountain. Shows herself to people she favors.	From second-hand source (while undergoing Boy Scout Training in Mount Makiling, one of their friends saw a ghostly woman who asked him to come with her. Locals said it must've been Maria Makiling)		They say she only appears during a full moon and late at night, but they warned that if she invites you to go with her, you must not follow, because if you do, you might not be able to return home.
Fig	Central Visayas and Negros Island (now Aotearoa)	Ghost woman	Mount Makiling		From parents, Tagalog friends		
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila	Has long hair. Beautiful.	Mount Makiling	Diwata or fairy of the mountain. Men get lost and are taken back to her world because they fall in love with her. Protects all that live within the mountain. Can get angry when people eat fruits or destroy trees.	From elementary school	No	
	Metro Manila	Looks like a regular girl. Radiantly beautiful. Wearing a white dress.		Diwata. Guardian of animals and nature. Curses those who desecrate nature or take too much.	From podcasts and books		
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila	Has long hair. Naked.	Mount Makiling	Diwata or deity of the mountain. Protects the plants and animals of the mountain. Keeps respectful travelers safe and curses rude travelers with ailments or getting lost.	From books and teachers as a young student	Yes	

INTERVIEWEE PEN NAME	RESPONDENT LOCATION	APPEARANCE	HABITAT/LOCATION	ABILITIES	ORIGIN	BELIEF	ADD INFO
	Metro Manila	Beautiful woman	Mount Makiling	Diwata of Mount Makiling. Protects those who live on the mountain.	From father	Yes	
	Metro Manila	Has long black hair and fair skin. Wears flowy clothes.	Mount Makiling	Diwata of the mountain and forest she is named after. Invites people into her garden.	From school	Yes	
Yasmine	Metro Manila	Beautiful Filipino woman. Or more Western-looking, e.g. blonde hair, white skin	Mount Makiling	Has magic. Can bless with good luck and curse with ailments depending on how people treat the mountain.	From class, adults, and family members.	Yes	
BMJ	Metro Manila	Beautiful Filipino woman. Has black hair and olive skin. Wears a white baro't saya.	Mount Makiling	Connected to Mount Makiling and it's ecosystem or wildlife. Able to protect it.	From school and Kapuso Mo, Jessica Soho		
Cheese	Metro Manila	Breathtakingly beautiful. Has light olive skin, shining black hair, and twinkling eyes.	Mount Makiling	Diwata	From oral tradition		
Lynsie	Metro Manila (now Aotearoa)		Mount Makiling		From studies during childhood	No	
RQ	Metro Manila (now Aotearoa)		Mount Makiling	Diwata or fairy	From family		Possibly got the name Maria during the colonial period.

INTERVIEWEE PEN NAME	RESPONDENT LOCATION	APPEARANCE	HABITAT/LOCATION	ABILITIES	ORIGIN	BELIEF	ADD INFO
	Bicol						
	Cagayan Valley						
	CALABARZON						
Jules	CALABARZON		Sea	God of the sea. Can control waves. God of the hunt.	From deviantArt		Lamented how popular portrayals have him as Poseidon-esque and bearing Visayan tattoos. "There was probably a point prior to Islam reaching Lusong, that we probably had [tattoos or something similar]. But I don't think [they] would have Visayan tattoos."
	Central Luzon						
Pando	Central Luzon						
Fig	Central Visayas and Negros Island (now Aotearoa)						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila			God of the sea			Has a temper.
	Metro Manila			Protector of hunters. God of the sea.	From Wikipedia, F. Landa Jocano	No	
Yasmine	Metro Manila						
BMJ	Metro Manila	The visual description for the deities were based on the respondents' public creative work. These were redacted to keep them anonymous.	Ocean or sea	Can summon storms and typhoons			
Cheese	Metro Manila	Husky		God of the sea, god of the hunt. Anito. Intercessor to Bathala.	From Aswang Project and F. Landa Jocano		Ill-tempered
Lynsie	Metro Manila (now Aotearoa)						
RQ	Metro Manila (now Aotearoa)						

INTERVIEWEE PEN NAME	RESPONDENT LOCATION	APPEARANCE	HABITAT/LOCATION	ABILITIES	ORIGIN	BELIEF	ADD INFO
	Bicol						
	Cagayan Valley						
	CALABARZON						
Jules	CALABARZON	Feminine	Sea	Goddess(?) of the sea. Goddess (?) of fishing. Grants safety to sea-farers.	From deviantArt		Possibly a male deity because the etymology of their name "Ama-ni-Sinaya" means Father of the First Catch.
	Central Luzon						
Pando	Central Luzon						
Fig	Central Visayas and Negros Island (now Aotearoa)						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila			Advocate of fishermen			
	Metro Manila			God of fishermen. Controls over the sea and its marine life.	From Aswang Project		
Yasmine	Metro Manila						
BMJ	Metro Manila	The visual description for the deities were based on the respondents' public creative work. These were redacted to keep them anonymous.	Ocean or sea	Can control the sea and sea creatures			Might have fought Bathala at one point and caused the archipelago of the Philippines to form.
Cheese	Metro Manila		Sea	Goddess of the sea. God of fishermen. Blessed the catch of fishermen.	From Aswang Project, Isabelo de los Reyes and The Soul Book		Might have fought Bathala at one point and caused the archipelago of the Philippines to form. Possibly a male deity because the etymology of their name "Ama-ni-Sinaya" means Father of the First Catch.
Lynsie	Metro Manila (now Aotearoa)						
RQ	Metro Manila (now Aotearoa)						

INTERVIEWEE PEN NAME	RESPONDENT LOCATION	APPEARANCE	HABITAT/LOCATION	ABILITIES	ORIGIN	BELIEF	ADD INFO
	Bicol						
	Cagayan Valley						
	CALABARZON						
Jules	CALABARZON	Maiden. Wears white. Pregnant.	The love between people(?)	Goddess of motherhood, pregnant women, and lovers.			Her name is, possibly mistakenly, interpreted as meaning "be destroyed there" (from the possible misspelling of Diyan Masalanta)
	Central Luzon						
Pando	Central Luzon						
Fig	Central Visayas and Negros Island (now Aotearoa)						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						"Like Maria Makiling, is said to be another supreme diwata or deity. Originally depicted as male but is changed into a female figure with the advent of Christianity in the country."
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila			Goddess of love			
	Metro Manila			Goddess of love and generation	From Aswang Project and Obando Fertility Rites	Yes	
Yasmine	Metro Manila						
BMJ	Metro Manila	The visual description for the deities were based on the respondents' public creative work. These were redacted to keep them anonymous.	Kalangitan	Goddess of love and peace. Strengthens bonds between lovers and family.			
Cheese	Metro Manila			Goddess of lovers. Patron of lovers and generations.	From F. Landa Jocano and Relacion de Las Costumbres de Los Tagalogs by Fr. Juan de Plasencia		Daughter of Dumakulem and Anagolay
Lynsie	Metro Manila (now Aotearoa)						
RQ	Metro Manila (now Aotearoa)						

INTERVIEWEE PEN NAME	RESPONDENT LOCATION	APPEARANCE	HABITAT/LOCATION	ABILITIES	ORIGIN	BELIEF	ADD INFO
	Bicol						
	Cagayan Valley						
	CALABARZON						
Jules	CALABARZON						
	Central Luzon						
Pando	Central Luzon						
Fig	Central Visayas and Negros Island (now Aotearoa)						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila			God of the waters. Guards ocean life.			
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila			Sea god			
	Metro Manila			God of the sea (for invoking peace and stillness)	From Aswang Project		
Yasmine	Metro Manila						
BMJ	Metro Manila	The visual description for the deities were based on the respondents' public creative work. These were redacted to keep them anonymous.	Ocean or sea				
Cheese	Metro Manila						
Lynsie	Metro Manila (now Aotearoa)						
RQ	Metro Manila (now Aotearoa)						

INTERVIEWEE PEN NAME	RESPONDENT LOCATION	APPEARANCE	HABITAT/LOCATION	ABILITIES	ORIGIN	BELIEF	ADD INFO
	Bicol						
	Cagayan Valley						
	CALABARZON						
Jules	CALABARZON	Often depicted shirtless, wearing a bahag; sometimes has a sword.	Around farms	God of farmers(?) Defends livestock from predators.	From deviantArt		
	Central Luzon						
Pando	Central Luzon						
Fig	Central Visayas and Negros Island (now Aotearoa)						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
Yasmine	Metro Manila						
BMJ	Metro Manila	The visual description for the deities were based on the respondents' public creative work. These were redacted to keep them anonymous.	Dwells among humans	God of fences. Strengthens the defenses and homes built by humans.			
Cheese	Metro Manila	Depicted with gold teeth and eyes; penis as tall as a rice stalk.		God of fences and protection. Protector of growing crops.	From Aswang Project, F. Landa Jocano, and Boxer Codex		Was offered eels when fencing swiddens.
Lynsie	Metro Manila (now Aotearoa)						
RQ	Metro Manila (now Aotearoa)						

INTERVIEWEE PEN NAME	RESPONDENT LOCATION	APPEARANCE	HABITAT/LOCATION	ABILITIES	ORIGIN	BELIEF	ADD INFO
	Bicol						
	Cagayan Valley						
	CALABARZON						
Jules	CALABARZON		Around farms and people who grow food	God of purity, food, and throat ailments.	From The Pinay Writer and deviantArt		
	Central Luzon						
Pando	Central Luzon						
Fig	Central Visayas and Negros Island (now Aotearoa)						
	Metro Manila						[Means] lady.
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
Yasmine	Metro Manila						
BMJ	Metro Manila	The visual description for the deities were based on the respondents' public creative work. These were redacted to keep them anonymous.	Dwells among humans	God of/and festivals			
Cheese	Metro Manila			Invoked in case of throat ailments.	From Barangay by William Henry Scott		
Lynsie	Metro Manila (now Aotearoa)						
RQ	Metro Manila (now Aotearoa)						

INTERVIEWEE PEN NAME	RESPONDENT LOCATION	APPEARANCE	HABITAT/LOCATION	ABILITIES	ORIGIN	BELIEF	ADD INFO
	Bicol						
	Cagayan Valley						
	CALABARZON						
Jules	CALABARZON	Hermaphroditic		Goddess of fertility	From deviantArt		
	Central Luzon						
Pando	Central Luzon						
Fig	Central Visayas and Negros Island (now Aotearoa)	Long black hair. Personification femininity and masculinity.	Bukid or farmland	Brings fertility and abundance to crops.	From the Internet	No	
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila	Gender non-conforming		Patron deity of agriculture and husbandry			Said to be the "kindest and the most compassionate deity [...] as they are very proactive listening to the needs of the people," e.g. providing better harvest or human companionship. "Passes down people's requests to other deities to help them further, [e.g.] asking to help with the weather for better crops." "The Filipino perception of the Holy Spirit has been modelled after Lakapati as they are the most accessible deity to folks. The Spaniards converted Filipino's beliefs on Lakapati and turned them as the messenger and the 'right-hand man'."
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila	Hermaphrodite		Goddess of fertility and agriculture. Looks over the growth of plants and the husbandry of animals.			
Yasmine	Metro Manila						
BMJ	Metro Manila	The visual description for the deities were based on the respondents' public creative work. These were redacted to keep them anonymous.	Kalangitan	God of fertility. Gives fertility to both humans and the land.			
Cheese	Metro Manila	Gender in flux. Figure of a man and a woman altogether.		Goddess of cultivated land. Giver of prosperity, "From her came fertility of fields, and health of flocks and herds."	From Boxer Codex, Vocabulario de la Lengua Tagala by Pedro de San Buena Ventura, F. Landa Jocano, and Barangay by William Henry Scott		
Lynsie	Metro Manila (now Aotearoa)						
RQ	Metro Manila (now Aotearoa)						

INTERVIEWEE PEN NAME	RESPONDENT LOCATION	APPEARANCE	HABITAT/LOCATION	ABILITIES	ORIGIN	BELIEF	ADD INFO
	Bicol						
	Cagayan Valley						
	CALABARZON						
Jules	CALABARZON						
	Central Luzon						
Pando	Central Luzon						
Fig	Central Visayas and Negros Island (now Aotearoa)						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila			Gods who cause a variety of illnesses.	From Wikipedia		
Yasmine	Metro Manila						
BMJ	Metro Manila						
Cheese	Metro Manila						
Lynsie	Metro Manila (now Aotearoa)						
RQ	Metro Manila (now Aotearoa)						

INTERVIEWEE PEN NAME	RESPONDENT LOCATION	APPEARANCE	HABITAT/LOCATION	ABILITIES	ORIGIN	BELIEF	ADD INFO
	Bicol						
	Cagayan Valley			Mayari is probably related to the sky, but not sure.			
	CALABARZON						
Jules	CALABARZON			Goddess of the moon			Possibly Kapampangan.
	Central Luzon						
Pando	Central Luzon						
Fig	Central Visayas and Negros Island (now Aotearoa)						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila			Goddess of the moon			
	Metro Manila			Goddess of the moon	From F. Landa Jocano		
Yasmine	Metro Manila	Filipino woman. Covered in tattoos. Muscular. Wielding a spear.		Goddess of the moon	From pop-culture	No	Sister of Apolaki. Lost an eye in a battle against Apolaki.
BMJ	Metro Manila	Has one eye.	Kalangitan	Goddess of the moon. Controls the moon.			
Cheese	Metro Manila	Beautiful. Has lost an eye.		Goddess of the moon	From F. Landa Jocano		
Lynsie	Metro Manila (now Aotearoa)						
RQ	Metro Manila (now Aotearoa)						

INTERVIEWEE PEN NAME	RESPONDENT LOCATION	APPEARANCE	HABITAT/LOCATION	ABILITIES	ORIGIN	BELIEF	ADD INFO
	Bicol						
	Cagayan Valley			Tala is likely a goddess of the stars.			
	CALABARZON						
Jules	CALABARZON			Goddess of the stars			There's a belief that Tala might be the Hindu goddess, Tara. Possibly Kapampangan.
	Central Luzon						
Pando	Central Luzon						
Fig	Central Visayas and Negros Island (now Aotearoa)						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila			Goddess of the stars			
	Metro Manila			Goddess of the stars	From F. Landa Jocano		
Yasmine	Metro Manila	Beautiful Filipino woman		Goddess of the stars	From pop-culture	No	
BMJ	Metro Manila	The visual description for the deities were based on the respondents' public creative work. These were redacted to keep them anonymous.	Kalangitan	Goddess of the stars. Guides people using the stars.			
Cheese	Metro Manila			Goddess of the stars	From F. Landa Jocano		
Lynsie	Metro Manila (now Aotearoa)						
RQ	Metro Manila (now Aotearoa)						

INTERVIEWEE PEN NAME	RESPONDENT LOCATION	APPEARANCE	HABITAT/LOCATION	ABILITIES	ORIGIN	BELIEF	ADD INFO
	Bicol						
	Cagayan Valley						
	CALABARZON						
Jules	CALABARZON			Goddess of the morning			Possibly Kapampangan.
	Central Luzon						
Pando	Central Luzon						
Fig	Central Visayas and Negros Island (now Aotearoa)						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila			Goddess of the dawn			
	Metro Manila			Goddess of the morning	From F. Landa Jocano		
Yasmine	Metro Manila	Beautiful Filipino woman		Goddess of the sind	From pop-culture	No	
BMJ	Metro Manila	The visual description for the deities were based on the respondents' public creative work. These were redacted to keep them anonymous.	Kalangitan	Goddess of the morning. Changes the color of the sky.			
Cheese	Metro Manila			Goddess of the morning	From F. Landa Jocano		
Lynsie	Metro Manila (now Aotearoa)						
RQ	Metro Manila (now Aotearoa)						

INTERVIEWEE PEN NAME	RESPONDENT LOCATION	APPEARANCE	HABITAT/LOCATION	ABILITIES	ORIGIN	BELIEF	ADD INFO
	Bicol	Looks scary.		Eats people. Climbs roofs and uses their tongue to eat unborn children.			
	Cagayan Valley	Woman, typically with long hair. May be seen as an old lady disguised as a beautiful maiden.	Siquijor Island	Often interpreted as a witch.			Although not strictly a Tagalog creature, the manananggal is popular among Tagalogs. It's also shared with Malaysia (penanggal), Indonesia, and other Southeast Asian countries.
	CALABARZON			Shape shifters that eat people. Vampires or ghouls.			Possibly an umbrella term.
Jules	CALABARZON	Black dog with red eyes	Non-urban areas	Shape-shifting. Some can fly.	From kasambahay and adults growing up	Yes	There's a belief that aswang should not be referred to by name. Salt is spread around the house of pregnant women and protection charms are made for them to ward off aswang. People become aswang by eating a black stone (possibly from Siquijor).
	Central Luzon	Looks like a human being.		Can bisect itself and the upper half is capable of flight.			Afraid of direct sunlight. Passed on from generation to generation.
Pando	Central Luzon	Looks like humans. Has bat-like wings and long tongues.		Can split their bodies in half, fly, extend their tongues to reach the fetus in a pregnant woman's belly, and morph into animals.			Garlic and pointed bamboo are placed near windows to prevent their entry. They also take livers and eat them.
Fig	Central Visayas and Negros Island (now Aotearoa)	Has ark or deep black hair and red eyes.	Forests. Near or within human communities.	Strength. Shape-shifting.	From family (Iloilo)		
	Metro Manila	White lady					
	Metro Manila	"Usually in the stories it's mostly women. But people's perspective changed when the movie "Aswang" came out as it's about a town full of aswangs and there are men as well."	Negros Occidental	A human taking on other forms like dog, pig or goat, and eats human flesh.	From family stories, TV shows/movies like "Aswang."	"As a child, I believe them so I don't go out of the house at night time. But as a teenager and adult, I realised it's just another "tool" for adults to make kids behave properly."	"My mum shared that when she was pregnant with me, a well-known "aswang" in their barrio in Negros Occidental stayed in our house. But she made "extra precaution" so she won't get attacked."
	Metro Manila			Can eat raw flesh, fetuses, discarded phlegm, and corpses. Can shape-shift. Can segment their bodies. Can cast curses and hexes.			General term for Filipino monster.
	Metro Manila	Looks like a cross between a vampire and a banshee. Has wings.		Can shape-shift. Sucks blood from the living, especially pregnant women. Can turn a pregnant woman into an aswang by biting them. Can crawl up ceilings.	From family and university research	Yes	Used as propaganda during the Spanish Colonization. "The Spaniards would accuse the baybaylans as aswang to persuade and control Filipinos and prevent them from travelling too far from their villages."

INTERVIEWEE PEN NAME	RESPONDENT LOCATION	APPEARANCE	HABITAT/LOCATION	ABILITIES	ORIGIN	BELIEF	ADD INFO
	Metro Manila			They eat flesh and prey on pregnant women, people walking alone at night, or livestock. Can disguise themselves to look like normal people.	From childhood and Darna (2009)	No	
	Metro Manila						Umbrella term for many monsters found in the Philippines.
	Metro Manila	Can masquerade as regular folks. Have long tongues.		Can shape-shift, usually into crows or pigs. Can use their long tongue to eat organs and the fetuses of pregnant women.	From Aswang Project		"There are quite a lot of variants depending on the region but for the Tagalogs, [...] there is the tiktik and the mandurugo."
Yasmine	Metro Manila	No definitive appearance. Gangly with sharp teeth.	Forests, Jungles, In human communities disguised as people	Strong enough to take livestock. Stealthy enough to stalk and prey on humans. Some can suck babies out of pregnant women.	From kids in school	No	
BMJ	Metro Manila	Ghoulis. Looks humanoid. Has long claws, fangs and tongue.	Among human communities	Shape-shifting. Can turn others into aswang by spitting out a black chick and feeding it to a human.	From Kapuso Mo, Jessica Soho and Tiktik: The Aswang Chronicles (2012)		
Cheese	Metro Manila	No one image, e.g. has long tongue, dog-like.		Sorcerer. Can fly. Shape-shifter.	From Fr. Juan de Plasencia and Maximo D. Ramos	Yes	Umbrella term for different types of creatures according to Maximo D. Ramos.
Lynsie	Metro Manila (now Aotearoa)		Near or in balete tree.	Has a unique tongue that they use to suck out fetuses from pregnant women.	From elders and helpers (yaya)		Umbrella term for a type of creature that includes the manananggal or tik-tik.
RQ	Metro Manila (now Aotearoa)	Looks like human beings. Looks Filipino. Can look like pigs, boars, and dogs. Some look like distorted human beings.	Jungle area	Are vampires, corpse-eating ghouls, and/or shape-shifters. Some can fly.	From a manggawgawa and manghihilot	Yes	Umbrella term for many creatures. Aswang is the name of a god of the Bicolano people.

INTERVIEWEE PEN NAME	RESPONDENT LOCATION	APPEARANCE	HABITAT/LOCATION	ABILITIES	ORIGIN	BELIEF	ADD INFO
	Bicol						More of an experience than a creature (when you have a nightmare and it becomes difficult to wake up). Said to occur when sleeping full or right after eating.
	Cagayan Valley			Similar to the concept of a sleep paralysis daemon. A creature that leads to "bangungot" (sudden nocturnal death syndrome) by sitting on and crushing the chest of its victims.			
	CALABARZON						
Jules	CALABARZON	No set appearance		Sits on people's chest to kill them in their sleep. Causes nightmares. Sleep-paralysis demon.	From first-hand experience	Yes	
	Central Luzon	Invisible		Can keep a body from moving by pressing down on it.			More of an experience than a creature. "[It was] what happened to our body due to extreme fear."
Pando	Central Luzon	No face. No clear form.		Nightmares. Can trap people in their sleeping form, unable to move or cry out until they die.			Can be caused when one eats too much food, drinks heavily, or is overly tired and goes to sleep right away. "There are many possible causes for why a person might experience bangungot."
Fig	Central Visayas and Negros Island (now Aotearoa)						
	Metro Manila						[Happens when] sleeping immediately after a very full meal.
	Metro Manila	White lady		Bad dreams. "It's when you know you are having a bad dream but you can't wake yourself up and can't move. There's a story that someone or something is sitting on top of you that's why you can't move."		Personal experience. "I have experienced this once. It took a lot of effort to wake up, open my eyes and get up from the bed. I woke up crying and run out of the room. But in my dream, it was a white lady. Not sure if this is similar but whenever I describe it to others, they would say it's just a bangungot."	
	Metro Manila	Old hag. Huge, fat lady.	Old trees	When disturbed, will visit the person at night to sit on their chest until they suffocate.			Evil spirit
	Metro Manila	Dark figure		Sleep paralysis demon. Can kill you in your sleep if you don't survive your nightmares.		No	
	Metro Manila			Haunts people. Gives them nightmares, causing them to die in their sleep.	From adults, reading stories, and first-hand experience as a child	Yes	
	Metro Manila	Giant lady. Monstrous.		Chokes you in your sleep.			

INTERVIEWEE PEN NAME	RESPONDENT LOCATION	APPEARANCE	HABITAT/LOCATION	ABILITIES	ORIGIN	BELIEF	ADD INFO
	Metro Manila			Will sit on your face until you die.	From elders' gossip		"Monster-fied explanation for sudden arrhythmic death syndrome."
Yasmine	Metro Manila	Little girl with completely black eyes	In nightmares		From first-hand experience	Yes	
BMJ	Metro Manila	Large lady		Sleep paralysis demon			
Cheese	Metro Manila	Gigantic	Walls of the house	Can cause sudden death to a sleeping person.	From Maximo D. Ramos	Yes	
Lynsie	Metro Manila (now Aotearoa)			Kills people in their sleep. Can cause or appear in nightmare. Possibly sleep-paralysis demon.	From an article by Professor Michael Tan		
RQ	Metro Manila (now Aotearoa)	Invisible	Attached to certain locations.	Can give nightmares that you can't wake up from that kill you. Will sit on you while you're sleeping. Can cause sleep-paralysis.	From first-hand experience	Yes	Might be "ligaw na kaluluwa" or wandering soul. Possibly fairy-like in nature.

INTERVIEWEE PEN NAME	RESPONDENT LOCATION	APPEARANCE	HABITAT/LOCATION	ABILITIES	ORIGIN	BELIEF	ADD INFO
	Bicol	Have scary smiles.					
	Cagayan Valley	A constantly grinning and laughing gremlin.					
	CALABARZON						
Jules	CALABARZON	Giant. Has one eye.	Forest	Takes animals.			
	Central Luzon						
Pando	Central Luzon	A human					Someone who always laughs when they talk about something.
Fig	Central Visayas and Negros Island (now Aotearoa)						
	Metro Manila	Jolly person					Someone who easily laughs with good sense of humor; with positive attitude.
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila	Giant. Two huge tusks. One eye.	Trees	Has tremendous strength.	From books		Always laughing.
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila	One-eyed giant					Comes from the Tagalog word "ngisi."
	Metro Manila	One-eyed giant. Has a wide grin.		Enhanced strength. Enhanced durability.	From Aswang Project	No	
Yasmine	Metro Manila		Hides in rooftops	Can curse you if you offend them.		No	
BMJ	Metro Manila	Cyclops. Giant.		Change the landscape to confuse humans			
Cheese	Metro Manila						
Lynsie	Metro Manila (now Aotearoa)						
RQ	Metro Manila (now Aotearoa)						

INTERVIEWEE PEN NAME	RESPONDENT LOCATION	APPEARANCE	HABITAT/LOCATION	ABILITIES	ORIGIN	BELIEF	ADD INFO
	Bicol						
	Cagayan Valley						
	CALABARZON						
Jules	CALABARZON						
	Central Luzon						
Pando	Central Luzon						
Fig	Central Visayas and Negros Island (now Aotearoa)						
	Metro Manila						[Means] vanished.
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila	Gigantic seprent, like bakunawa.		Can cause eclipses.	From podcasts and books	No	Has similarities with the demon in Hindu mythology named "Rahu."
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila	Sea serpent		Prophesized to eat the moon.			
	Metro Manila			Seeks revenge against the moon and causes eclipses.	From Aswang Project and Wikipedia	No	A datu punished for stealing the wine of the gods. Ratted out by the moon.
Yasmine	Metro Manila						
BMJ	Metro Manila	Serpent. Similar to the bakunawa.			From Aswang Project		Associated with the Blood Moon
Cheese	Metro Manila						
Lynsie	Metro Manila (now Aotearoa)						
RQ	Metro Manila (now Aotearoa)						

INTERVIEWEE PEN NAME	RESPONDENT LOCATION	APPEARANCE	HABITAT/LOCATION	ABILITIES	ORIGIN	BELIEF	ADD INFO
	Bicol		Forested areas	Engkanto. Invites victims into their palaces.			
	Cagayan Valley						
	CALABARZON						
Jules	CALABARZON						Umbrella term for many creatures. Warded of with offering of food or spreading salt around the earth.
	Central Luzon	Terrestrial creature					Territorial. Usually asked for permission to pass through their territory by saying "bari apo" or "tabi tabi po."
Pando	Central Luzon	Small. Invisible to humans.	Beneath the earth	Can cause illness and wreak havoc, Take you to their realm if they take a liking to you and you eat the food that they offer			Similar to gnomes. Have their own world and communities similar to humans. Elders used to remind children back in the day that before they throw water or anything, they should say "makikiraan po kami." If you're going to throw water outside, you should say "tabi tabi po at baka kayo'y masabuyan."
Fig	Central Visayas and Negros Island (now Aotearoa)						
	Metro Manila		One who lived underground.				
	Metro Manila		Underground	Elementals. Can get angry when you do something bad to the environment.			"I hope this is true so people will leave nature alone!"
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						Type of duwende
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila	Made of earth					
	Metro Manila						
Yasmine	Metro Manila						
BMJ	Metro Manila						
Cheese	Metro Manila						
Lynsie	Metro Manila (now Aotearoa)	Tall. Good-looking. Otherworldly.	Trees. Nature in general.		From nanny (yaya)		They're elementals who can take a liking to people and bless them with luck, but their favor is not necessarily a good thing.
RQ	Metro Manila (now Aotearoa)	Various sizes and genders. Earth-tone colors like soil or rock.	The earth	Can "swim" through the earth, curse with ailments, move objects, and cause earth-related phenomena.	From first-hand experience		Collective term for many creatures.

INTERVIEWEE PEN NAME	RESPONDENT LOCATION	APPEARANCE	HABITAT/LOCATION	ABILITIES	ORIGIN	BELIEF	ADD INFO
	Bicol						
	Cagayan Valley						
	CALABARZON						
Jules	CALABARZON	Robed figure		Knocks on doors to deliver an omen.			
	Central Luzon						
Pando	Central Luzon			Can be evil spirits or witches knocking on the door. Can also be people from the New People's Army (NPA) asking for food or lodging.			Reciting something such as "Matam, Hasika, Tibik, Harika, Matam" three times commands the evil spirit to leave.
Fig	Central Visayas and Negros Island (now Aotearoa)						
	Metro Manila						[Means] knocking.
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila	Three hooded figures		Can kill unsuspecting victim who opens the door when they knock. Harbingers who foretell doom and misfortune. Cultists who can utter prayers and spells on slippers outside the door to make their owner open the door against their will.	From second-hand accounts	Yes	
	Metro Manila						Creature who knocks
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila	Three hooded spectres		Will knock on doors indicating someone close to you will die or you will suffer misfortune.	From Youtube videos and Aswang Project	No	
Yasmine	Metro Manila						
BMJ	Metro Manila	Three human-like beings: one man, one woman, one elderly woman.		Knocks on the door and foretells a death in the household.			Bad omen
Cheese	Metro Manila						
Lynsie	Metro Manila (now Aotearoa)						
RQ	Metro Manila (now Aotearoa)						

INTERVIEWEE PEN NAME	RESPONDENT LOCATION	APPEARANCE	HABITAT/LOCATION	ABILITIES	ORIGIN	BELIEF	ADD INFO
	Bicol			Can curse people with illness if their home is disturbed.			Saying "tabi tabi po" can help to avoid disturbing them.
	Cagayan Valley	Dwarf-like creature. More goblin-like than Western dwarf mythology.	Lurk in bushes, or other dark colours [sic].				Common superstition is to say "tabi-tabi po" (please step aside) when peeing on the ground / grass or stepping on grounds said to be inhabited by nuno.
	CALABARZON						
Jules	CALABARZON			Curses with ailments.	From first-hand experience	Yes	Saying "Tabi, tabi, po" lets them know you don't mean to disturb them.
	Central Luzon	Dwarf		Keeps treasure. Protects areas they consider their home.			
Pando	Central Luzon		Ant hill. Termite mound.				What the elders used to say back then when someone's fallen ill or unwell is "uy, nanuno ito," implying that they might have offended a nuno sa punso (spirit believed to dwell in an ant hill)
Fig	Central Visayas and Negros Island (now Aotearoa)						
	Metro Manila	Dwarf					
	Metro Manila	Look like dwarves or duwende.	Mound of ground or ant hill	Elementals. Can get vengeful if humans destroy their house.			"When we're walking in a forest or an area where there's a lot of plants, we usually say "tabi tabi po nuno" as a way to warn them that we are there so they won't attack us."
	Metro Manila	Old man	Ant mounds	Elves or goblins. Can curse those who don't respect their place [or home].		Yes	"Tabi tabi po" should be uttered first when going to an unfamiliar place to show respect (especially in forests). "It's said that ancient Filipinos believed that mountains are sacred and they bury the dead (or the old men) on the mountains. [They] also believe that the ant mounds are also small mountains ("Nuno" came from the root word "Ninuno" or ancestors, nuno sa punso can also be understood as "the old man's mountain," which makes sense since another depiction of the Nuno is an old man)."
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila	Small	Underneath trees and ant mounds.	Can curse people who disturb their home.		Yes	Chant "tabi tabi po" to avoid disturbing them
Yasmine	Metro Manila						

INTERVIEWEE PEN NAME	RESPONDENT LOCATION	APPEARANCE	HABITAT/LOCATION	ABILITIES	ORIGIN	BELIEF	ADD INFO
BMJ	Metro Manila						
Cheese	Metro Manila			Can curse with ailments.		From first-hand experience. An albularyo was called in.	
Lynsie	Metro Manila (now Aotearoa)	Small. Interchangeable with duwende.	Mounds of earth or soil	Can curse with bad luck or illness.		From their province	Say "tabi, tabi, po" to let them know you're passing through.
RQ	Metro Manila (now Aotearoa)	Looks Filipino. Small.	Termite mound	Can curse with illness and undo it if appeased.		From a manggawgawa and manghihilot	Saying "tabi, tabi, po" lets them know you don't mean to disturb them.

INTERVIEWEE PEN NAME	RESPONDENT LOCATION	APPEARANCE	HABITAT/LOCATION	ABILITIES	ORIGIN	BELIEF	ADD INFO
	Bicol						
	Cagayan Valley						
	CALABARZON						
Jules	CALABARZON			Has "kampon" or servants that do their bidding.	From deviantArt and Hinilawod		Popular portrayals have him as Hades-esque. Possibly related to Islamic Shaitan.
	Central Luzon						
Pando	Central Luzon			Is the Devil. Has "Kampon ng Kadiliman" or forces of evil, such as the mangkukulam (witches), mambabarang (sorcerers), aswang, and all those who do evil things.			
Fig	Central Visayas and Negros Island (now Aotearoa)						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila			Satan figure			
	Metro Manila			Deity of temptation who sends out his four servants to do his bidding.	From Aswang Project		
Yasmine	Metro Manila						
BMJ	Metro Manila						
Cheese	Metro Manila		Kasanaan	God of the underworld			
Lynsie	Metro Manila (now Aotearoa)						
RQ	Metro Manila (now Aotearoa)						

INTERVIEWEE PEN NAME	RESPONDENT LOCATION	APPEARANCE	HABITAT/LOCATION	ABILITIES	ORIGIN	BELIEF	ADD INFO
	Bicol	Male mermaid. More frightening appearance.					
	Cagayan Valley	Merman creature similar to a male siren. May appear ghoulish in some interpretations.		Similar to western sirens, they lure maidens, but not with song.			
	CALABARZON						
Jules	CALABARZON	No physical description		Takes people underwater.		No	
	Central Luzon		Ocean	Preys on fisherfolk.			
Pando	Central Luzon	Male counterpart to mermaids. Half-man, half-fish.	Water	Will upturn rafts to drag down women they've taken a liking to.			
Fig	Central Visayas and Negros Island (now Aotearoa)						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila	Half human, half sea creature. Have gills and pointed teeth. Looks like the merpeople from Harry Potter.	Sea or lake	Can drown people they are angry with by taking them to the bottom of the sea or lake.			Drownings where bodies are not found are attributed to them. Used as a scare tactic against children when near bodies of water.
	Metro Manila		Underwater	Enchants people with their beautiful looks and voices to lead them underwater and eat them.	From films and books		The "aswang" of the water. Their female counterpart is the magindara.
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila	Beautiful	Sea	Drowns fishermen who are alone.		No	
	Metro Manila	Male mermaid					
	Metro Manila	Has fish face and webbed feet.		Drown sailors.	From a TV program	No	
Yasmine	Metro Manila	Male mermaid. Half-man, half-fish. Ugly.			From childhood and people when visiting beaches	No	
BMJ	Metro Manila						
Cheese	Metro Manila				From Maximo D. Ramos		
Lynsie	Metro Manila (now Aotearoa)	Fish-man. Like a mermaid but masculine.	In the ocean		From people when visiting beaches	No	
RQ	Metro Manila (now Aotearoa)	Fish-like. Like the Gill-man from "Creature from the Black Lagoon." Colorful. Has spikes and fins.	Sea		From mother		

INTERVIEWEE PEN NAME	RESPONDENT LOCATION	APPEARANCE	HABITAT/LOCATION	ABILITIES	ORIGIN	BELIEF	ADD INFO
	Bicol						
	Cagayan Valley						
	CALABARZON						
Jules	CALABARZON		Forest	Good omen			
	Central Luzon						
Pando	Central Luzon			Is the bird that pecked open the bamboo of the first humans, Malakas and Maganda, according to a Tagalog creation myth.			
Fig	Central Visayas and Negros Island (now Aotearoa)						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila	A small bird with vibrant blue and black feathers.		Omen bird or messenger of Bathala. Observing its flight determines if an endeavor will be successful or not.	From Wikipedia	Yes	
Yasmine	Metro Manila						
BMJ	Metro Manila						
Cheese	Metro Manila						
Lynsie	Metro Manila (now Aotearoa)						
RQ	Metro Manila (now Aotearoa)						

INTERVIEWEE PEN NAME	RESPONDENT LOCATION	APPEARANCE	HABITAT/LOCATION	ABILITIES	ORIGIN	BELIEF	ADD INFO
	Bicol	Has a horse head and human body.					
	Cagayan Valley	Similar to a minotaur - half-man and half-horse.					
	CALABARZON	Half man, half horse.	Lives in the forest	"Plays tricks on you and makes you lost unless you wear your shirt inside out."			
Jules	CALABARZON		Roams around. Sometimes near trees.	Shape-shifter. Takes people.	From first-hand experience-ish		Mischievous. If it rains while sunny, a tikbalang is getting married.
	Central Luzon	Half-horse, half-human.		Has supernatural strength.			
Pando	Central Luzon	Looks like a big horse. Has red eyes.	Balete or banyan tree	Can appear human. Kicks like a horse but still climbs trees.			Said to fall in love with beautiful women in the area. If he likes them, he can make himself known, usually during a full moon.
Fig	Central Visayas and Negros Island (now Aotearoa)	Horse-man. Large. Like a minotaur but with horse instead of bull.		Strength. Can blend in with trees when standing still. Has spell-casting ability.	From parents		If it rains while sunny, a tikbalang is getting married.
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila	Horse-like creature. Very huge. [Smokes] tobacco.	Huge trees	Has super-human strength. Can possess people they get mad at and make them eat things they don't usually eat.			If it rains while sunny, a tikbalang is getting married.
	Metro Manila	Bird with a human body		Can trick people, causing them to lose their way, which is how they guard knowledge or treasure.	From books, podcasts, and second-hand accounts of mountaineers	Yes	
	Metro Manila	Horse-man. Centaur but in reverse.					
	Metro Manila	Has head and lower body of a horse, and torso and arms of a man.		Can cast spells around their territory to make people lost.		Yes	Turning all your clothes inside out lets you escape their spell.
	Metro Manila	Has head of a horse and body of a man.					
	Metro Manila	Has head and legs of a horse, and torso of a man.	Mountains and forests	Can make you lost.	From parents	Yes	Turning your shirt inside-out frees you [from their spell that causes you to get lost].
Yasmine	Metro Manila	Has horse head, human arms and torso, and horse legs.		Can curse people into making them believe they're lost.	From childhood (classmates)	No	If it rains while sunny, a tikbalang is getting married.
BMJ	Metro Manila						
Cheese	Metro Manila	Humanoids with a horse head. Legs so long that when they sit, their knees go above their head. Skinny.	Forests and mountains	Tricks people into getting lost in the forest.	From Wikipedia		If it rains while sunny, a tikbalang is getting married. Has a spine on the back of its neck that, when taken, compels it to obey you.
Lynsie	Metro Manila (now Aotearoa)	Horse person. Has horse head and human body. Like Bojack Horseman.					If it rains while sunny, a tikbalang is getting married.
RQ	Metro Manila (now Aotearoa)	Horse-like	Provincial areas. In valleys, jungles.	Are strong and fast.			Will kidnap and brutalize people but do not eat them like the aswang.

INTERVIEWEE PEN NAME	RESPONDENT LOCATION	APPEARANCE	HABITAT/LOCATION	ABILITIES	ORIGIN	BELIEF	ADD INFO
	Bicol						
	Cagayan Valley	A gremlin, not personally sure how it's different from the kapre.					
	CALABARZON	Vampiric, ugly baby or toddler.		Cries a lot	TV show		
Jules	CALABARZON	Mimics a human baby.		Can mimic human babies to lure people.	From Shake-Rattle-and-Roll		If children aren't given proper burials they become tiyanak, or demons possess or replace the baby. "I feel like the Spaniards kind of like changed [the pontianak] to be like, "Oh, you have to baptize your babies, otherwise [they become tiyanak]."
	Central Luzon	An unborn or dead fetus or baby.		Tries to avenge their death.			
Pando	Central Luzon						In Baler, they call the duwende or pati-anak the same thing.
Fig	Central Visayas and Negros Island (now Aotearoa)	Scary baby. Has sharp teeth.	Forests		From Fantaseryes, Grimm (2011)		
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila	Monster baby. Has red eyes and sharp teeth.		Eats human flesh.			Described as an aborted fetus. "As an adult, I now know that this is a way to keep women from doing abortion. Religion has great influence on this."
	Metro Manila	Has one long leg and one short leg.	Forests	Can shape-shift, mimic the appearance and cries of a baby. When picked up, shape-shifts into an old man or monster to eat the flesh of the victim.			
	Metro Manila			Demon baby. Eats their way out of their mothers' wombs.		Before yes, now no.	"Unfortunately now used [as] a scare tactic by older parents to deter their children from getting abortions."
	Metro Manila			Mimics the appearance and cries of a baby to lure people in, particularly mothers and women who are more sensitive to their cries. When picked up, reveals itself to be a tiyanak and eats the person.	From other people, reading books, internet articles, and Darna (2009)	No	
	Metro Manila			Can mimic the appearance and cries of a child to lure people into dark areas and eat them.			
	Metro Manila	Has sharp teeth.		Reanimated baby yet to be baptized when it died. Mimics the appearance and cry of a human baby to lure people and when brought back to the victim's home, eats them.	From childhood	No	
Yasmine	Metro Manila	Has sharp teeth, pointy ears, and red eyes.		Can mimic human babies	From childhood (classmates and older kids) and Darna (2009)		Allegedly, are the result of babies who were not baptized.

INTERVIEWEE PEN NAME	RESPONDENT LOCATION	APPEARANCE	HABITAT/LOCATION	ABILITIES	ORIGIN	BELIEF	ADD INFO
BMJ	Metro Manila						
Cheese	Metro Manila	Similar to human babies. Has sharp claws and fangs.	Forests and mountains		From Fr. Juan de Plasencia and Juan Francisco de San Antonio		Nowadays associated with aborted babies but "[This retelling] is probably post-colonial, because precolonial people didn't care about that sort of thing. Abortion was very common." If you turn your clothes inside out the Tiyanak will laugh at you giving you time to get away. There is also the Patiyanak (a woman who died in childbirth) which may be related to the tiyanak.
Lynsie	Metro Manila (now Aotearoa)	Monster baby					
RQ	Metro Manila (now Aotearoa)	Ferocious eyes. Sharp teeth.	Secluded areas	Can shape-shift, mimic the cry of human babies, and create illusions.			

INTERVIEWEE PEN NAME	RESPONDENT LOCATION	APPEARANCE	HABITAT/LOCATION	ABILITIES	ORIGIN	BELIEF	ADD INFO
	Bicol						
	Cagayan Valley						
	CALABARZON						
Jules	CALABARZON						
	Central Luzon						
Pando	Central Luzon						
Fig	Central Visayas and Negros Island (now Aotearoa)						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila	Giant					Cross between a kapre and an aswang.
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
Yasmine	Metro Manila						
BMJ	Metro Manila						
Cheese	Metro Manila						
Lynsie	Metro Manila (now Aotearoa)						
RQ	Metro Manila (now Aotearoa)						

INTERVIEWEE PEN NAME	RESPONDENT LOCATION	APPEARANCE	HABITAT/LOCATION	ABILITIES	ORIGIN	BELIEF	ADD INFO
	Bicol						
	Cagayan Valley						
	CALABARZON						
Jules	CALABARZON						
	Central Luzon						
Pando	Central Luzon			Spirits who live with people in a certain place.			
Fig	Central Visayas and Negros Island (now Aotearoa)						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
Yasmine	Metro Manila						
BMJ	Metro Manila						
Cheese	Metro Manila						
Lynsie	Metro Manila (now Aotearoa)						
RQ	Metro Manila (now Aotearoa)						

INTERVIEWEE PEN NAME	RESPONDENT LOCATION	APPEARANCE	HABITAT/LOCATION	ABILITIES	ORIGIN	BELIEF	ADD INFO
	Bicol						
	Cagayan Valley						
	CALABARZON						
Jules	CALABARZON						
	Central Luzon						
Pando	Central Luzon			The highest among all powers. Gives life and blessings. If angered, brings death.			A higher entity that people believed was watching them, though they could not exactly name who.
Fig	Central Visayas and Negros Island (now Aotearoa)						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila			Supreme creator deity of the Tagalog pantheon.			
	Metro Manila	His bahag is the rainbow.		Omnipotent creator deity			
Yasmine	Metro Manila						
BMJ	Metro Manila						
Cheese	Metro Manila						
Lynsie	Metro Manila (now Aotearoa)						
RQ	Metro Manila (now Aotearoa)		Langit or Kalangitan	Creator God	From family		Only for the Tagalogs. Other regions/cultures have other gods.

INTERVIEWEE PEN NAME	RESPONDENT LOCATION	APPEARANCE	HABITAT/LOCATION	ABILITIES	ORIGIN	BELIEF	ADD INFO
	Bicol						
	Cagayan Valley	Dragon		Moon-devouring dragon also not from Tagalog mythos but somehow related.			
	CALABARZON						
Jules	CALABARZON						
	Central Luzon						
Pando	Central Luzon						
Fig	Central Visayas and Negros Island (now Aotearoa)						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
Yasmine	Metro Manila						
BMJ	Metro Manila						
Cheese	Metro Manila						
Lynsie	Metro Manila (now Aotearoa)						
RQ	Metro Manila (now Aotearoa)						

INTERVIEWEE PEN NAME	RESPONDENT LOCATION	APPEARANCE	HABITAT/LOCATION	ABILITIES	ORIGIN	BELIEF	ADD INFO
	Bicol						
	Cagayan Valley						
	CALABARZON						
Jules	CALABARZON						
	Central Luzon						
Pando	Central Luzon						
Fig	Central Visayas and Negros Island (now Aotearoa)						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila					Causes earthquakes.	
Yasmine	Metro Manila						
BMJ	Metro Manila						
Cheese	Metro Manila						
Lynsie	Metro Manila (now Aotearoa)						
RQ	Metro Manila (now Aotearoa)						

INTERVIEWEE PEN NAME	RESPONDENT LOCATION	APPEARANCE	HABITAT/LOCATION	ABILITIES	ORIGIN	BELIEF	ADD INFO
	Bicol						
	Cagayan Valley						
	CALABARZON						
Jules	CALABARZON						
	Central Luzon						
Pando	Central Luzon						
Fig	Central Visayas and Negros Island (now Aotearoa)						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila	Wears black drapy clothing.					Must be avoided at all costs.
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
Yasmine	Metro Manila						
BMJ	Metro Manila						
Cheese	Metro Manila						
Lynsie	Metro Manila (now Aotearoa)						
RQ	Metro Manila (now Aotearoa)						

INTERVIEWEE PEN NAME	RESPONDENT LOCATION	APPEARANCE	HABITAT/LOCATION	ABILITIES	ORIGIN	BELIEF	ADD INFO
	Bicol						
	Cagayan Valley						
	CALABARZON						
Jules	CALABARZON						
	Central Luzon						
Pando	Central Luzon	Beautiful		Guards or holds power over a certain place.			
Fig	Central Visayas and Negros Island (now Aotearoa)						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
Yasmine	Metro Manila						
BMJ	Metro Manila						
Cheese	Metro Manila						
Lynsie	Metro Manila (now Aotearoa)						
RQ	Metro Manila (now Aotearoa)	Beautiful Filipino woman, but can be any gender.		Can heal, cast magic, and make people lost and confused.	From sister		

INTERVIEWEE PEN NAME	RESPONDENT LOCATION	APPEARANCE	HABITAT/LOCATION	ABILITIES	ORIGIN	BELIEF	ADD INFO
	Bicol						
	Cagayan Valley						
	CALABARZON						
Jules	CALABARZON						
	Central Luzon						
Pando	Central Luzon						
Fig	Central Visayas and Negros Island (now Aotearoa)						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila	Has hair covering their entire body. Looks like a clump of hair on the ground.		Can ensnare people with their hair that acts like tentacles and suffocate them with it.			
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
Yasmine	Metro Manila						
BMJ	Metro Manila						
Cheese	Metro Manila						
Lynsie	Metro Manila (now Aotearoa)						
RQ	Metro Manila (now Aotearoa)						

INTERVIEWEE PEN NAME	RESPONDENT LOCATION	APPEARANCE	HABITAT/LOCATION	ABILITIES	ORIGIN	BELIEF	ADD INFO
	Bicol						
	Cagayan Valley						
	CALABARZON						
Jules	CALABARZON						
	Central Luzon						
Pando	Central Luzon						
Fig	Central Visayas and Negros Island (now Aotearoa)						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
Yasmine	Metro Manila						
BMJ	Metro Manila						
Cheese	Metro Manila						
Lynsie	Metro Manila (now Aotearoa)						
RQ	Metro Manila (now Aotearoa)	Gigantic (12 to 20 feet tall). Hairy. Has dark skin. Like a shadow.	In large trees that can support their weight.	Smokers			It is possible that its name and description come from racist stereotypes of Spanish colonizers, but there is a creature that predates the name "kapre."

INTERVIEWEE PEN NAME	RESPONDENT LOCATION	APPEARANCE	HABITAT/LOCATION	ABILITIES	ORIGIN	BELIEF	ADD INFO
	Bicol						
	Cagayan Valley						
	CALABARZON						
Jules	CALABARZON						
	Central Luzon						
Pando	Central Luzon			Can conjure insects in/on a person's body, command insects, and make it appear as though their victims are suffering from natural causes.			When someone dies and their back is uneven or raised, people conclude that the person's cause of death is a curse from a barang.
Fig	Central Visayas and Negros Island (now Aotearoa)						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila	Human		Can make insects or small animals come out of your body. Worse than kulam.	From relatives in Leyte		"They always tell me about a story of one of my aunts who became a victim of this; [she] ate a bucket full of live crabs including the outer shells."
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
Yasmine	Metro Manila						
BMJ	Metro Manila						
Cheese	Metro Manila						
Lynsie	Metro Manila (now Aotearoa)						
RQ	Metro Manila (now Aotearoa)						

INTERVIEWEE PEN NAME	RESPONDENT LOCATION	APPEARANCE	HABITAT/LOCATION	ABILITIES	ORIGIN	BELIEF	ADD INFO
	Bicol						
	Cagayan Valley						
	CALABARZON						
Jules	CALABARZON						
	Central Luzon						
Pando	Central Luzon						
Fig	Central Visayas and Negros Island (now Aotearoa)						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila	Similar to aswang; bisects at the waist. Wings come out of the back of the top half.		Eats the fetus with the tip of their tongue.			"Used as a scare tactic against children to not go out at night or it will snatch them."
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
Yasmine	Metro Manila						
BMJ	Metro Manila						
Cheese	Metro Manila	Beautiful woman. Has proboscis tongue.		Bisects herself at night. Top half grows wings to fly.			
Lynsie	Metro Manila (now Aotearoa)						
RQ	Metro Manila (now Aotearoa)	Beautiful hair. Oily. Filipina woman. Has bat-like wings, sharp claws and teeth.		Can use magic. Can bisect and reattach themselves, and use their top-half to fly. Can make their tongue ultra thin to drink the blood and fetus of a pregnant woman.			Can walk in the sunlight as long as their halves are not separated. Salting the lower-half prevents them from reattaching.

INTERVIEWEE PEN NAME	RESPONDENT LOCATION	APPEARANCE	HABITAT/LOCATION	ABILITIES	ORIGIN	BELIEF	ADD INFO
	Bicol						
	Cagayan Valley						
	CALABARZON						
Jules	CALABARZON						
	Central Luzon						
Pando	Central Luzon			Can bring illness to people they despise through dark prayer and voodoo dolls. Can curse on behalf of others as long as they know what they look like i. e. through pictures.			Their knowledge and power is passed down from someone with the ability to inflict harm on others through witchcraft. When the victim goes to a doctor, the victims' condition may worsen so people suggest going to an albularyo instead. Albularyos can find out if a person has been cursed and who cursed them through the tawas ritual.
Fig	Central Visayas and Negros Island (now Aotearoa)						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila	Human		Knows dark magic. Can make someone suffer using voodoo dolls or incantations.			"It's common to say "ipapakulam kita" to threaten someone." Someone with similar powers can fight the mangkukulam through the victim's body.
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
Yasmine	Metro Manila						
BMJ	Metro Manila						
Cheese	Metro Manila	They can look like babaylan or albularyo, or otherwise just a normal human.		Can do curses and has dark magic. Can only curse those who have done wrong.			
Lynsie	Metro Manila (now Aotearoa)						
RQ	Metro Manila (now Aotearoa)						

INTERVIEWEE PEN NAME	RESPONDENT LOCATION	APPEARANCE	HABITAT/LOCATION	ABILITIES	ORIGIN	BELIEF	ADD INFO
	Bicol						
	Cagayan Valley						
	CALABARZON						
Jules	CALABARZON						
	Central Luzon						
Pando	Central Luzon						
Fig	Central Visayas and Negros Island (now Aotearoa)						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila	Headless human figure.		Can take on the shape of dogs or pigs.			
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
Yasmine	Metro Manila						
BMJ	Metro Manila						
Cheese	Metro Manila						
Lynsie	Metro Manila (now Aotearoa)						
RQ	Metro Manila (now Aotearoa)						

INTERVIEWEE PEN NAME	RESPONDENT LOCATION	APPEARANCE	HABITAT/LOCATION	ABILITIES	ORIGIN	BELIEF	ADD INFO
	Bicol						
	Cagayan Valley						
	CALABARZON						
Jules	CALABARZON						
	Central Luzon						
Pando	Central Luzon						
Fig	Central Visayas and Negros Island (now Aotearoa)						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila	Monster. Dog-like or goat-like. Has long face, tongue, and legs.		Eats human flesh. Attacks at night.	From relatives in Leyte		
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
Yasmine	Metro Manila						
BMJ	Metro Manila						
Cheese	Metro Manila						
Lynsie	Metro Manila (now Aotearoa)						
RQ	Metro Manila (now Aotearoa)						

INTERVIEWEE PEN NAME	RESPONDENT LOCATION	APPEARANCE	HABITAT/LOCATION	ABILITIES	ORIGIN	BELIEF	ADD INFO
	Bicol						
	Cagayan Valley						
	CALABARZON						
Jules	CALABARZON						
	Central Luzon						
Pando	Central Luzon						
Fig	Central Visayas and Negros Island (now Aotearoa)						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila				Kirby Araulto		"Pre-colonial Filipinos are known to be poly-religious and have adopted many beliefs across different regions and nations. If they hear a different religion/deity during their trading crusades, they will often honour them by taking their beliefs and make idols as tribute [...] hence the concept of Sto. Niño was conceived!"
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
	Metro Manila						
Yasmine	Metro Manila						
BMJ	Metro Manila						
Cheese	Metro Manila						
Lynsie	Metro Manila (now Aotearoa)						
RQ	Metro Manila (now Aotearoa)						

APPENDIX B

Study B: Filipino Psychology and Colonial Trauma

Low-Risk Approval Questionnaire



Massey University

Te Kuenga ki Pūrehuroa

SCREENING QUESTIONNAIRE TO DETERMINE THE APPROVAL PROCEDURE

(Part A and Part B of this questionnaire must both be completed)

Name: Ar-Em Bañas
Project Title: On the Bones of BATALA: Exploring Philippine Historical Distortions and Trauma through Tabletop Role-Playing Games

This questionnaire should be completed following, or as part of, the discussion of ethical issues.

Part A

The statements below are being used to determine the risk of your project causing physical or psychological harm to participants and whether the nature of the harm is minimal and no more than is normally encountered in daily life. The degree of risk will then be used to determine the appropriate approval procedure.

If you are in any doubt, you are encouraged to submit an application to one of the University's ethics committees.

Does your Project involve any of the following?

(Please answer all questions. Please circle either YES or NO for each question)

Risk of Harm

1. Situations in which the researcher may be at risk of harm.	YES <input type="radio"/> NO <input checked="" type="radio"/>
2. Use of questionnaire or interview, whether or not it is anonymous, which might reasonably be expected to cause discomfort, embarrassment, or psychological or spiritual harm to the participants.	YES <input type="radio"/> NO <input checked="" type="radio"/>
3. Processes that are potentially disadvantageous to a person or group, such as the collection of information which may expose the person/group to discrimination.	YES <input type="radio"/> NO <input checked="" type="radio"/>
4. Collection of information of illegal behaviour(s) gained during the research which could place the participants at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to their financial standing, employability, professional or personal relationships.	YES <input type="radio"/> NO <input checked="" type="radio"/>
5. Collection of blood, body fluid, tissue samples or other samples.	YES <input type="radio"/> NO <input checked="" type="radio"/>
6. Any form of exercise regime, physical examination, deprivation (e.g. sleep, dietary).	YES <input type="radio"/> NO <input checked="" type="radio"/>
7. The administration of any form of drug, medicine (other than in the course of standard medical procedure), placebo.	YES <input type="radio"/> NO <input checked="" type="radio"/>
8. Physical pain, beyond mild discomfort.	YES <input type="radio"/> NO <input checked="" type="radio"/>
9. Any Massey University teaching which involves the participation of Massey University students for the demonstration of procedures or phenomena which have a potential for harm.	YES <input type="radio"/> NO <input checked="" type="radio"/>

Informed and Voluntary Consent

10. Participants whose identity is known to the researcher giving oral consent rather than written consent (if participants are anonymous, you may answer No).	YES <input checked="" type="radio"/> NO
11. Participants who are unable to give informed consent.	YES <input checked="" type="radio"/> NO
12. Research on your own students/pupils.	YES <input checked="" type="radio"/> NO
13. The participation of children (seven (7) years old or younger).	YES <input checked="" type="radio"/> NO
14. The participation of children under sixteen (16) years old where parental consent is not being sought.	YES <input checked="" type="radio"/> NO
15. Participants who are in a dependent situation, such as people with a disability or residents of a hospital, nursing home or prison or patients highly dependent on medical care.	YES <input checked="" type="radio"/> NO
16. Participants who are vulnerable.	YES <input checked="" type="radio"/> NO
17. The use of previously collected information or biological samples for which there was no explicit consent for this research.	YES <input checked="" type="radio"/> NO

Privacy/Confidentiality Issue

18. Any evaluation of Massey University services or organisational practices where information of a personal nature may be collected and where participants may be identified.	YES <input checked="" type="radio"/> NO
--	---

Deception

19. Deception of the participants, including concealment and covert observations.	YES <input checked="" type="radio"/> NO
---	---

Conflict of Interest

20. Conflict of interest situation for the researcher (e.g. is the researcher also the lecturer/teacher/treatment-provider/colleague or employer of the research participants or is there any other power relationship between the researcher and the research participants?).	YES <input checked="" type="radio"/> NO
--	---

Compensation to Participants

21. Payments or other financial inducements (other than reasonable reimbursement of travel expenses or time) to participants.	YES <input checked="" type="radio"/> NO
---	---

Procedural

22. A requirement by an outside organisation (e.g. a funding organisation or a journal in which you wish to publish) for Massey University Human Ethics Committee approval.	YES <input checked="" type="radio"/> NO
---	---

Part B

The statements below are being used to determine if your project requires ethical approval by a Regional Health and Disability Ethics Committee. The statements are derived from the document, "Guidelines for an Accredited Institutional Ethics Committee to Refer Studies to an Accredited Health and Disability Ethics Committee", prepared by the Health Research Council Ethics Committee.

(<http://www.hrc.govt.nz/assets/pdfs/policy/ReferralGuidelines.pdf>)

In situations where you are not sure whether the research needs approval by an HDEC, you should seek an opinion from the Administrator of the relevant HDEC.

(<http://www.newhealth.govt.nz/ethicscommittees/>)

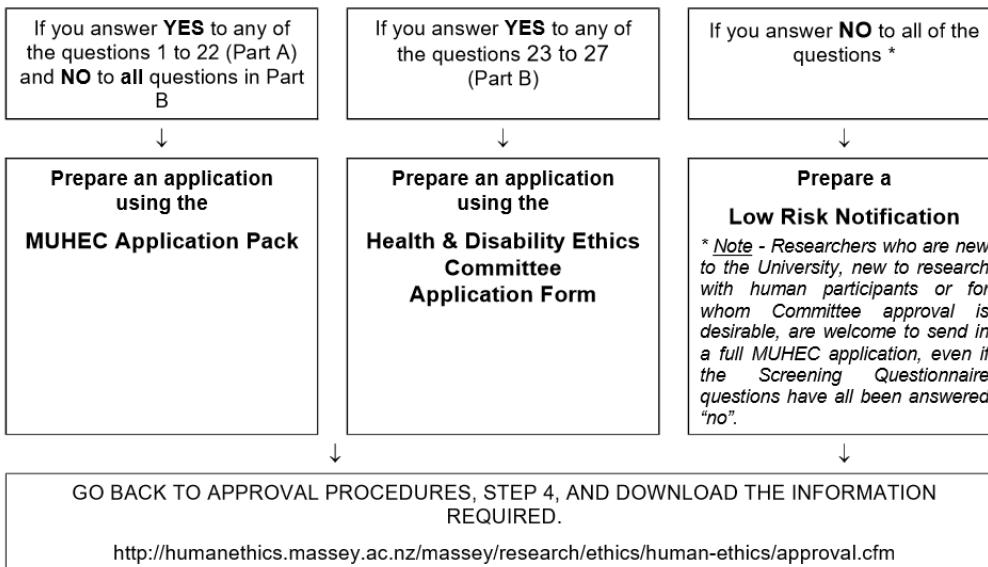
Include a copy of your written response from the Administrator with your application.

Does your Project involve any of the following?

(It is important that you answer all questions. Please circle either YES or NO for each question)

23. The use of staff or facilities of a District Health Board.	YES <input type="radio"/> NO <input checked="" type="radio"/>
24. Support, directly or indirectly, in full or in part, by District Health Board funds.	YES <input type="radio"/> NO <input checked="" type="radio"/>
25. Participants who are patients/clients of, or health information about an identifiable individual held by, an organisation providing health services (for example, general practice, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, sports medicine), disability services or institutionalised care.	YES <input type="radio"/> NO <input checked="" type="radio"/>
26. Requirement for ethical approval to access health or disability information about an identifiable individual held by the Ministry of Health, or held by any public or private organisation whether or not that organisation is related to health.	YES <input type="radio"/> NO <input checked="" type="radio"/>
27. A clinical trial which: requires the approval of the Standing Committee on Therapeutic Trials; requires the approval of the Gene Technology Advisory Committee; is sponsored by and/or for the benefit of the manufacturer or supplier of a drug or device.	YES <input type="radio"/> NO <input checked="" type="radio"/>

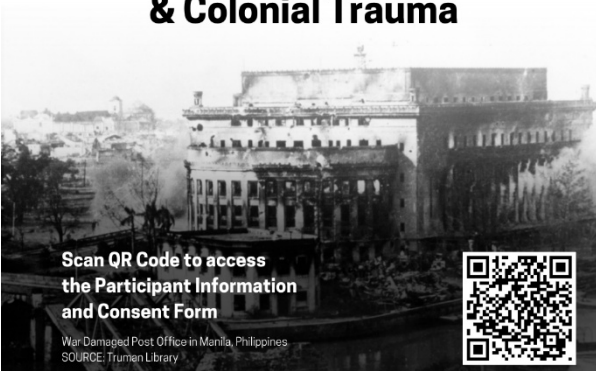
Determine the type of approval procedure to be used (choose one option):



Call-for-Respondents


**Calling for Filipino
Mental Health Professionals**

**Interview on
Filipino Psychology
& Colonial Trauma**



Scan QR Code to access
the Participant Information
and Consent Form

War Damaged Post Office in Manila, Philippines
SOURCE: Truman Library




Who are you?

I'm **Ar-Em Bañas**, a writer and illustrator born and raised in the Philippines. I'm currently studying Master of Design at Te Kunenga ki Pūrehuroa Massey University in Aotearoa New Zealand.

What is this for?

The interview is for my master's exegesis / thesis project, **"On the Bones of Batala."** Inspired by Tagalog folklore and precolonial history, it is a horror tabletop role-playing game (TTRPG) that delves into historical distortions and trauma caused by the colonization of the Philippines.



Filipino Baby in Human Zoo, Coney Island
SOURCE: The Sun, World News

Who can participate?

Participants must be Filipino mental health professionals or social workers who has worked with Filipino clients.

What questions will be asked?


Questions will be about the differences between Filipino and Western psychology when it comes to processing colonial or historical trauma, grief, and death. I will also be asking about ways to minimize retraumatization.

I want to participate. What next?


OPTION 1: Please complete the **Google Form**.
OPTION 2: Please fill out the **PDF** and email it to me at **arembanas@gmail.com**.




"Kill Every One Over Ten" Editorial Illustration
SOURCE: In Our Image: America's Empire in the Philippines



Scan QR Code to access the
Participant Information and Consent Forms



Google Form



PDF

Tank enters Fort Santiago, Manila, 1945
SOURCE: University of Wisconsin-Madison

Figure 58. Study B call-for-respondents.

Participant Information and Consent Form

On the Bones of Batala is a practice-based research project that offers a critical investigative contribution to the decolonization discourse in game studies and concept design. Inspired by Tagalog folklore and precolonial history, it is a horror tabletop role-playing game (TTRPG) that delves into historical distortions and trauma caused by the colonization of the Philippines.

You are invited to participate in a study about Tagalog deities and folklore.

Participant Information

Who is conducting the research?

Ar-Em Bañas is a Master of Design student at Te Kunenga ki Pūrehuroa Massey University in Wellington, Aotearoa New Zealand. Prior their postgraduate studies, they worked as a freelance illustrator, writer, story writing coach, and game designer in the Philippines.

Who can participate in the interview?

Respondents must be at least 18 years old, of Filipino descent and has some knowledge about Tagalog (or general Philippine) folklore.

What will happen during the interview, and how will it be conducted?

The interview will be semi-structured and may take from 1 to 2 hours. The time, date and location if done in-person* will be discussed through email prior the meeting. If online, it will be conducted over Zoom.

Depending on the deity or folklore creature, sensitive topics may come up during the discussion, e.g. discussing the manananggal may bring up topics of body horror, graphic violence, miscarriage or child death.

You may be provided with a list of questions prior the interview upon request, however, additional clarifying questions may be asked during the interview. You are welcome not to answer any questions you do not wish to.

All interviews will be recorded.

* NOTE: In-person meetings will only be available for participants in Wellington, Aotearoa New Zealand.

Will I be paid if I participate?

For in-person interviews, you will be provided with snacks and a bottle of water. You will not be paid for participating in the study.

What will happen to the information I have provided for this research?

The interview recordings will be kept in a password-protected folder on my personal computer. It will be deleted after two years or after I graduate, whichever comes first. Participants will also be allowed to opt out for up to two weeks. If they choose to do so, their data will be deleted immediately.

The information provided will be anonymized in the exegesis. In case of direct quotations, a pen name of your choosing will be used.

Can I access the results of the research?

Yes, the completed exegesis will be available through Te Kunenga ki Pūrehuroa Massey University. You may have a link or a digital copy of the exegesis upon request.

Do I have to participate?

No, you do not have to participate if you would not like to. You may also withdraw from the study for up to two weeks after the interview.

Who can I contact for questions or concerns I have about the study?

For questions or concerns, please email Ar-Em Bañas at arembanas@gmail.com.

Consent Statement

I, _____, have read and understand the information above. Any questions I have asked were answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this research, knowing that I can withdraw from further participation without consequence any time prior the interview or two weeks after the interview. I have been given a copy of this form to keep.

Do you consent to participate in an online or in-person interview about Filipino psychology and colonial trauma?

- Yes
 No

How would you like to hold the interview?

- Online through Zoom
- In person (only in Wellington, Aotearoa New Zealand)

Do you consent to the interview being recorded?

- Yes
- No

What pen name would you like to use?

Would you like to receive a copy of the questions ahead of the interview?

- Yes
- No

Interview Questions

Based on your observations, what is the difference between how Filipinos and their Western counterparts discuss and process traumatic concepts and events like colonial or state violence (e.g. police brutality)?

Based on your observations, what is the difference between how Filipinos and their Western counterparts discuss and process historical or intergenerational trauma?

Based on your observations, is there a difference between Western and Filipino views or responses to death or dying?

Based on your observations, is there a difference between how Filipinos and their Western counterparts process death-related grief and trauma?

TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE PRINCIPLES. According to the [Buffalo Center for Social Research](#), being Trauma-Informed means "changing interactions, policies, and environments to prevent the possibility of re-traumatization."

Do you agree with this definition? If not, how would you prefer to define it?

How do Trauma-Informed Care Principles impact your practice and care philosophy with Filipino clients?

How can we avoid retraumatizing or triggering people, specifically Filipinos, when discussing historical or colonial trauma?

In your experience, what does the client gain from engaging in these discussions, even if they are potentially retraumatizing?

In your opinion, what is the best way for individuals to process historical or colonial trauma by themselves or outside of therapeutic practices?

In your opinion, what is the best way to broach open discussions about historical or colonial trauma outside of therapeutic practices?

What practices must be undertaken to assure a beneficial outcome for all those involved?

What does a beneficial outcome look like?

BRAVE SPACES. According to the [Educating for Equity and Inclusion module](#) at Harvard University, a Brave Space is a space where individuals are "encouraged to explore new ideas, respectfully challenge each other's assumptions, and make mistakes."

Do you agree with this definition? If not, how would you prefer to define it?

In your observation, does creating Brave Spaces help when discussing trauma in a group setting?

What are the best practices to create or facilitate Brave Spaces when discussing historical or colonial trauma?

Have you created or facilitated Brave Spaces before?

LIVING CONTRACTS. In my understanding, Living Contracts are agreements that are based on mutual trust and evolve according to the needs of the parties involved.

Do you agree with this definition? If not, how would you prefer to define it?

In your observation, does creating Living Contracts help when discussing trauma in a group setting?

What are the best practices to create and maintain Living Contracts when discussing historical or colonial trauma?

Have you created or maintained Living Contracts before?

Interviewee Information

Table 18. Study B interviewee information.

Interview No.	Pen Name	Location
1	Jane	Northern Mindanao, Philippines
2	Elias	Metro Manila, Philippines
3	Beth	Aotearoa
4	Isla	Aotearoa
5	Andrea	Aotearoa

Interviews

Interview 1: Jane

Traumatic Concepts and Events

The interview began with Jane sharing an anecdote. When meeting other students from former colonies, Jane and their peers asked each other, "Who was your colonizer?" They explained, "It was a fun opening topic because we had just met each other in person for the first time."

Regarding how traumatic concepts and events are discussed in the Philippines compared to the West, Jane explained how trauma is perceived (or in this case, not perceived) in less privileged areas. "UNICEF wanted to do a statistical study on violence on children in the Philippines, and they approached this very bad slum area, and they weren't able to do it because they found out that the children don't have a concept of being hit as violence. They're just like, 'When there's no money, when mom and dad are mad, we get hit. When we do something wrong, we get hit,' but they're not associating it with trauma."

"I think when it comes to processing trauma, there's still a lot of survival mentality when it comes to Filipinos. So, they see trauma in the context of survival. In other words, it happened because we were doing something that would keep us alive, versus a Westerner's perspective, where it happened, but it didn't have to happen because they have enough food, they have enough resources, so why are you hitting your kid?"

To Jane, this disparity wasn't limited to the Philippines and the West. It was present among the Philippine regions as well.

"Here [in Northern Mindanao] there is less concept of trauma because it's the province, and the province is automatically more survival oriented. [...] In Manila, there's a higher concept of trauma, because there's more wealth in general. So, I think in that sense, Manila or bigger cities would be tending a little more to the Western [perspective] because there's enough resources for that kind of trauma to come out. But here, for example, corporal punishment is very normal. [Even if] the children are already teenagers, there's still corporal punishment."

"[In Northern Mindanao], you wouldn't see trauma when it comes to subtleties, unless the child's already self-harming or suicidal. They wouldn't probably acknowledge trauma unless there had been a very specific traumatizing incident. So, that sense of acknowledging that there is such a thing as trauma that comes from, for example, too many rules in the house or not enough free play time, which is actually a thing... They wouldn't see it here. It wouldn't be trauma. It would really be considered overreacting."

"In the province, you would really need to have been smacked across the head for them to say you experienced

trauma. So, they do not really see trauma as something less than a very big experience. But in Metro Manila, they would probably see gaslighting, microaggressions, things like that. They would acknowledge that these things cause trauma."

Historical or Colonial Trauma

When asked about the difference between how Filipinos and their Western counterparts discuss and process historical or intergenerational trauma, Jane observed how it was a source of pride, particularly in the U.S. "The first thing I noticed was how good they are at preserving stories. So, they're technically a young nation, right? [The Philippines is] 200 years older. But what [the U.S.] did very well with their very young nation was to idolize and monumentalize everything. So, if you go to DC, there's this ridiculously gigantic statue of Jefferson with all these words about democracy carved into stone around his head, the Holocaust museums in DC... They have that gigantic sitting statue of Abraham Lincoln. They turned their history into gods. There's a very strong sense of pride for Americans, no matter how young their nation is. Even if you're an immigrant or first generation, second generation, they're so proud of all that. It's like tracing your generational trauma as a source of pride for them. How did they come in? Were they in colonies? Were they on slave ships? Did they cross the border from Mexico? Did they sneak in from China? Were they the first families of Virginia? It's such a big thing for them. I think their trauma is something for them to be proud of, and the better they know it, and the better they can express it, the more famous they can get, or the more they can leverage it for stories, for media. It can become sensationalized, so it's easy for them to embrace [it] because it's not a source of shame. It's such a 'I made myself!' You know, a self-made man... They immortalize their own suffering because it makes them who they are. But I think personally, both as a mental health professional and also whatever else I am, I think it's also because they're so young, they need something to be proud of, and they will hold on to what makes them different, and that goes for trauma as well as anything else. So, the way they treat their background is just so, you know, they do their best to stand out or acknowledge or go back to their roots."

On the other hand, they observed that Philippine intergenerational trauma was often a source of shame. "We would rather get a dreamcatcher, which is actually Native American, than know our own weaves, and know that there's different weaves across the Philippines. I think that says so much. We don't know our own background, and a lot of people don't even know their own tribes. Where does their mom come from, or their mom's mom? And I think it's because [...] you need to make it look like you got there without having a big drama about it. I think it's that thing about calling attention to yourself that's so very Asian that

we don't like to do. Like you're tooting your own horn, or you're showing off, [...] you're standing out too much, or calling attention to yourself.

"When it comes to [Philippine] intergenerational trauma, people don't talk about it because they don't think it makes them unique. Maybe they really wish there's something they could change about it, or they wish it didn't have to happen that way. [...] Maybe that's what's traumatic for us? It's knowing, it's acknowledging that you have a past that was difficult. We don't like that. We like blending in and making it. We like being, you know, going to college and having a good job. We like looking like we succeeded, and we don't really look back and say, 'Oh, yeah. Because they worked hard. I'm so proud.' I mean, we do, but not in the way that Westerners do if you're specifically talking about Americans, especially."

On where the shame may have come from, they said, "The shame-honor system is very strong here" which they recognized as an Asian cultural value. However, it may also be a "familial value." "Usually in a concentrated unit you tend to know each other, and hopefully respect each other enough that it works because you care about your own family and you want to uphold the name, right? [The shame-honor system] works in the absence of an organized justice system [because] that's what keeps people in line without the need to have a police force. It would be so weird if you had [an internal] police force for a clan. It's a very family-based value system, which is why it's also true throughout Asia [and in] places where the family structure was able to stay in place for a longer time. [Shame-honor system] is how you do it without getting a stick and beating people up. You don't need a jail if you have a shame-honor system [in place]."

For Jane, avoiding retraumatization when discussing historical and intergenerational trauma is about phrasing the question and paying close attention to how the other person responds. A sample question they asked about WWII was, "It's incredible to think that our grandparents were still alive during WWII. I wonder if you know where yours were at that time, or what they were doing?" The potential answers may range from disinterest to an openness to share. The other person may ask their family about their story, or maybe they have a story that they are either willing or unwilling to discuss.

"I think the question is always like, why are you bringing it up in the first place? Do you want to tell a personal story about it, or do you just want to have a fun discussion about it? Or do you want to start just spouting historical facts about it? But I think the first question is helpful to know [to decide] where you go from there. Are you going to keep going? Are you going to go the other way?"

When asked about what a person gains from engaging in these discussions despite being potentially retraumatizing, they responded, "I don't think we should forget."

Jane began to talk about their great grandmothers who lived through WWII even when they were getting emotional about their passing.

"I think the importance of triggering this generation and older generations to record what happened to their stories, because it's part of what made them, no matter how much they want to be [like other people who went to college and had jobs, all that]. What wonderful stories they have of the people in their lives that they wouldn't tell anybody because it's a private story and it sounds like they're showing off. So, I think just creating that space for you to show off about your family, I think that's very healing, potentially."

Jane said how important it was to express oneself through writing, voice recording, or other creative media (hosting a YouTube channel, scrapbooking, even collecting memorabilia), saying, "Some people find it therapeutic to create for themselves." They also cited a history-based song by a PPop group as "one of the best non-retraumatizing historical retellings in song that exists today," saying how after showing it to their friends, it led to a discussion about their ancestral histories.

They emphasized how important it is to write and record, even if it means asking another trusted individual to transcribe or record for you. As an example about its benefits, they mentioned how one of their friends who began writing about their ancestry became more willing to open up about it, process it in themselves, and talk to others about it.

"Just write. It doesn't have to be good words. It can be in your own language. [...] As long as it's written down somewhere, someone can do something about it. If it's not, we're just going to lose it. We're going to lose all this intangible heritage."

When asked about how to broach discussions about historical or intergenerational trauma, they said, "I think the simplest way is to ask [someone you're not close with], 'Are you from here, or are your parents from different places?'" It's about asking questions, paying attention to the response, and asking more questions based on said response. For example, when broaching colonial history with someone who has roots in a certain region, the follow-up question can be, "Has your family been here since the Spanish Era?" This conversation led me to opening up about how my previous conversations with Filipinos almost always lead back to colonial history by just asking about their hometown, province, or region.

However, they did mention framing the follow-up question differently when it comes to Mindanaoan Muslims and Indigenous peoples. Not only are they more in touch with their precolonial roots, but "their heritage and their colonial wounding is tied to land." So instead of just saying, "Where did your family come from?" It might be, "What region did you grow up in?" followed by "What region are you or your family from?" For Muslims, one may even ask, "What clan are you from?"

"I think if you're approaching a Mindanaoan, you would have a different approach, and you would assume they were more proud, rather than ashamed, of where they came from."

Jane stated that a beneficial outcome from these conversations would be a reciprocal, emotional but not shame-filled retelling of family history. "The person who opens the topic should expect to also reveal their own [family history]. It's such a vulnerable place that I think anyone who approaches the topic should be willing to answer the questions they ask, because you're asking the other person to be so open. There should be reciprocity."

They also provided precautions, saying, "Never [go] where the person is not willing to go [while] not assuming they don't want to go there." They said that because of the shame-honor system, people may be reluctant to talk or take too much time. Showing genuine interest in the topic gives them permission to tell their story. Suggested questions were:

- Then what happens?
- May I ask a little more about that?
- I wonder if you're willing to share about that?

"It's always giving them the option to back out, but never shying away from the details, because usually, once they've started the story, they want to tell the details. They just don't want to look like they're showing off. If they start being like, 'I don't think I should share this,' don't push it."

For a beneficial outcome for a one-on-one discussion, they said, "It should feel like a [relief and/or a] blessing to them that they were able to tell the story. I think the burden would be on the person doing the asking to make sure that happened." For a group discussion, they explained that it would be the facilitator's responsibility to make sure people have an opportunity to tell their story, e.g. halting interruptions by saying, "I'd like to hear them complete their story."

Discussing Death-related Grief and Trauma

On the differences between how the Philippines and the West viewed death-related grief and trauma, they mused, "Just browsing through news about the latest scientific stuff [like] about prolonging life and new technology, my question is usually, 'Why are they afraid to die? Or, 'Why do they want to prolong their life so much?' Like, why? What do you do if you live longer especially if you're way past the prime of your life? Aren't you happy with your life? I think when you don't strive hard to accomplish certain things, which you find more in survivalist societies like Asian or Filipino societies, there's no relief to dying if you feel like everything was too easy." They also pointed out the importance of family to many Asian elders, and how it may be difficult for them to see the point in living longer when isolated from their children and grandchildren.

They also compared Metro Manila to Mindanao views on death or dying. "I think in the province, more than Metro Manila, [people know that death] could happen anytime." They observed pragmatism among Mindanaoans when

dealing with death. "Maybe within a week, they'll be done talking about it. In Manila, it's like, 'Oh, couldn't they have done this? Was it the doctor? Was it the hospital?' There are all these reasons [why death] happened. There's not so much acceptance. I think that's also true in the West because they can see all the resources available and they don't feel like they need to survive."

Jane admitted that they are still navigating their thoughts on death but as of that point, they observed how for people in Metro Manila and the West, where there are more resources and wealth, "it's like death is an affront to a life that didn't have so much stress, because it doesn't feel like it's an accomplished life." They explained that by seeing all the available resources, people use phrases such as "they could've done so much more" when grieving someone. Meanwhile, in places like Mindanao, people's lives are more readily celebrated and their deaths more easily accepted. "When it comes to death, I feel there's a groundedness [if the people are] more survival-oriented."

They observed that "people in the Philippines see grief as a waste of time" or that "grief is unproductive." They also observed how there's a drinking culture in the Philippines when people process their grief over beer with a friend. "Grief is a social thing here. It can be processed socially. [However], when the person is grieving alone, that's when they think it's a waste of time."

When comparing the Western way of processing grief, they explained using the film, *Zack Snyder's Justice League*. "Even in the middle of a massacre happening around each one of the heroes, when they grieve, they grieve. [...] No matter who is dying around them, the person, that character, will have a very long grieving moment. As an Asian, I was offended. As a mental health professional, I got it, but as an Asian, I was like, 'People are dying around you. Wipe those tears and save them. You are unproductive right now [and you are the only one who can fight]. Repress that emotion.' I think that's the biggest difference. If I grieve, bills don't get paid or [my family doesn't get to eat]. But for Westerners, because they're so isolationist, they will grieve [even to the detriment of their family who needs them]. If you are [from] an Asian family, that is unacceptable."

Trauma-Informed Care Principles

They agreed with the given definition "because it pays attention to the nuances of trauma-informed care [in the sense that] trauma-informed care doesn't entail mentioning trauma [or] mentioning cures all the time. It's an accessible form of communication and interaction. Accessible meaning... for example, one reason to invest in wheelchair ramps instead of stairs is that everyone can use a wheelchair ramp, not just wheelchair-users. That's what I mean by accessible. Trauma-informed care is an accessible way of communication that will work for people that you don't need to use it with, but it will be especially beneficial for those you need to use it with. [Trauma-informed care principles] really

kind of guides everything. You don't know the other person's triggers, but you have a general idea of what would make them feel safe."

They also point out that it's very person-adapted. What may be comfortable for one of their previous clients may be a trigger for another, so it was important for them to adapt to the interaction.

While not yet certified, they explained that they use Trust-Based Relational Intervention (TBRI) from the [Karyn Purvis Institute of Child Development](#) for their work ([Karyn Purvis Institute of Child Development](#)). When talking to their client, they keep an open body posture (e.g. showing their wrists as a sign of vulnerability and openness) and speak at their pace. They say, "Because trauma messes with the brain's ability to comprehend complex situations or sentences. So, sometimes it's just saying one sentence at a time and waiting for them to catch up or respond to one sentence at a time."

Brave Spaces

When discussing brave spaces, Jane pointed out, "There's a big difference between discussing trauma, traumatic experiences, and processing, and the group has to be very clear about what they're doing."

In their perspective, *OTBOB* focused on discussion, explaining that my role was "not to offer [players] a way forward" which happens during processing.

Furthermore, they warned how there may be participants who may not be ready to engage in a brave space, saying, "When people are processing the pain of trauma, it's hard to keep them respectful. Because when you're in the middle of that pain, you'll be selfish." They explained that to have a brave space, one must be "confident in the story that [they're] telling, and they already accepted it into themselves" or at the very least, they are willing to be vulnerable enough to say, "I'm not actually ready to process it" or "I haven't fully processed this myself, and I hope that while we're talking here, I'll get more perspectives and ideas that will help me understand."

Jane discussed how they facilitated brave spaces at work. They said, "The trick [and challenge when facilitating these spaces] is knowing when to stay quiet. [...] The other would be affirming the right of each party to finish their sentences before the other person starts talking."

Living Contracts

When defining living contracts, I explained how *OTBOB* would be using Safety Tools, such as Lines and Veils ([Contributor](#)) where players list topics that they would rather not discuss or encounter within play.

They agreed that setting expectations prior to play is important, saying, "I think expectation is very important [...]"

because what are you there to do? Are you there to unhone anonymously, or are you there to enjoy a fruitful game with a mission or a goal with a bunch of other people? Because when there's a goal in mind, people usually don't mind rules, because you wouldn't be in the game if you're not planning to go to the same goal."

They recommended providing reminders during the play session. "I think one of the strongest reminders you could give, especially if we're talking about Filipino trauma, is to [say] everyone's experiences are different. You may have experienced the same situation, but from a different perspective, and both will be valid. If your experience differed from this person's, please allow it to widen your perspective of your own and share freely from your own perspective."

When discussing their own experiences with living contracts, they said they had once done so to a friend, saying, "I explicitly withdraw consent for you to give unsolicited feedback." They observed how "we give unofficial consent to people we trust. I think withdrawing it or allowing it explicitly is one way of doing a living contract verbally. I think that's just what it is. It's a codified version of an evolving relationship."

Philippine Media as a Tool for Grief

Jane and I also had a conversation on Philippine media and why they were almost always sad or dramatic.

"I think it's a grieving tool," they mused. On telenovelas (or soap opera) fans, they said, "[When people watch telenovelas], they can cry over someone else's problems, and they can cry about [their own problems] at the same time. I'm pretty sure [that's our way of] grieving. We don't talk about grief, we don't cry enough as a society, but sad stories help us cry. [...] Media reflects psychological realities, right? Or maybe *especially* psychological realities. [...] We're [still] processing our trauma."

Interview 2: Elias

Traumatic Concepts and Events

Elias believed that “the difference in how people process, discuss and process things, is that in Western perspectives there are institutions that would facilitate not to forget [the trauma],” e.g. in countries where there were many Holocaust victims. “Not forgetting is institutionalized and real structures help facilitate that. So, they get to process it better, understand it better.”

He pointed out that it is different in the Philippines where only dates of historical tragedies are institutionalized. Some are even moved to different dates to have longer weekends, “so people tend to forget what the purpose of these holidays are.”

He also brought up how in the Philippines, STEM courses are prioritized “because these jobs bring money” while the Humanities, which are considered non-money-generating courses, aren’t given much significance. This leads to the issue where students and even some parents refuse to learn about Philippine history because they don’t see the point to it. Furthermore, because the importance of history is minimized, there is a prevalence of colonial mentality. “Some would say, ‘I hope the Americans spent longer periods of time here so we would be as progressive as other American colonies,’ but they forget that colonizers won’t treat the colonized the same way they treat colonizers.”

He also observed that while there are people who rally against state violence, e.g. police brutality, extrajudicial killings, historical revisionism, and red-tagging, there are also people who turn a blind eye and refuse to blame it on the state itself. “For example, police brutality. They will blame it on the police, but they won’t blame it on the system that perpetuates such violence.”

He also observed this tendency to absolve if not outright defend political leaders enabling state violence, using former President Duterte and the extrajudicial killings as an example. “People who voted for Duterte will be quick to defend him, [saying,] ‘It’s not him, it’s the police. He’s not the police.’” He mused that this behavior may be a form of cognitive dissonance. “‘I know that I voted for the wrong person. I know that I should feel bad, but I can’t [or I don’t want to] feel bad.’ So people will just turn a blind eye and not recognize it because it’s uncomfortable to feel that.”

He also mused that Filipinos are not necessarily forgetful about the traumatic past, but that they would rather work. “It’s a difficult country so they would rather earn than spend time reading or listening to other people.”

Historical or Colonial Trauma

“I think in other countries, in the West, they discuss it in class. Here, not as much.” He mentioned how in many textbooks, the horrors of Martial Law and the EDSA revolution is

condensed to a single sentence or paragraph. “That’s why it’s so easy to revise history in the country. I mean, historical revisionism is everywhere, but in the [Philippines], it’s much easier, because if you look at the government systems at play... For example, the Department of Education chairperson is Sara Duterte [daughter of former President Duterte]. It will be easier for them to blur significant events.”

He also discussed how political trauma (e.g. dealing with state violence) is only treated as context and not as real reasons for distress. As a mental health practitioner, he believed that “we need to talk about what happened. We need to talk about the systems, the contexts that facilitated or enabled such violence. But here, [political trauma is treated as] an external event. A separate event that [one] shouldn’t worry about.” Furthermore, he observed that many therapists and practitioners refuse to talk about these topics. “They won’t talk about racism. They won’t talk about crimes, violence [like] state violence because you can’t do anything about it already. But for me, I [believe] we need to talk about it.”

He explained that it’s difficult to avoid retraumatizing or triggering people “because you cannot avoid it. [...] It’s everywhere. There are [historical] markers in the country where these [events] happened but I think it’s not really to avoid the trigger, but to *manage* these triggers.”

He explained how important it is to talk about, saying, “If you keep on avoiding it, we get no insight from it.” Furthermore, he suggested, “Perhaps the immediate way is to facilitate management of emotions when encountering these things. But these are bandaids solutions; to manage emotions, cognitive reframing, etc.” In the end, he explained that it’s about coming to terms with the trauma that has happened, but also being aware that (1) this form of healing must come from the person who is traumatized and not imposed by the practitioner or facilitator and (2) it cannot happen immediately. “It’s really a large process. I mean, imagine being colonized for 333 years; a single therapy session cannot address the entire historical trauma.”

He recommended the autoethnography of Cristina Montiel, a researcher whose work revolved around the trauma surrounding the EDSA Revolution. “According to her, there is this concept [called] the ‘antinomy of political trauma’. [...] The cause is the political, but at the same time, the cure is also the political. It’s the same thing. It’s a cycle.” Hence, even though such discussions have potential for retraumatization, there is also potential for healing.

He also explained that through discussing historical or colonial trauma, people gain the experience of validation, which then facilitates healing.

He believed that healing isn’t done individually but collectively, even with one-on-one therapy sessions. He explained that as a client, he sees their therapist as his ally when tackling issues. He also explained that “healing doesn’t happen inside therapy alone. [Healing also] happens when you go to your respective communities who have shared the same experiences. [Not for furthering] shared trauma or

trauma-sharing, [but] as a community who recognizes these things." Again, reiterating the importance of validation.

He was also aware of the potential for retraumatization within these spaces but believed that there are facilitative ways to manage it, e.g. cognitive reframing and perhaps mindfulness practices. He believed that giving people the opportunity to talk about their experiences with others is beneficial enough.

While he encouraged collective healing, he also provided suggestions on how people could process historical or colonial trauma on their own.

"When on their own, perhaps the actual way to process it is to write about it." He also recommended Cristina Montiel's process, explaining how she delved into the expressive arts, e.g. writing poetry, creating artwork. He believed that it was important that the trauma was transformed into something (e.g. art) than not processed at all.

However, he believed that this could also be a form of collective healing. "For me, my framework is to somehow transform it into a creative output that's not only for them, but for others to heal. [...] Of course, [it has to be] on their own terms, on their own readiness when they want to share it. But we hope that [their creative work] that helped them process these things can help others who experienced [something similar] process these things."

We had a brief conversation about my goals with *OTBOB* and how I was curious about how to open up discussions about historical or colonial trauma within the game space. He was supportive of this, saying, "When it comes to psychological framework, I'm more of a discursive kind of person, so the more that we enable this, the more that we foster spaces where we can talk about these things, it can aid in facilitating healing, not only individually, but collectively."

Elias explained that a beneficial outcome would look like someone gaining insight from the discussion. However, he was also critical of the question, saying, "My approach is critical clinical psychology where we try to question issues of power, consumerism, these oppressive structures. Every time we think that there should be an output for things, that there should be a benefit... It's like thinking of an input-output kind of thing, which is a business model. But sometimes, there are some therapy sessions when the client doesn't gain an immediate benefit. If we're too pressed about whether or not the client gained anything, we're under the impression that the client should always be productive... But what if they can't [be productive] at that moment? What if what they can do as of now is just to survive? Maybe that's enough." To him, just sharing insights or providing a space for discussion is enough.

Discussing Death-related Grief and Trauma

On death and dying, Elias recommended that I read about Fr. Jaime Bulatao, a Filipino psychologist whose research work

revolves around transpersonal worldview. "[Fr. Bulatao] proposed that the Filipinos have a transpersonal worldview, that our world exists with the spiritual world. It's not set like with the Western concept, 'Here's Earth, here's heaven.'" He gestured to show the separation between the two. "But in the Philippines, it's both. It's transpersonal. The present, our living world exists with the spiritual world. That's why we can see ghosts. We can see [creatures like the] kapre, duwende, because they are here, living with us, not on a separate plane. So with that, plus combining it with our colonial history, Filipinos, being as creative as they are, fused these folk beliefs with Catholicism, for instance."

He explained that death-related superstitious beliefs and practices are prevalent in the country, which is very different from the West. He provided several examples:

"For victims of injustice, they will place a chick on top of the coffin to peck on the conscience of the one who murdered [them]."

"One culture in the Ilocos Region, they will ask children to fall in line [in front of the casket] then they lift the child up to the other side of the coffin for them to grow taller."

"When someone has a birthday or death anniversary, they will put food [by] the Santo Niño (the baby Jesus figure) for the [deceased] relative to eat."

When asked about Philippine and Western ways of processing death-related grief and trauma, he said, "[Similar to political trauma and traumatic history], in the Philippines, we don't talk about grief. It's more of an 'it-happened' kind of thing so we need to move on. 'Their spirit is in a better place.' That's why therapy is not famous here in the Philippines."

On the phrase, "Their spirit is in a better place," he went on to say, "I guess it's reflective of the optimism Filipinos have. [...] We have joy, humor, optimism, [but] because we have too much optimism, too much joy, the counterpart is a lack of reflection. We don't get to process these things. That's why intergenerational trauma happens."

He explained that concepts like intergenerational trauma may be discussed in the West through Freud, Jung and their other contemporaries, but "in the Philippines, it's not as famous. It's more common for people who came from a [Westernized] educational background to go to therapy than a local layperson." He explained that their clients are those who can afford to go to therapy and have the privilege to recognize that these issues must be discussed. "But if you go to the local communities, they won't talk about it because [they can't earn anything from therapy]. Again, we can't blame them because we need to survive. [To them], survival is more important [than processing trauma and grief]."

Trauma-Informed Care Principles

He agreed with the given definition, saying, "In order for us to care for people who experience trauma, we need to change

policies." Using red-tagging as an example, he explained that to prevent people from experiencing trauma relating to it, the systemic violence has to stop.

"It's so difficult if we care for our clients within the clinic, but then when they step outside of the clinic, they would encounter the same experiences. What are we doing then? [...] I don't want to use the word productive, but it's not really helpful for the people who experience trauma to be constantly going to therapy then [experience the] same systems, same structures [outside]." To Elias, trauma-informed care principles shouldn't just be applied to one-on-one interactions, but should also be about changing policies and environments.

While Elias admitted that he doesn't often deal with clients who experienced trauma, he explained that his study on political trauma impacted his care philosophy for people who were victimized by various forms of oppression within the country. For example, he would ask his client/s if there are safe spaces or communities that they could engage with or provide support when dealing with their trauma.

He also said that while providing these safe spaces or communities is possible within university settings, it is difficult when applying it to the entire country. Still, he held onto hope, saying, "While my one-on-one correspondence with my clients cannot provide change on a national scale, [at least] we get to talk about these things. It's in my framework to talk [to my clients] about context, to inform them of why such trauma happens [because] of these systems. So there's some psycho-education happening there."

Brave Spaces

When defining "brave space," Elias explained that it was his first time hearing the term, but it mirrored how he described spaces throughout the interview. "[It's] just a safe space where we can talk about these things."

He agreed with the provided definition, saying, "I think we need to push for these spaces to exist, to talk about it in a way that everyone can participate in that space, everyone can respectfully challenge each other's assumptions. Because I think many people, many Filipinos, are afraid of debates. They would think about it as always argumentative, et cetera. But maybe we can transform this space into something that's a cooperative kind of space, rather than something like, 'Hey, I'm challenging you.' [Instead, it could be] 'I'm challenging your assumptions, but I'm not challenging you as an individual.'"

When asked about best practices for facilitating a brave space, he said, "Perhaps it would be nice to begin with where [the participants are] coming from. The Philippines is an archipelago, and there's that hegemony. There's Imperial Manila versus local experiences outside Manila. So maybe it would be good to ask local, contextual experiences to include everyone in that space." He also explained that other than understanding different contexts, it would be good to

set ground rules, and to remind everyone that "one's trauma is not heavier than the other's trauma." He also mentioned how important it was to develop good facilitation skills, recommending Fr. Bulatao's work on group process.

Living Contracts

It was the first time Elias heard the term "living contracts" so we both discussed what it may mean within the Philippine context. He shared their experience when he facilitated a group, saying, "In that group, we talked about ground rules, like, 'When someone is speaking, we listen to them' or 'everything that we talk about here is confidential so don't bring it outside the context of our group.' So I think that reflects what a living contract is."

He confirmed that by having that mutual agreement, it helped the group be more vulnerable and open. "Of course, it took more time to build [that openness], but it helped in a sense that everyone was somehow confident that whatever they share won't come out."

Interview 3: Beth

Traumatic Concepts and Events

When asked about Filipino and Western ways of discussing traumatic concepts and events, Beth observed that the Filipinos they knew who talk about these topics are often involved and engaged in advocacy spaces and discuss it "from a frame of liberation and non-colonial lenses."

They were critical of how some Western individuals have an "easier or freer" way of discussing things that they haven't experienced themselves. Meanwhile, there is more risk within Filipino spaces to discuss such topics, e.g. threat to physical safety, threat of community harm, or even being known as the person who "talks about problematic things." They wonder if this may be why Filipinos tend not to talk about these topics as much as their Western counterparts. As an example, they shared how their own family and relatives don't talk about intergenerational or historical trauma.

Historical or Colonial Trauma

When asked about Filipino and Western ways of discussing or processing historical or colonial trauma, Beth shared that many of the Pākehā they know "don't necessarily have historical trauma from a colonial perspective that they necessarily have to work through" given their background. However, they observed that Filipinos tend to have a more collective approach of processing trauma while their Western counterparts are more individualistic, e.g. "This is what happened to me, and this is how I process it for myself."

On avoiding retraumatization, they explained, "I don't necessarily think that avoiding triggering people is the most helpful thing, because then you probably don't end up talking about the thing that you need to talk about. But I think there are ways in which you can approach it." They explained further that responding to triggers would depend from one person to another, e.g. it's possible for one person to shut down and refuse to continue talking, while another person may need a way to express how they're feeling.

They also observed that "Filipinos aren't very good at naming how they're feeling," so providing a way that could help them name how they're feeling at the moment may be beneficial as well.

They also explained how avoidance isn't the answer to triggers and issues. Instead, it should be discussed or processed. Afterwards, strategies could be developed to help the person deal with their triggers.

When asked about what a beneficial outcome may look like, Beth replied, "I think they get freedom and liberation, because once you talk about it, and once you work through it, then it doesn't have to bother you as much."

They also shared their personal experience with counseling as a client, saying, "What I get out of it is that I have a way to

nurture whatever part of me was really hurt and harmed as a young child, so that I can take it with me as an adult, for one thing. But it also means that I can be a more healed person when I engage with [the people around me.] The benefit isn't just for me as an individual, like I have better skills to deal with it, but it also affects all the relationships around me as well."

Additionally, they said, "if we're talking [about] a Filipino person to a Filipino person, I would like to hope that a beneficial outcome would feel like you would feel less alone in your experience, regardless of whether you had the same experience or not. [...] I think a beneficial outcome is feeling like you've been heard, feeling like you've been validated, feeling a sense of togetherness. I think also it looks like potentially [having] ideas on ways to move forward, or to process through [it], depending on how that conversation goes."

In terms of practices, they explained how important it was to have a "real, deep level of trust and maturity from at least one person [but] ideally both people" and how it shouldn't be treated as a competition or "oppression Olympics." They observed how there are some people who "try to locate themselves within the conversation" even when they don't have an understanding or lived experience. To that, they said, "You can listen just to listen. You don't have to try and locate yourself or find meaning for yourself."

They also said how it's good to have a sense of discernment. As an example, they said, "Like when you feel like a person doesn't want to talk about it anymore, or they've brushed past something, and you feel that there's something there, but you're like, 'Oh, actually, maybe they don't want to touch that.' I think it requires a little bit of finagling to make sure that people feel like they're being heard."

When asked about how individuals could process historical or colonial trauma by themselves, they said, "I think healing can only really happen within community. I think there are some really great books to read [on healing] but even when reading books, you're engaging with another person, another being, another way of thinking. I think it is really harmful to think that you can heal yourself. I think that's a really Western thing, that you can heal your life with the food that you eat [or] by exercising. I think those things are helpful but [what my counselor told me is that] we hurt in relationships, and we also heal in relationships. So, being able to think about the kinds of people we can engage with, that can kind of facilitate that healing process, whilst being aware that we also have to work to change ourselves. You can't heal yourself in the sense of... you can't go at it alone and do your thing and kind of just hope that you will get better, but at the same time, you can't solely rely on other people to fix all your problems. Unless you're willing to make necessary changes, then nothing is going to change."

In the context of historical or colonial trauma, they explain, "I think being able to process historical or colonial trauma means that you can see the story [or] the reality of what it is [and] acknowledging the pain of what it is. I think what people

don't like to talk about is their coping mechanisms of how they dealt with that trauma. It doesn't necessarily mean that they can just get a pass to keep acting that way. Like, if [someone] started beating their kids because they were stressed about the impact of colonial trauma, it doesn't make [the beating okay] even if the colonial trauma was super, super traumatic. So, I think part of being able to process that is being able to acknowledge that there might have been unhealthy ways of coping or being, or things that you have attached yourself to that you also have the freedom to [change] or not do anymore. [...] That's kind of one of the things that you can do for yourself, *with* yourself, because it's really only choices that you can make as an individual, but they do impact your relationships and your community."

They explain how important it was to learn about oneself outside of the trauma they have experienced. "I think for some people, they can attach everything about who they are to historical or colonial trauma. While that makes a lot of sense, especially if it's been really big and it feels really life-consuming, it's also not all of who a person is, and kind of being able to expand their identities outside of that is also really, really helpful."

When asked about how to broach discussions about historical or colonial trauma, they said, "It depends on the person and depends on your relationship with the person."

For friends or youths, they recommended letting them lead the conversation and foregoing labels, saying, "I don't think we necessarily have to label it as historical trauma. [But] I would ask to check my understanding [or to hopefully know that] we're talking about the same thing without having to name it as such."

They also mentioned how important it was to have a level of openness within the relationship to broach the subject, and that this openness must be reciprocal, saying, "I don't think you can have open discussions about those things if you aren't an open person yourself, or if you haven't done [the work] to be able to have those conversations in a way that's safe to yourself [and] to others." Furthermore, they explained how important it was to be aware of the person you're discussing with, saying, "If I'm talking about the impact of colonization on Filipinos [with] Tangata Whenua, I would probably have that conversation in quite a different way than I would with someone who's Pākehā."

They also talked about the importance of preempting people for the conversation. "Something that I try to ask people is if they have the capacity to have a big conversation." E.g. "Just want to check-in if you have capacity to talk about this, because I've got a lot going on." They explained that by doing so, "you're not just coming to a space expecting everyone to meet all your needs," which can be harmful as is the case with trauma-dumping.

Discussing Death-related Grief and Trauma

Beth agreed that there was a difference between Filipino and Western views on death or dying, saying, "I think dying is such a cultural process."

While they admitted that they haven't witnessed a lot of how Filipinos discuss death and dying, but they observed how their Western counterparts were very "individual," saying that "sometimes, there's kind of a practical financial component." They shared their observation of other non-Filipino but Asian or ethnic families who "dropped everything to be with their families in their last years of life, regardless of whether it costs them their careers." Looping back to the Filipino perspective, they observed, "There's a lot more giving that happens within a Filipino perspective. Whether that's a positive thing or not is another conversation. But I think because Filipinos so much value that kind of collective approach, there's sort of that collective response to death and dying as well."

They noticed how religion plays a big role as well, sharing how there tends to be a lot of prayers when someone is dying in the family. "If you're a non-religious person, [the prayers] can feel very frustrating. But I think if you are a religious person, then that practice feels really grounding and helpful for you."

When asked about the differences between Filipino and Western ways of processing death-related grief or trauma, they explained, "When I think Western, I think, again, it's very individualized. I think for Filipinos, again, it's kind of about that collective." They referenced their immediate family as an example.

They also noticed how Filipinos process death differently depending on how a person died. "If someone passed away from cancer, there's a lot of talk about being really sad, but if it was mental health-related, we don't really talk about how they died. I think that kind of silencing, and that grief can amplify other things."

They observed that both Filipinos and Western are "closed off [about death-related grief] for different reasons," saying, "I think in general, Filipinos will kind of talk about losing someone as sad, and things kind of just have to continue going on. While there's a bit of reality to that, I don't think we talk about grief. [...] What I can say for Filipinos is... we just have to keep going. There's that sense of ongoing survival mode of like, 'we just have to move through.'"

Trauma-Informed Care Principles

They didn't completely agree with the provided definition for trauma-informed care principles, saying, "I think sometimes retraumatization is inevitable. We can do our best to talk about something but we can't preempt every single thing that we say or do that might impact someone in a different way. I think [by] focusing on [prevention], you can kind of just go in circles [which] can be a little bit limiting. So, I think I would

extend that definition to also talk about how we care for someone through retraumatization, or the processes in which we [can] engage to limit the impact of retraumatization if and when it happens.”

While Beth didn't classify their work or methods as trauma-informed care principles, they emphasized how important it was “to not make people feel worse about themselves.” They also found it important to validate another person's experience during discussion while not necessarily agreeing with everything that has been said. “It's more like, ‘I understand and I hear what you're saying. Why do you think [this other person] responded that way? Or was there anything else going on in the situation that might have influenced that?’”

Brave Spaces

Beth agreed with the given definition for brave spaces but also suggested “adding to where people are encouraged to find new ways forward, or finding ways to agree, to disagree, or to be okay at the disagreement. Challenging each other's assumptions is also just that underlying belief and understanding that it's okay that we don't have to agree on everything, and it doesn't mean that we can't be friends, or we can't communicate or live in peace. I mean, to be fair for me, that can only go so far (like what I'm willing to agree-to-disagree with) but in a general sense [it's] being okay with other people's worldviews and lived experiences, and not dismissing someone just because they disagree with you, even if [their perspective is fundamentally different from yours].”

When asked about how to create brave spaces, they said, “I don't necessarily think you can create a brave space. I think a brave space is facilitated by the people who are in that space. Because you can't be in a brave space if there are no brave people. [...] If people aren't willing to go there, or they're not willing to be a brave person, then they can't have brave conversations, so they can't have a brave space. I think people want it, and I think it would help [when discussing trauma in a group setting], but people don't also want to do the work to be a brave person.”

They shared their own experience with facilitating brave spaces and the challenges they faced “because people in those spaces weren't willing to come face to face with the things that required a sense of responsibility or ownership from them. I think being a brave person requires a lot from you, like you have to be really mature. You have to decenter yourself and your ideas, and kind of understand that you [...] or your ideas aren't the center of one's universe. You might be wrong, and that's okay. It doesn't make you a bad person; there are just other ways to think about things. [...] So, I think it can be facilitated, but I think it can only be facilitated if the right people are in that space.”

Living Contracts

Before responding to the question, Beth clarified if living contracts were like a spoken agreement, which I affirmed. To that, they said, “I would agree that it's based on a kind of mutual trust. [But also] I think it requires trust in lots of areas. [...] It doesn't just rely on, ‘I trust you as an individual and you trust me as an individual,’ but I think it also requires that ‘I trust the nature of what it means to be human,’ and can hold that, or ‘I can trust that [we both] have mutual values in a living contract.’”

They believe that it would be useful when discussing trauma in a group setting, with the caveat that it “comes down to if people are willing to abide by those contracts, or abide by being a brave person. So, I think we can do all of the things that we can to help facilitate those spaces, and people need to be willing to abide by them. I think it would help [when discussing such topics], but that would be based on the assumption that everyone is in a capacity to be able to understand and hold that contract.

While they haven't facilitated living contracts, they have experienced it as participants. For best practices, they said how important it was to talk, listen, and set aside time because “we're asking a lot of people when it comes to contributing to a living contract.” One practice they liked was when facilitators tell participants to “contribute if you're able, contribute if you're ready, contribute if you have capacity.” They liked it when facilitators made sure that the participants were “able to attend to all of [their] other needs before bringing [themselves] into a bigger space.”

Interview 4: Isla

Traumatic Concepts and Events

When asked about Filipino and Western ways of discussing traumatic concepts and events, Isla responded, "It's very different. I feel with Filipinos, there's a bit more of that, 'Oh, and that happened,' kind of thing," citing the people they know who lived through the traumatic Martial Law Era in the Philippines. "It's part of what's happened to history. It is traumatic. [But people] found some ways to move forward from it rather than dwell on that. That's what I found with [the] older generation. Whereas Western counterparts... It depends which [part in the West, but looking at the Western models that's coming up around trauma] nowadays, there's more of a sensitive approach to trauma, which is good. It's about the way of being, about how a traumatic event impacts a person, and the response to that in their nervous system." Furthermore, they said current systems predominantly follow Western models, however, "the system right now looks more like a tick box. 'Oh, yeah, let's be trauma-informed,' but I don't feel it."

They said a Filipino's openness to discuss such topics depends from one person to another. "It kind of goes in the spectrum. Either they brush it off, move forward. 'Bahala na.' (transl. let it be). Or the other [end of the spectrum] where they're still trying to process what's happened in the past, maybe because they're still in that healing journey. It's coming up, and it's impacting their lives. That's what I'm seeing."

However, even though they observed that there was still a stigma around discussing such topics for both cultures, there was still more of an openness to express or feel trauma among Western individuals compared to Filipinos, saying, "I guess in our culture, there's still a bit of that stigma to talk about mental health, to talk about how we feel, because it's kind of being seen as a sign of weakness. So, others might see [the moving forward or 'bahala na' behavior] as resilience. But at the same time, it's like, 'Are you sure you've processed [or healed from what] happened?'"

They also discussed that aside from Filipino and Western views on trauma, there is also an indigenous perspective, saying, "Like with the Māori culture, their one is more relating to the spiritual essence."

Historical or Colonial Trauma

When asked about Filipino and Western ways of discussing or processing historical or colonial trauma, Isla said, "With Filipinos, [when] it comes to historical or generational trauma, it's like a fact. This happened and you have to be strong. It's just how our how life is." They briefly shared their own experiences with loss and observed how religion and prayer were coping mechanisms, e.g. being told "just pray on it" and "pray for strength from God."

When asked why Filipinos tend to avoid discussing trauma, they replied, "It's feelings of shame that it's happened, that

traumatic events happen, and talking about it... I think it's that stigma of opening up about these traumatic events. Talking about it kind of opens the wound. It's probably coming from the core belief [that] it's a sign of weakness, whereas, in actual fact, [...] in order to process and heal from it, you need to open the wound and actually talk about it."

On the other hand, they observed that there are some Western cultures that are very open about talking about the past while others are more closed off. "They're still processing it, or maybe they don't have the acknowledgement [or the] awareness that these events happened but it's actually a traumatic event."

When asked about how to avoid retraumatization, they said, "To be honest, it's hard to tell whether you're going to be retraumatizing a person, in general."

When it comes to avoiding retraumatization with Filipinos, they said, "If they bring up something that's traumatic, for me, it's like, 'Okay, cool.' They've opened up the window and they've invited you, but I'm not going to keep asking. I'm not going to drill and ask questions. [Or if I will ask, it will] be an open-ended question like, 'How did that make you feel?'"

They explained that they use a motivational interviewing approach "where it's patient- or client-led. It's more of them talking, rather than me asking a lot of questions and talking."

They admitted that conducting patient- or client-led sessions was tiring, saying, "It's actively listening to what they're saying. You have to formulate in your head, 'What do they mean about this?' You have to look at their non-verbal cues, also the way that they're talking. How it probably would have shown in their body language, their voice."

They also explained how silence could be good in these sessions. "It might be uncomfortable for a lot of people, but that's actually because we're wired to talk [...] whereas silence gives that space for everyone to just be present, to regulate and process what's being talked about. I'd probably just think of ways to just guide them, and alongside that, ask some questions that are quite open-ended, like, 'How did that make you feel?' I [also ask for consent, like], 'I'm going to ask you something, but you don't have to answer right now.' [...] You'll see signs when [...] we need to stop talking about this traumatic event. [Going back to] quietness, that space gives the opportunity to just ground in your nervous system. [It gives] that person a way to take a deep breath."

When asked about what the client gains from engaging with these topics, Isla said, "It's the opportunity to process it rather than suppressing the impact of the traumatic events. Yes, there's a risk of retraumatizing, and that's why you really have to make sure that you're in a safe space." In terms of safe space, they explained how important it was to make sure that the person isn't exposed to the event or environment that traumatized them, and to see if "they have any current support in place." "And eventually, [...] they can start that healing journey. [They can] look at ways to learn coping skills from that."

When asked about the best way for individuals to process historical or colonial trauma by themselves, they said, "I think it all comes down to self-awareness and reflection. Of course, seek a professional but one of the things that you do learn in [therapeutic practices] is reflecting on what's happened, reflecting on [how it impacted you]. Outside of that space, it's so important to keep reflecting on it, and reflection in terms of being curious [and] acknowledging that... Yes, it's happened, but what does this mean in my body? [For example,] this person said something to me, and that just really frustrated me. Why? What was that telling me? So, increasing that self-awareness, whether it be [through] different modes of reflection [like] journaling, maybe talking to a trusted or loved one to reflect on that. [They could also] approach it in a more creative way, maybe through art, music. It's based on the person's interest, I would say."

When asked about the best way to broach these discussions, Isla said, "It's so tricky when it comes to historical trauma, because everyone's got different opinions and perspectives."

"First of all, seek people that are going to be in the same wavelength as you [or have a] similar perspective. If not, then at least people that are open to any opinions or perspectives. That's the important thing." They explained that talking to a loved one or a trusted individual doesn't necessarily mean that they would be safe to talk to about historical trauma. "Yeah, it's someone that you trust, but they might have a different way of thinking about what's happened. So, it's really just gauging [and figuring out if they see] historical trauma the same way you do."

They also mentioned how important it was to be clear about one's intentions when sharing these experiences, e.g. "Is it to be validated, to be heard? Or do I just want to vent and I don't care about what the other person says?"

When asked about what a beneficial outcome may look like, Isla replied, "I think feeling that validation [and] support." They explained how trauma may be associated with feelings of shame and fear of judgment, so a beneficial outcome would be to have a space where one doesn't feel judged and one can openly discuss these topics. They added more about what this space or group dynamic may look like, saying, "It's that consistent, ongoing support that [one] can join whenever [they] want. There's no pressure [...] to talk. They can just listen."

It's also understanding that everyone has experienced some form of traumatic event, and their responses to it can be different. "It's acknowledging that everyone has a different way of responding, a different way of wanting to cope, or looking for support as well. [...] Everyone's on their own healing journey."

Furthermore, they mentioned how trust and confidentiality are important in these spaces. "[There has to be trust that] this is going to be confidential."

Discussing Death-related Grief and Trauma

When asked about Filipino and Western views on death-related grief or trauma, Isla shared how non-Filipinos found it strange whenever they shared their death-related beliefs, e.g. saying that deceased loved ones visit as a bird, babies looking blankly at something because they can see deceased loved ones.

"They're like, 'Oh, my gosh. That's weird. Why do you believe that?' But for us, it's like finding ways to still have that connection with our loved one [even after they have passed]. It's our way of dealing with the grief."

Another difference was Halloween and All Souls' Day. They explained how growing up in the Philippines, they would go to cemeteries to celebrate the lives of those who passed instead of doing trick-or-treating. Meanwhile, they observed how their European peers don't visit the cemetery as often. We discussed the similarities between Dia de los Muertos in Mexico with All Souls' Day in the Philippines, and how they were treated as picnics or parties.

They also observed a more religious or spiritual perspective when it comes to death among Filipinos. "We're really spiritual in a sense of having that connection with our loved ones [despite] death and dying. No matter what [the] religion you have, we have similarities in terms of [honoring] that spiritual essence of the loved one that's passed away. [...] I think with the western counterparts, [they] do the funeral [...] but there's no consistency of honoring [except on their] anniversary, or their birthday." However, they did say that it depends on a Western individual's spirituality, e.g. someone who is agnostic undergoes the funeral then moves on while someone who is more spiritual will share a similar way of thinking about death with Filipinos. "Not to be biased, but I find [spirituality] does help when it comes to processing grief."

They also shared an experience with a New Zealand-European grief therapist who recommended that "as part of the grief process, treasure those [items] that remind you of your loved one that's passed away." These items could be jewelry, clothing, or, in Isla's case, a perfume. "For me, it's like a comfort item to honor them. It feels like they're still around."

This led to a conversation about how our relatives have altars with images of saints (e.g. a small Santo Niño) alongside the deceased loved ones and the cherished items they've kept. Sometimes, Isla's relatives would leave small offerings on the altar.

Isla also shared how, for their wedding, they had an honor table with photos of deceased loved ones. "I want them to be a part of it."

Isla believed that processing death-related grief and trauma "depends on the spiritual well-being of that person." "[With Filipinos], our spiritual well being is quite high because we have been brought up with our faith and superstitious beliefs. It's become an ingrained part of our being. It's what we've

been taught by our parents, our grandparents. [...] I would say it's the same [to our] Western counterparts [whose] spiritual well-being is even more pronounced, or that's one of their values.

"But I think it really depends on death-related trauma [or] what the traumatic event is, because there's big T trauma and there's small T trauma. [If] it's an event that still really triggers you when you try to think about it... it's probably harder to process [that] death-related trauma."

They shared their own experiences with death-related grief and how, because of the nature of the event, it was more significant for them to honor their deceased loved one because a lot of "what-ifs" and "I should have done this" happened. "Things that were really, really out of our control... It's probably harder to process that because a lot of those 'what-ifs' will come out. It's really processing what you could have had control of [and] what you couldn't control [during that moment]."

Trauma-Informed Care Principles

On the given trauma-informed care principles definition, Isla said, "To an extent, I do agree it is bigger, wider [in scope], it's not just the responsibility of the person, but it's everyone's responsibility. Because in the first place, how did that traumatic event happen? It happened because of the environment. It's because of the system."

They also explained that to be trauma-informed is about "being human," saying, "It's really addressing the nervous system of that person. [We] see trauma and behaviors in terms of [being] a response from an event that's happened. Trauma is not because of that person." They explained this concept further by sharing about Gabor Maté, a physician with a "compassionate approach" to trauma. "He said [that] people who have gone through trauma are labeled and seen as abnormal because some people [...] use unhealthy behaviors like addiction and things like that [to deal with their trauma]. Society then labels them as the problem [when] in actual fact, they're not the problem. What they're going through are normal responses. [It's] the trauma response, [...] the nervous system's response to an event that is actually abnormal. It's the event, it's the things that happen that are the problem rather than the response or the person."

With that said, Isla agreed that to be trauma-informed, one needs to look at the environment and the systems at play. It's about asking questions such as, "What can we do so that we can prevent those things that have traumatized people? What can we do differently as a society?"

When asked about how to apply these principles, Isla explained first that they work with Filipino families, and a lot of their clients deal with shame and guilt. Instead of going by a "tick box" to make sure that their practice is trauma-informed, they focus on making sure that the space is comfortable for the client. To them, this means coming to their home to do the work.

Isla also explained how important it was for them to not be perceived as the only 'professional' in the room. "I think it's common in Asian culture, especially Filipinos, where we see professionals like doctors or therapists or counselors, that they have the answers. They're the expert. But I tell [my clients] in the beginning, 'I'm here to support you. I'm here to get to know you. You're the expert of your [family], and I am the expert in what I do and what I know, but we're here to work together.'"

Isla followed a narrative approach to their work, e.g. hearing stories, kwentuhan (transl. sharing stories), building connections, etc. They found this approach an interesting contrast to Western models where they were asked not to disclose personal information about themselves. "But how do we connect with Filipino families? It's through finding the similarities [to build] that connection."

They believe that to be trauma-informed is "[to be] alongside them in that journey," and to do so, they recommended having compassion and patience. "You're not going to get answers or have them open up [to you overnight]."

Brave Spaces

Isla liked the concept of brave spaces but emphasized how important it was to be safe as well. "How does the 'challenge' look like? How is it delivered? That's the thing. [...] Challenge is good [but] there's this 'challenge' in a way of acknowledging and validating you, but there's also 'challenge' where people challenge you but in a quite undermining way."

They responded that brave spaces may be helpful when discussing trauma in a group setting but with a few caveats such as conducting the space with like-minded people, being clear about the intentions, expectations, and rules of the space, as well as making sure that everyone is on the same page.

When determining the rules of the spaces, they suggested that it should be done as a "shared collective" while being personalized to each group or space. There should be rules around privacy, confidentiality, and safety, which they recommend reviewing after every six months. "How can we make sure that the person is safe after this, in terms of retraumatizing? And how can we make sure that, as a collective, we are actually supporting each other and helping each other?"

They emphasized how important it was to have respect within the space as well. "Respect that everyone is in a different circumstance [or] situation, [and that everyone has a] different way of processing historical traumas. Respect each and everyone's differences in the way of thinking about their perspectives, and respect also that privacy and confidentiality."

For starting a brave space, they recommended personally inviting people who are "on the same journey of healing" or "have experienced the same trauma but are open to those

kinds of spaces.” They also said that marketing the brave space (while making sure that it remains safe and confidential) depends on the group’s scale or audience. For a university, for example, marketing could look like posting up flyers. Marketing, in general, could also be done through social media and word of mouth. However, they recommended starting small.

They also recommended having a network of healthcare professionals, information on where to seek help during a mental health crisis, as well as a disclaimer that one should still seek a mental health professional. “[The] brave space [is] just part of your healing journey.”

Living Contracts

Isla agreed with the given definition for living contracts, saying, “It’s an agreement. It’s about making sure that [...] you’re maintaining [the other person’s] sense of autonomy and that mutual respect as well.”

They associated living contracts with informed consent in their practice. The informed consent takes place before the assessment or intervention with their clients, and consists of going through their values at work, making sure that the session is done in a private, safe and confidential environment especially if it goes on electronic communication, listing down emergency contacts, and explaining that the only time that the practitioner will have to breach this agreement is if there is any kind of safety risk towards the client or other people, or if they find that their service is out of scope and other services might be of help. “But I’m always going to have that conversation with you. I’m not going to make that decision. I’m going to let you know, like, ‘Look, I think you might need a referral to another person or another service,’ but that’s a conversation.”

They believed that living contracts would help when discussing trauma in a group setting (such as within brave spaces), saying that it could be part of the rules. They also recommended checking in with the participants by asking questions such as, “Are you still happy with this living contract?” or “How are you finding this brave space?” or “Is this still beneficial for you?” or “Do you want to explore other places or spaces?” This is to ensure that the participants don’t feel pressured to participate in these spaces.

In terms of check-in frequency, they based it on their professional work, explaining how they do both informal and formal check-ins. Informal check-ins could simply be asking someone how they are doing on a weekly basis, while formal check-ins would be reviewing the groups’ progress after three or six months.

Interview 5: Andrea

Traumatic Concepts and Events

Andrea believed it was important to think about levels of acculturation when having discussions about traumatic concepts and events. “Because whilst I’m Filipino, the level of acculturation for me is that I was born and raised in predominant Western society, but my parents very much would have their “Filipino-ness” mostly intact or preserved.” They explained that the way they would discuss colonial trauma would be different from the way their parents would discuss it.

Andrea also mentioned how important it was for someone to feel safe enough to speak about colonial trauma. “For me, it’s been, ‘Is this person trustworthy and able to have a conversation without becoming defensive?’ Then I think actually, that regardless of ancestry or cultural background, if someone is not open to or open-minded to talk about trauma or the past, then it’s difficult to talk about these things.” By this, they meant that there were some Filipinos that they wouldn’t feel comfortable to discuss such topics with.

“I think that some of that would come down to positionality, but I don’t think people are aware of that, or maybe conscious of those things. I think that there are certain privileges... Or maybe it’s not a privilege, but there’s history that’s been so whitewashed where every individual is coming from in terms of their understanding or their openness, or their ability to think critically. I think all of those factors come into play [when discussing traumatic concepts and events].”

Historical or Colonial Trauma

Andrea observed that among their older Filipino relatives, there wasn’t a lot of interest in discussing historical and colonial trauma. “I think there’s a lot of not wanting to dwell on the past, or sort of perceiving it as dwelling on the past. I think that’s also born out of trauma. [...] I think of relational trauma as a result of colonial trauma makes it really difficult to have nuanced conversations. [...] I don’t think there’s a lot of space to think differently or to question or challenge an idea. So, I think our ability to have these nuanced conversations about colonial trauma within my Filipino family is really difficult and near impossible.”

They shared that they had an easier time speaking about these topics with Pākehā because “they’re not the subject.” They admitted that it might be because of the Pākehā circles that they were a part of and having “enough access to education for people to want to do better or want to be open or want to think [about these things].” “Because they’re not the subject matter, I think, there’s less defensiveness there, but more of the opportunity to learn or hear.”

They explained how different it was growing up in a Filipino family where “as children, we weren’t talked with. We were spoken to. Because there hasn’t been safety nurtured in

terms of having a robust discussion, [it is really difficult] to have these sorts of conversations."

As Andrea spoke about their family, I observed how for their Filipino family, the trauma was very much present, while among their Pākehā friends, there was a layer of separation.

On avoiding retraumatization when discussing historical or colonial trauma, they said, "This is really tricky, because I'm not sure it's something that can be entirely eliminated."

To them, instead of avoidance, it was more important to clarify people's expectations as well as having clear boundaries, communication, and ways to take care of each other. "There is some scaffolding work to be done. How might I communicate if I need to pause, or I need to take five, or I need to walk out of the room?"

It was also about being respectful and "considerate of pace." "Something might be really useful to talk about doesn't mean that it's the right time."

They also mentioned it would be good to take time to clarify the intention of the session and "locate where we are," whether it is before, during or after the session. Using the example of the ocean, they said, "Where are we sitting? Are we sitting up on the sand dunes where we are being very contemplative and [observant]? Or are we right in it [in the ocean]? Are we feeling comfortable?" I remarked how the imagery of the ocean (to determine where their client is in their journey) reminded me about roleplaying.

When asked about what one may gain from having these discussions, Andrea said, "[There's] an opportunity to reframe, or maybe adjust, where the feelings are directed, or where there might be blame that they have directed toward themselves [or towards] another person that's caused a breakdown in relationship or connection. I think when we're able to zoom out, so to speak, and consider many different storylines that influence the stories that sort of make up our lives... I think that the opportunity for people to be observant in their lives, and practice curiosity that has been made accessible through building trust and safety, allows people to maybe practice more of that in other facets of their lives."

For best practices, Andrea believed it may be a combination of both therapeutic practices and practices outside of it, saying, "The context of lives these days are so filled, so busy, that I don't think there is enough time or space or energy necessary for people to take care of one another in these types of conversations. [But also] I think we're asking people to manage a lot on their own. So, I guess it might be a bit of a dance between the two."

When talking about supporting an individual's journey to process historical or colonial trauma, they recommended a person-centered approach where one considers the "motivation for the journey" and their resources or support for research.

For a group-setting, they reiterated the importance of managing people's expectations. It was also good to be

aware of "what we're learning, where the learning is coming from, and positioning oneself as a learner."

For Andrea, they encouraged proactive learning and research whether the journey was to be done individually or collectively. In their practice, they explained how they and their clients "have this ability to regularly debrief and build up some of the language, and build up some of the confidence in being a researcher, being curious, being an observer to life." Although they admitted about how they struggled bringing this ability to a community space, saying, "'Oh, we don't have enough time together to cover all these things.' I have to, you know, calm myself that not everything can be done at once. Sometimes things are worthwhile, even though they're shorter versions of what we would like."

When asked about best practices when broaching discussions about historical or colonial trauma, they responded, "I think creativity. I think we need more storytelling."

Andrea explained that a beneficial outcome is for an individual to determine. Instead, they shared their hopes, and to them, a beneficial outcome would be, at its core, "reducing isolation and healing relational trauma." "[A beneficial outcome for me] would be that people were brought together, and not in a way that asserts that we must be the same, but in a way that celebrates our differences. [We are] brought together in a way that we can accept what's within ourselves, and sort of communicate with one another in a way that manages each other's expectations, so that... whilst we might not get all of our needs met, we might be able to negotiate [to] have an experience of mutual aid as a community or collective, where there's more trust and that there is an adequate amount of support between us, and to varying degrees, so that we're less defensive relationally."

To make this possible, they said that more third spaces are necessary where "we can come together and experience and witness and share life together." They said, "This might be very unpopular, but I do think it's less about Western psychology and one-to-one therapy and professionals, and more about a redistribution of wealth [to create spaces for] healing relational trauma."

They also reiterated how creativity is a great way to heal relational trauma. "I think creating together and being... This is probably one of the most binary things I will ever say, but I think there is good stress and bad stress. I think there are some stresses that are really useful for us, and sometimes that's around uncertainty and creating something and not knowing what it's going to be, and other people witnessing that process and being touched or influenced by what is created, [and to create] not for anyone's gain in particular."

Andrea didn't shy away from their counter-hegemonic views, saying, "I think that systems have to be broken. I mean, they are [already] broken. I think they need to be dismantled, or we should spend our energy building these third spaces."

Discussing Death-related Grief and Trauma

Andrea observed a level of stoicism among Pākehā in Aotearoa when it comes to death-related trauma or grief. "I think there's a stoicism, or a disconnect from land and self. I don't know, but I see that throughout the Western culture or dominant Pākehā culture here, that it's better to show no expression than to show a heightened expression of any sort that might make other people feel uncomfortable. [So] I think funerals and death are very sort of, I'm not saying that people don't feel the grief or the loss... I'm saying that the ability to express it is very different."

Compared to their Filipino family and community, they observed how they were able to express their emotions "and with magnitude. Whether that's sadness or joy and laughter and appreciation or guilt."

"In terms of death and dying, I think I would say the Western or the dominant Pākehā culture here is avoidant of grief, or that it's very uncomfortable to be sad in front of other people. Or, you know, if someone has a loved one that's passed away, here in New Zealand, there's often a rush of baked, home-cooked meals that might, let's say, be dropped off at a doorstep, whereas what I've experienced from my Filipino community is if someone has experienced loss, we'll sit there and we'll be there and we'll cook food, but we'll also sit and eat together."

They observed that this Western avoidance remained even after the funeral. "They don't really speak of the dead."

On the other hand, Andrea remained open speaking about their deceased loved ones. "It was natural for me to talk about [them]."

They said that processing death-related grief or trauma depended from one individual or community to another. "I've definitely had Filipino friends or people I've worked with where their families have just really wanted them to find silver linings [or] 'be positive.' I think when positivity becomes toxic, for me, it's almost always connected to some religion. I see that within Pākehā communities as well." They explained how this form of avoidance could "get in the way of processing grief." They also observed how the binary of being either happy or sad was "created by frameworks such as Christianity." Furthermore, they said that there is a stigma when a person is sad.

Trauma-Informed Care Principles

Andrea agreed with the provided definition for trauma-informed care principles but added, "I think it would benefit to, for its scope to be slightly widened, incorporate cultural sensitivity. Or [cultural] humility, or competency."

They said that trauma-informed care principles greatly impacted their practice and care philosophy with Filipino clients.

"Because, I think, from a cultural understanding considering collectivism and impacts of migration, just thinking about the context of where perhaps Filipino clients are coming from, if they're children of migrants, or if they're first generation... I think these are all layers that need to be considered.

Whether they have close familial bonds or whether they have defensively detached or disconnected, whether they have a sense of the Filipino identity and where they're at in that particular journey. I think there's a lot of relational trauma as a result of colonial trauma, and I think that an awareness of that is highly important, with the Filipino in particular."

In terms of application, they explained that they were trained in narrative therapy, so to them, "being trauma-informed or working towards being trauma-informed and having cultural sensitivity looks like being very transparent and being very mindful about language, [specifically] language and power and how that is experienced in a therapeutic relationship. Actively reducing power dynamics, where I'm maybe perceived as the expert in the room."

They also believed that a lot of psychotherapy is "zoomed in to childhood trauma." To them, narrative therapy is "able to offer a really zoomed-out perspective." "[It allows] space for a client to see their story within multiple stories, within wider stories, and I think what that means, and particularly for Filipinos, being collectivist people, is feeling less isolated and alone and singular or individual."

They also shared that a lot of their practice involved "being able to bring storytelling and resource-sharing into the room." "A lot of [it is just] sharing content, sharing education, sharing knowledge, [sharing] where to access alternative ways to consider things or think about things, and ways to see oneself. In a lot of ways, I see therapeutic work and group therapy to be very... maybe not too dissimilar to free colonial community living."

Brave Spaces and Living Contracts

They were hesitant to agree with the given definition for brave spaces. When asked if they had a different definition or explanation in mind, they recommended Bell Hooks' quotation which went, "I want there to be a place in the world where people can engage in one another's differences in a way that is redemptive, full of hope and possibility. Not this 'In order to love you, I must make you something else.' That's what domination is all about, that in order to be close to you, I must possess you, remake and recast you" (153).

Andrea expounded on this, saying, "If everyone can be as they are, and if we can talk about topics such as colonial trauma... [If we] are able to experience conversation about problems [and] seeing problems as the problem. I think that allows for it to be a brave space. I think it's counterproductive or counterintuitive or anti-human to want someone to come to where I am, and to see things as I see them, in order for them to be accepted."

For Andrea, brave spaces are necessary when discussing trauma because “within it, we’re accepting that nothing can be perfect. [...] We’re making space for the uncertainty. [...] A brave space doesn’t promise that it’s going to be easy.”

They also believed that having brave spaces would allow the participants to become skillful at what may be considered ‘facilitation,’ “but I think it’s really about respectfully relating to one another.”

When asked about how to develop this skill, they shared the proverb, “If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go together, go slow.” They explained, “I’ve not ever been able to shake my want for us to go together. I recognize that that can’t always be on [...] my timeline, or to my expectation. Taking care of others, and taking care of me looks like a continued negotiation, a continued checking-in and clarifying... A continued commitment to continue the conversation.”

When asked about best practices to create or facilitate brave spaces, they recommended having a clear collective agreement. “If we get a sense that there are any individuals that are unable to continue the conversation, or do not want to continue the conversation, or have had a conversation that’s opened up many more questions and it needs to be slowed down. [It’s helpful to create] a collective agreement that we can slow down, or that we will go at the pace of everyone’s needs, and so there is [also] a responsibility for individuals to communicate their individual needs.”

They also mused about having spaces or discussions of permission-giving, saying, “Maybe it’s trauma, or maybe it’s part of Filipino culture to want to do the best by everyone, and maybe things that you know we’ve been socialized to.” They explained how as the eldest child of the family, they were taught to prioritize everyone else’s care above their own.

“We might need to give permission to each other to do things differently. I think that’s what [...] having a collective agreement or understanding [is for]. I think it’s really important that people are aware that they can come back and change what they said, that there’s space for that. That nothing’s fixed or permanent in the way that maybe Western spaces [function, where it’s just] start and stop. If people don’t want to share anything, they don’t have to share anything. I think there’s a lot of negotiating permission, [and] maybe unpacking what respect looks like.”

This concept of a fluid collective agreement led to the discussion on living contracts. To them, they associated living contracts with Filipino spirituality and concepts such as ‘kapwa,’ but also with their understanding of te ao Māori.

They agreed that living contracts or collective agreements are helpful when discussing trauma in a group setting.

“The idea of a collective agreement really is based on real living relationships, because if not, then it’s just a piece of paper. What other use is that piece of paper, unless you are wanting to yield it as some authority with, you know... I’m sort

of thinking of colonial ways that contracts or agreements are used.”

They mused on how their professional experience led them to contracts that centered around their safety but also the “safety of the Crown, or the safety of the organization.”

“It’s an interesting thing to consider what codes of ethics and lenses that [these contracts] have been created through: for who, for what, and for what reasons. And [how] those things are at odds with worldviews, cultural perspectives or values. [...] There are indigenous ways of being caretakers, and stewards, and future-generation-minded.”

I observed how a living contract makes sense when thinking about the future since the future changes and people change alongside it. To this, Andrea remarked that they have grown weary of the word, ‘tradition.’ Using their experience growing up as an example, they explained how they were taught a set of rules and traditions that they weren’t allowed to question, which to them, felt similarly to Western contracts. “What a shame that in a lot of ways, and for the sake of tradition, what was lost was connection. [Because] in order to hold on to tradition, you have to exert some sort of power over [someone]. There has to be this power dimension in order to maintain it [and] it’s so closely linked to punishment.”

When asked about best practices to create and maintain living contracts when discussing historical or colonial trauma, Andrea responded that it was important to not always be discussing colonial trauma.

“There’s a therapeutic modality, or approach, called Internal Family Systems, and it’s more commonly known as parts. I love that it asserts that as people, we are made up of many parts, and our lives are made up of many parts. I also like the Dual Process Model of Grief. I think that’s a really beautiful model to consider. It sort of talks about us oscillating between, as opposed to maybe older theories of grief, like the Five Stages... The Dual Process Model of Grief holds that we’ll have moments of great disappointment and loss and anguish and sadness [but we’ll also] have times through grief where we are actively building, restoring, practicing the life that we will want to have or are working towards, and that might look like having a break from the grief but they aren’t opposites of a spectrum. They co-exist as an experience in life and living. I think that can be a really beautiful thing for us to consider about unpacking colonial trauma. We’re effectively processing grief, and when we’re in it, the state that we’re in may be quite overwhelming or triggering [...] as well as being able to oscillate out of that space and be eating together, and be making art together, and be [...] laughing, or having humor, and doing things that that are very meaningful to us. So, it’s not one or the other, [it’s] continual.”

They continued on how there was often a binary way of seeing things and how it has influenced how we perceive expressed emotions. “If I’m sad, then somehow I’m wrong, or I’m bad or I’m lazy. [Thinking that,] ‘There could be something I could be doing with my time that’s more productive,’ rather than seeing it as an honoring, as a process, as necessary, as a reflection of what has been of great value to us, or what

makes our lives rich and meaningful. To experience loss and grief is an honoring of that and tells a wider story. It may become less of something to be afraid of and avoidant of, but rather something that we practice some acceptance around. Because I think it's when we are experiencing more of an ease to oscillate between those two things [like] despair and sadness, and then also being restorative and rebuilding... I think the more we can move with ease between those spaces, the less distress we may overall experience. It requires a lot of permission-giving and a lot of resources and support."

APPENDIX C

Study C: Playtest

Low-Risk Approval Questionnaire



Massey University

Te Kuenga ki Pūrehuroa

SCREENING QUESTIONNAIRE TO DETERMINE THE APPROVAL PROCEDURE

(Part A and Part B of this questionnaire must both be completed)

Name: Ar-Em Bañas

Project Title: On the Bones of BATALA: Exploring Philippine Historical Distortions and Trauma through Tabletop Role-Playing Games

This questionnaire should be completed following, or as part of, the discussion of ethical issues.

Part A

The statements below are being used to determine the risk of your project causing physical or psychological harm to participants and whether the nature of the harm is minimal and no more than is normally encountered in daily life. The degree of risk will then be used to determine the appropriate approval procedure.

If you are in any doubt, you are encouraged to submit an application to one of the University's ethics committees.

Does your Project involve any of the following?

(Please answer all questions. Please circle either YES or NO for each question)

Risk of Harm

1. Situations in which the researcher may be at risk of harm.	YES <input type="radio"/> NO <input checked="" type="radio"/>
2. Use of questionnaire or interview, whether or not it is anonymous, which might reasonably be expected to cause discomfort, embarrassment, or psychological or spiritual harm to the participants.	YES <input type="radio"/> NO <input checked="" type="radio"/>
3. Processes that are potentially disadvantageous to a person or group, such as the collection of information which may expose the person/group to discrimination.	YES <input type="radio"/> NO <input checked="" type="radio"/>
4. Collection of information of illegal behaviour(s) gained during the research which could place the participants at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to their financial standing, employability, professional or personal relationships.	YES <input type="radio"/> NO <input checked="" type="radio"/>
5. Collection of blood, body fluid, tissue samples or other samples.	YES <input type="radio"/> NO <input checked="" type="radio"/>
6. Any form of exercise regime, physical examination, deprivation (e.g. sleep, dietary).	YES <input type="radio"/> NO <input checked="" type="radio"/>
7. The administration of any form of drug, medicine (other than in the course of standard medical procedure), placebo.	YES <input type="radio"/> NO <input checked="" type="radio"/>
8. Physical pain, beyond mild discomfort.	YES <input type="radio"/> NO <input checked="" type="radio"/>
9. Any Massey University teaching which involves the participation of Massey University students for the demonstration of procedures or phenomena which have a potential for harm.	YES <input type="radio"/> NO <input checked="" type="radio"/>

Informed and Voluntary Consent

10. Participants whose identity is known to the researcher giving oral consent rather than written consent (if participants are <u>anonymous</u> , you may answer No).	YES <input type="radio"/> NO <input checked="" type="radio"/>
11. Participants who are unable to give informed consent.	YES <input type="radio"/> NO <input checked="" type="radio"/>
12. Research on your own students/pupils.	YES <input type="radio"/> NO <input checked="" type="radio"/>
13. The participation of children (seven (7) years old or younger).	YES <input type="radio"/> NO <input checked="" type="radio"/>
14. The participation of children under sixteen (16) years old where parental consent is not being sought.	YES <input type="radio"/> NO <input checked="" type="radio"/>
15. Participants who are in a dependent situation, such as people with a disability or residents of a hospital, nursing home or prison or patients highly dependent on medical care.	YES <input type="radio"/> NO <input checked="" type="radio"/>
16. Participants who are vulnerable.	YES <input type="radio"/> NO <input checked="" type="radio"/>
17. The use of previously collected information or biological samples for which there was no explicit consent for this research.	YES <input type="radio"/> NO <input checked="" type="radio"/>

Privacy/Confidentiality Issue

18. Any evaluation of Massey University services or organisational practices where information of a personal nature may be collected and where participants may be identified.	YES <input type="radio"/> NO <input checked="" type="radio"/>
--	---

Deception

19. Deception of the participants, including concealment and covert observations.	YES <input type="radio"/> NO <input checked="" type="radio"/>
---	---

Conflict of Interest

20. Conflict of interest situation for the researcher (e.g. is the researcher also the lecturer/teacher/treatment-provider/colleague or employer of the research participants or is there any other power relationship between the researcher and the research participants?).	YES <input type="radio"/> NO <input checked="" type="radio"/>
--	---

Compensation to Participants

21. Payments or other financial inducements (other than reasonable reimbursement of travel expenses or time) to participants.	YES <input type="radio"/> NO <input checked="" type="radio"/>
---	---

Procedural

22. A requirement by an outside organisation (e.g. a funding organisation or a journal in which you wish to publish) for Massey University Human Ethics Committee approval.	YES <input type="radio"/> NO <input checked="" type="radio"/>
---	---

Part B

The statements below are being used to determine if your project requires ethical approval by a Regional Health and Disability Ethics Committee. The statements are derived from the document, "Guidelines for an Accredited Institutional Ethics Committee to Refer Studies to an Accredited Health and Disability Ethics Committee", prepared by the Health Research Council Ethics Committee.

(<http://www.hrc.govt.nz/assets/pdfs/policy/ReferralGuidelines.pdf>)

In situations where you are not sure whether the research needs approval by an HDEC, you should seek an opinion from the Administrator of the relevant HDEC.

(<http://www.newhealth.govt.nz/ethicscommittees/>)

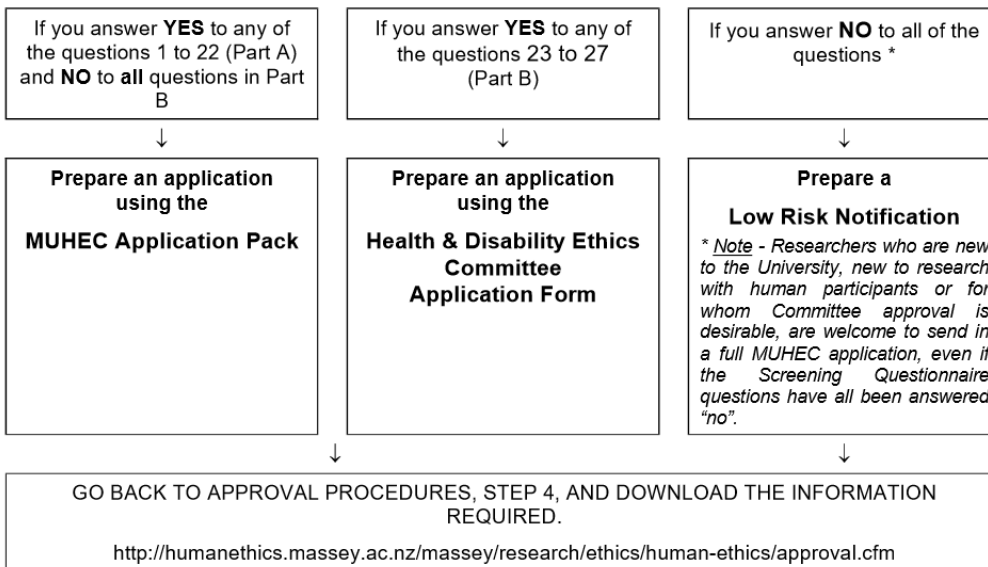
Include a copy of your written response from the Administrator with your application.

Does your Project involve any of the following?

(It is important that you answer all questions. Please circle either YES or NO for each question)

23. The use of staff or facilities of a District Health Board.	YES <input type="radio"/> NO <input checked="" type="radio"/>
24. Support, directly or indirectly, in full or in part, by District Health Board funds.	YES <input type="radio"/> NO <input checked="" type="radio"/>
25. Participants who are patients/clients of, or health information about an identifiable individual held by, an organisation providing health services (for example, general practice, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, sports medicine), disability services or institutionalised care.	YES <input type="radio"/> NO <input checked="" type="radio"/>
26. Requirement for ethical approval to access health or disability information about an identifiable individual held by the Ministry of Health, or held by any public or private organisation whether or not that organisation is related to health.	YES <input type="radio"/> NO <input checked="" type="radio"/>
27. A clinical trial which: requires the approval of the Standing Committee on Therapeutic Trials; requires the approval of the Gene Technology Advisory Committee; is sponsored by and/or for the benefit of the manufacturer or supplier of a drug or device.	YES <input type="radio"/> NO <input checked="" type="radio"/>

Determine the type of approval procedure to be used (choose one option):




ON THE BONES OF BATALA

Five hundred years ago, the god-giants **BATALA** and the **KADAYUHAN** battled to the death to take over **SANDAIGDIGAN**.

BATALA has failed you, **Katauhan**, and now you have no choice but to survive on the flesh of your fallen god, toiling under the ever-watchful eye of the **KADAYUHAN** and **ITS** growing army of **Kawal**.

This statement is a lie.



THE VENTURE

You, **Katauhan**, hail from the Rotting Isles.

Once orphans of the calamity known as the **Arrival**, your ancestors built settlements upon the corpse of **BATALA** with the hope that you may one day escape the violence wreaked by the **KADAYUHAN** and **ITS** **Kawal**.

You are tasked by the **Datu** to create a map of the **Great Balete Tree** of **Lambana**, the bridge between the realms of **KALUPAAN**, the **Middleworld**, and **KALANGITAN**, the **Skyworld**. It was said that the surviving divinities fled there, finding refuge amongst the skies. Perhaps mankind could join them.

Now, it is up to you, **Katauhan**.

Seek answers and allies who could aid us in our plight. Find our path to liberation. Deliver us from **the Bones of BATALA**.

THE GAME

"On the Bones of **BATALA**" is a horror TTRPG inspired by the pre/colonial histories, cultures and folklore of the Tagalog region. It is currently in development for the Master of Design programme at Massey University, Aotearoa New Zealand.

The campaign may take between **4-6 sessions, including Session Zero** (for **Katauhan** Creation and discussion of safety tools). The **Session Zero** will be held this **April 13 (Sunday) at 3pm GMT+8**. **@LFG Player 3-5 Playtesters!**

For a **list of trigger warnings**, please scroll to the end of this document:
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/11eHMdirshCrQUZ71FYjoshLS3TpPyFhK2HVsmVaw9m4/edit?tab=t.0#heading=h.ahpaznn70eqa>

NOTE: The feedback provided pre-/post-sessions will be documented (live note-taking), anonymized, analyzed, and included in the game development workbook and/or research component of the exegesis/thesis. You can withdraw anytime before the session. (edited)




Figure 59. Study C call-for-playtesters.

Participant Information and Consent Form

Who is conducting the playtest?

Ar-Em Bañas is a Master of Design (MDES) student at Te Kunenga ki Pūrehuroa Massey University in Wellington, Aotearoa New Zealand.

What is the playtest for?

Playtesting the current mechanics and getting feedback on the overall play experience are vital for the development of "On the Bones of BATALA" and its research component in the MDES exegesis/thesis.

Who can participate in the playtest?

Filipino players are given priority but everyone is welcome to participate in the playtest. However, because of the potentially sensitive topics, participants must be at least 18 years old to join.

Will I be paid if I participate?

No, you will not be paid for participating in the playtest.

What will happen to the information I have provided for the playtest?

The feedback provided during will be documented (live note-taking), anonymized, analyzed, and included in the game development workbook and/or the exegesis/thesis. The documentation will be deleted after two years or after I graduate, whichever comes first.

While participants may opt out anytime prior the scheduled Session Zero and/or Campaign, it will be impossible to withdraw what has been done or said during the session itself since it will be incorporated with the input of other participants.

Can I access the results of the playtest?

Yes, the completed exegesis will be available through Te Kunenga ki Pūrehuroa Massey University. You may have a link or a digital copy of the exegesis upon request.

Do I have to participate?

No, you do not have to participate if you would not like to. You may also withdraw anytime prior the scheduled Session Zero and/or Campaign Sessions.

Who can I contact for questions or concerns I have about the study?

For questions or concerns, please email Ar-Em Bañas at arembanas@gmail.com.

Do you consent to participate in the playtest session/s?

Yes

No

Do you consent to the playtest being documented?

NOTE: The documentation will be live note-taking. It will only be for the game development workbook and/or research component of the exegesis/thesis project. It will not be uploaded anywhere else.

Yes

No

Do you consent to providing feedback during/after the playtest?

Yes

No

Playtest Schedule

For campaign playtests, I chose to run a Session Zero, a pre-campaign session, to explain the participant information, confirm consent, negotiate safety tools, and walk playtesters through Katauhan Creation.

Session Zero

- Introductions or Catch-Up
- Discussion of Safety Tools
- Character Creation (Katauhan Creation)

Session 1 Onwards

- Catch-Up
- Brief Review of Safety Tools
- Pre-Session Reflection (for Session 2 onwards)
- Role-playing Start
- Check-In
- Post-Session Reflection

Playtester Information

Table 19. Study C playtester information.

No. of Playtesters	Location (based in the Philippines)
6	Metro Manila
2	Metro Manila and CALABARZON
1	Metro Manila and Central Luzon
1	Central Luzon
1	Northern Mindanao

Katauhan Creation Playtest

Pre-Katauhan Creation

Prior to Katauhan Creation, I asked playtesters which type of TTRPG they expect *OTBOB* to be based on the pitches provided. This was to test the marketing to make sure that I was reaching my target audience.

- Eleven playtesters expected *OTBOB* to be mystery-solving.
- Nine playtesters expected *OTBOB* to be roleplay-heavy.
- Zero playtesters expected *OTBOB* to be tactical combat.

Below are their additional observations:

- Three playtesters described *OTBOB* as grimdark
- Three playtesters compared the setting to *Elden Ring* or other Soulslike games (Scherff 21; *ELDEN RING*)
- Two playtesters brought up the “colonization as the apocalypse” metaphor

One playtester observed, “[Regarding the first pitch], there's already a sort of loss that happened with the people. There is a whole calamity that created orphans. There is loss within the culture, or the culture [itself] is built on loss. [But regarding the second pitch], there is a lot of rebuilding. We're trying to take back what was ours (what was taken from the first pitch). There's a call-to-action so there's still hope despite the calamity.”

Post-Katauhan Creation

After the Katauhan Creation, five players remarked that even when rolling randomly, the Katauhan they created felt appropriate in the *OTBOB* setting. They also found it helpful for several reasons: the prompts give players a “jumping-off point” when creating their Katauhan; it expands on the worldbuilding during the creation itself; it also explains why their Katauhan are venturing out of their comfort zones. One playtester said, “It felt like I was slowly uncovering who my [Katauhan] is for the game.”

Two playtesters also pointed out how the Katauhan Creation worked as an equalizer especially when rolling for choices, e.g. while it's possible for a player to roll for the wealthiest Settlement, it's equally possible that they roll for the poorest Social Class. One playtester shared, “I like how you can't avoid [the violent] setting through the Scars and Loss. Even if

you're on top, like being from Kadatuan or having Maginoo social class, your life is not good.”

Three players liked that there were handouts (Secrets and Histories Manuscripts). One of them observed that by giving a Katauhan a starting Secret and History, they are given a unique “life path” or starting point, which makes the process more interesting for them.

However, six playtesters wondered about the mechanics and how much of Katauhan Creation would affect play. Two of them emphasized how important it is to explain how *OTBOB* is played for players who are new to the grimdark and precolonial setting, or even to TTRPGs as a whole. Some of their suggestions include a complete overview of rules and mechanics; having a list of precedents as benchmarks in the introduction to give players more context on what to expect during play; an explanation of TTRPG lingo (e.g. Safety Tools) as well as a brief rationale why it's an important aspect of *OTBOB* and TTRPGs in general.

Additionally, four playtesters were curious about the lore and worldbuilding of *OTBOB* even before starting the Katauhan Creation. Two of them were curious about how *OTBOB* plays, e.g. if it would be “a historical exploration of the setting or if it would be more like an Indiana Jones type of adventure where the Katauhan learn the history of the world through relics and people”; the other two were more interested about how the Rotting Isles and Settlements would look illustrated.

Moreover, during the Katauhan Creation, I found myself sharing some illustrations during the Katauhan Creation to help provide more context.

- I showed the Rotting Isles map during two playtests
- I showed the KADAYUHAN during one playtest

Lambana Campaign Playtest

Playtest Group 1

Has two players.

Session 1

Stars

Worldbuilding and Play Experience

Both playtesters liked the worldbuilding and setting of *OTBOB*. One playtester (experienced TTRPG GM and player) specified enjoying the readability of the setting and mechanics. The other (new TTRPG player) said, "It felt like I was living through a fantasy novel [and] I was just going back to when I was a kid and when we told stories to each other, which is such a comfort memory." Furthermore, they said *OTBOB* was easy to grasp for new roleplayers. "It's such a small world that it's easy to hold in my head [as a beginner]. Everything makes sense about the setting."

Both playtesters were very involved with the story, either by leaning into the roleplay or sharing their insights on the world or setting. One of the playtesters also liked how, even though they described themselves as a more 'practical role-player,' they were able to weave in their character decisions into the narrative.

One playtester (who was playing as an Alipin) mentioned that they liked how they were able to move out of their Social Class when exploring the Lambana scenario (unlike when they had to act according to their Social Class within the Kadatuan settlement).

GM as Kamatayan Mechanic

One playtester liked the GM as Kamatayan mechanic and developed a strong attachment to Kamatayan because of their Scar from Katauhan Creation.

Catharsis in the Horrific and Traumatic

Both playtesters mused on the violence within the setting. Post-session, one of them wondered, "What kind of life do we wish to give [our fellow Katauhan] if KALANGITAN is gone, BATALA died, and the KADAYUHAN are sadistic?" They also connected the struggle in the setting and narrative with their Katauhan's own struggles. E.g. they observed how the Sacrifice NPC tried not to scream when he was being flayed but eventually gave in and began screaming. Their Katauhan felt envious that the Sacrifice got a chance to scream because as an Alipin, they are forced to stay silent. "Who deserves what? Silence vs. screams? [I think these are themes that we will explore through our journey to KALANGITAN. I wonder,] at what point do we choose a different ending? At what point do we start to change the

game? At what point do we scream?" They liked how they felt the sense of survival through the gameplay, e.g. the Sacrifice which was based on the Katauhan's Prologue Leaf.

One playtester liked how *OTBOB* "repositioned the world as a body."

Conversations about Real-Life Issues

One of the playtesters enjoyed how *OTBOB* featured concepts of class [stratification and struggle] and colonization, e.g. "I like the depiction of the KADAYUHAN because [it reflects] the powerlessness I feel about world events. When traveling, I realized that [other countries] don't care about the Philippines. At best, we're amusing. At worst, we're insignificant." They also made the observation on revolution from money vs. revolution from the people based on their Katauhan's Social Classes (Timawa and Alipin).

Wishes

Worldbuilding and Play Experience

Both playtesters wanted to see more of the Tagalog pantheon. One of them was particularly curious about the man-made religions and beliefs in the Rotting Isles, e.g. how did it evolve? How did it shift from BATALA and the old Divinities to the KADAYUHAN? They also wanted to know more about the world to run *OTBOB* as a GM.

One playtester also said they wanted to see art to imagine the world better.

Session 2

Stars

GM as Kamatayan Mechanic

One playtester liked the GM as Kamatayan. "Death as the great equalizer."

Catharsis in the Horrific and Traumatic and/or Horror Expectations

One playtester liked the powerlessness; fleeing vs. fighting. "What I love about this game is that unlike traditional TTRPG [where] you do a dungeon [crawl and] you fight, Here there's powerlessness."

Worldbuilding and Play Experience

One playtester liked the Empathy vs. Violence. "It's more about uncovering and discovering the truth. It's all about human empathy; it's all about stories and histories; it's about caring about the players, and the world."

One playtester liked traversing Lambana. "It reminds me of the trees here in Mindanao. During WWII, instead of hiding in bunkers, we would go into the trees. [The trees were so old and large] that the shrapnel didn't make it through the treetops [and there was enough space to] hide under the roots."

NOTE: Mindanao is a different Philippine region. This is evidence that it connects to players who aren't Tagalog.

Wishes

Worldbuilding and Play Experience

One playtester wanted more opportunities to meet and interact with the creatures (after realizing that they're not scary as they initially thought).

One playtester wanted to be more involved with the role-playing (asked more about what to do) since they're being overshadowed by another playtester who is more experienced with role-playing. This made me realize that I must develop GM tools that could allow inexperienced or quieter role-players moments to shine.

Additionally, the other playtester suggested that the Aid action could be used for role-play, e.g. describing how they can assist another player who may not be as experienced with role-playing.

Session 3

Stars

Worldbuilding and Play Experience

One playtester pointed out that this TTRPG is specifically for players who "want to tell stories and feel things."

One playtester liked the poignant and entertaining storytelling even without combat; immersive even without voice-acting or "flashy stuff."

One playtester loved how I as the GM responded to last session's feedback, e.g. including an NPC to involve a Katauhan more into the role-play.

One playtester liked how PCs develop during the sessions, e.g. changing Conviction, gaining Skills, or simply having character development (e.g. Katauhan starting out as more detached and becoming more grounded as they learn more about the world around them). They said, "There were moments I teared up. There were moments when I felt the grief of Kamatayan [and NPCs], their sacrifices and poverty..."

And I could feel [my Katauhan] changing. I could feel them shift emotionally... [I could feel them] evolve. They were trying to be playful and silly but now they found a way to serve friends. Now, it's more like, 'I can avenge [them].'"

One playtester enjoyed seeing Lambana come to life (in response to their Faith Skill). Additionally, they enjoyed gaining the Faith Skill since it adds to their Katauhan's character arc, e.g. learning the true names to pray to, understanding the anito/ancestor who they thought was ignoring them; having a more personal relationship with Lambana. They explained that despite their Alipin Social Class, they felt empowered by their personal connection with Lambana.

Connections Mechanic

One playtester loved connecting with NPCs.

Aid Mechanic

One playtester loved the Aid mechanic and how they can assist another player.

Kamatayan as NPC

One playtester loved how the Katauhan get to dictate what Kamatayan looks like / Loved how nonbinary Kamatayan shines through, e.g. one Katauhan sees Kamatayan as more feminine while the other sees Kamatayan as more masculine

Conversations about Real-Life Issues

One playtester liked the concepts/themes of anticapitalism (since they saw Lambana's destruction caused by the Kadatuan's [and by extent, the KADAYUHAN's] greed).

Wishes

GM Tools

One playtester wanted more GM Tools to run *OTBOB*.

Worldbuilding and Play Experience

After discovering the relationship between Makiling and Kahaya, one playtester wanted to hear more about their love story and see Makiling's reaction/what became of her after Kahaya's death. For context, at this point, a lot of the playtesters' curiosities were answered: the datu is problematic (can hear the KADAYUHAN), the Kawal is an infection, the First Son's true name is Kahaya, etc.

Kamatayan as NPC

After I admitted that some of my anticapitalist leanings and personal views on death bled into Kamatayan and my GMing, one playtester recommended that I institute Kamatayan's values within the rulebook (e.g. how Kamatayan doesn't find joy in war and needless violence) otherwise *OTBOB* won't feel the same.

Representation

One playtester wanted to see more of Lambana coming alive since it reminds them of the forests in their region.

Additional Notes

Folklore Recognition

One of the playtesters immediately recognized the *tikbalang* even without mentioning their name, e.g. they nervously said, "I know what that is," when I showed a picture of hoofprints on the ground.

I did have to explain what the *nuno sa punso* was to the other playtester (from Northern Mindanao).

4 and Death Recognition

One playtester noticed that the maximum number of Omens is 4 and wondered if it had anything to do with Kamatayan (based on the Filipino-Chinese association of 4 with death). I explained that yes, it was intentional.

Player Agency

During play, I offered the playtesters two choices: fight or flee. One playtester chose neither, choosing to pray (Faith Skill) instead. The other followed suit.

Session 4

Stars

GM Tools and Potential SRD

One playtester (experienced player and GM) said, "I want to run the system already. I have stories that I want to tell in the Rotting Isles." They also used some mechanics from *OTBOB* for their own TTRPG, e.g. Reflection, Omen, Sanity Table, Respite.

Worldbuilding and Play Experience

One playtester liked how I presented the villain in a subtle manner (not heavy-handed foreshadowing, e.g. the Datu as a

traitor since he can hear the KADAYUHAN's voice and it's implied that he follows THEIR orders). "It feels right that he's the enemy."

One playtester loved the worldbuilding.

One playtester liked how *OTBOB* is a passive way of learning folklore.

One playtester liked the Empathy vs. Violence. "You level up by learning [and] you connect with people to learn."

One playtester observed that it's a good system to introduce players to [their own] feelings, e.g. "Players having an emotional connection to [their] own PCs is almost inevitable."

One playtester liked how *OTBOB* reflected cultural values, e.g. being family-oriented. In one of the histories, it was revealed that Makiling and Kahaya changed their names to Inankasi and Amankasi for their daughter, Kasi. One of the playtesters observed how that was something that many Filipino and Southeast Asian parents do: as soon as their children are born, their identities shift from being an individual to a parent for their child. The playtester also observed how both their Katauhan leaned into the family dynamic when meeting Makiling, e.g. calling Her their mother. They said, "We didn't worry that She wouldn't recognize [my Katauhan] after declaring her lineage, that "mom won't want us." Makiling is our mother. We instinctively walked into the family [dynamic] and Makiling responded to it."

One playtester compared Lambana to the song, "Hunter" (Paris Paloma). "It's facing your preconceived notions and realizing, "Oh, my god. [Our struggle is the same.]"

One playtester loved that *OTBOB* has arcs to it (e.g. Lambana scenario as one arc) and is excited for the next arc (e.g. Maka arc).

Catharsis in the Horrific and Traumatic and/or Horror Expectations

One playtester loved how challenging it was to wake Makiling, e.g. "[I was thinking,] "What are we going to do?" It was scary in that moment."

One playtester enjoyed learning about the love story between Makiling and the First Son (finding catharsis in the midst of horror). They said, "Hearing the love story was so satisfying because so many people have died and there's been so many lies for so long that you kind of need a payoff for the amount of pain you went through. [Since you cannot have it on the success of the ongoing mission (because it's a short campaign)], a good alternative is a powerful backstory, especially a love story. [...] We went through so much but it was for this great love story that continues until now. I can do something with that despite my pain, my sacrifices [because] this love story gave birth to all of us." (Context: both the Katauhan were descendants of Makiling and Kahaya).

One playtester excited to see the revolution and the buildup to it.

Connections Mechanic

One playtester developed an attachment towards the NPCs, e.g. for Wishes, one of the playtesters asked that I keep one of the NPCs alive

Conversations about Real-Life Issues

One playtester liked how I handled an NPCs' Scars (depression and suicidality) and opened up about their own struggles, e.g. "[The First Son] lost the fight but it wasn't disgraceful. It was just the result of something that he had been fighting with for so long."

One playtester observed how in *OTBOB*, the forces of nature (Lambana and Kasamaan) have to rise up to defeat colonialism.

One playtester loved the representation of class stratification, e.g. "making the elite (Datu and Maginoo) make the lower classes fight, and that the only way to succeed is a united front. You're all affected by this."

Wishes

Worldbuilding and Play Experience

One playtester wanted to know more about the other realms (e.g. Maka and Kasamaan in KAILALIMAN) and see more of the creatures and communities of Lambana.

GM Tools

One playtester wanted GM Tools, e.g. an initial module to introduce the players (esp. Potential GMs) to the system. "[I want] a guide to run this game. What's the framework? What are the stories? The whole map of Lambana? What are the core motivations to play [in *OTBOB*]? e.g. harvest Lambana, overthrow KADAYUHAN. Offer theme suggestions for GMs. What are the things that I have to ask and report back to you as a GM playtester?"

Playtest Group 2

Has four players.

Session 1

Stars

Worldbuilding and Play Experience

One playtester liked the worldbuilding and setting of *OTBOB*, specifically how the mechanics are integrated with the narrative and vice versa, saying, "The game is shaping to be a very setting-focused game. It really wants you to play along. There are some games that they have a lore but when you run the game it's easy to ignore." They also liked that the setting was easy enough to understand. "I like that we get the vibe or essence of what we need to be aware of in the game."

Connections Mechanic

All playtesters enjoyed how everyone is roleplaying, e.g. leaning into their Social Classes and the Connections they gained through Katauhan Creation.

GM as Kamatayan Mechanic

All playtesters liked the GM as Kamatayan mechanic.

- "I like the concept of Kamatayan, that there's an entity that connects everyone in a way, even the GM."
- "GM as Kamatayan in the fiction world is really cool."
- "[I like how] Kamatayan is fueling us towards a direction."

"Personal Kamatayan is cool because it's a canon GM PC and I like that it allows the GM to [roleplay] with the players without having to change hats all the time. Like there's one NPC who's confirmed to be of the DM, and it's always who the DM can go back to. It allows the GM more flexibility in how they can incite these dramatic moments."

Secrets and Histories Mechanic

One playtester liked the History and Secrets mechanics, saying, "I love the system of the Secrets and having it the way for us to improve because it reminds me of Cultist Simulator because it relies on you collecting different lore so I think that's a good way [to improve mechanically]. I also like that part of the system where we have a choice to share or withhold a Secret which also helps in-character building."

Safety Tools

One playtester liked the Stars and Wishes at the end of the session.

Wishes

Secrets and Histories Regulation

One playtester expressed wanting to see more of Secrets and Histories at play. Meanwhile, three playtesters expressed concerns on regulating its mechanics. One was particularly worried about Kamatayan giving too many Secrets or Histories to one Katauhan in one go. "Because most of the time [Secrets/Histories] can be personal, this knowledge-based investigations can lead to "roleplaying at real time" where roleplays can fast-track. It really takes up time to flesh out Secrets because it requires conversation. My wish is that there [will] be a way to facilitate it better."

Another expressed similar concerns since Secrets and Histories were connected to upgrading Attributes, which in turn would improve dice rolls. "What if there's a player who's really bad at getting Secrets?"

Secrets and Histories relying on conversations is by design. However, the playtesters suggested some possible solutions which could be playtested in the future:

- "Perhaps Kamatayan gives a certain number of Secrets per session or a Katauhan loses Sanity or must offer an Omen to gain a Secret?"
- "I think a good way to go about [regulating Secrets/Histories] is there is always a piece of lore at the end of the certain interaction. [The question is,] how much Sanity does it take from you? Which is very Call of Cthulhu. Or what if it costs an Omen because it displeases Kamatayan or the ancestors? Maybe you can be more punishing, like [making a Katauhan go mad] by having too many Secrets [at a time]. Or maybe Kamatayan can step in to prevent them from getting more Secrets."

I also would like to playtest longer sessions and campaigns as well as develop GM tools that could prevent spotlighting one Katauhan too much.

Horror Expectations

One of the playtesters encouraged me to lean into the horror, not just narratively but mechanically as well. "Don't be afraid to take away from the players, especially when you feel that they're winning too much because it makes us be more careful. If we start to get too confident in Lambana, we might fuck up ala Darkest Dungeons ("Remind yourself that overconfidence is a slow and insidious killer"). Give us something to be scared of lore-wise and mechanic-wise."

Session 2

Stars

Reflection Mechanic

Everyone liked the Pre-Session and Post-Session Reflection mechanic. During play, the playtesters were pleasantly surprised to discover that it was part of OTBOB.

- "It grounds me back to the character."
- "It's a very good way of making sure that all the players are in check. It's a good preamble for everyone to have a recap so everyone knows what's happening and everyone knows what they want to do."
- "I really like Reflection being written [at the end of the previous session] and we start the next session describing it back. There's a sense of retention there. When I wrote my Reflection last week, they were half-thoughts. When I came here [for the session], I fleshed them out. At first I was not sold on it, [but I like how] revisiting it allows you to Reflect. [You're basically] reflecting on your Reflection."

Worldbuilding and Play Experience

One playtester liked how the story is building up.

One playtester liked traversing Lambana, particularly how confusing it was. "It was possible to get lost when you're not careful."

One playtester liked the character development of the Katauhan through the campaign.

One playtester liked how playtesters are roleplaying/leaning into the fiction. "I like how grounded everyone is in the story and the [world]."

One playtester liked how as the GM, I pulled story beats based on the Katauhan Creation, e.g. creating scenarios related to a Katauhan's Loss, Motivation or Conviction.

Dice Rolling Mechanics

Two playtesters liked how difficult the Difficult Challenge Rating is (since the point is to encourage PCs to use Aid and work together). "I appreciate that it feels difficult because we're traveling through an area that's supposed to be difficult."

One playtester liked the use of d6s. "I like that [the system of rolling] is only d6s because it's a very simple concept. Each d6 added becomes more difficult [like in the Passive and Active Tests]. I like those values."

One playtester liked how a lot of the rolls are related to the Wisdom Attribute. "It really drives home that you have stared into Abyss. Now, suffer."

Connections Mechanic

One playtester liked the character interaction (through Connections).

GM as Kamatayan Mechanic

One playtester liked GM as Kamatayan. "The characterization of Death and their personification are very good GM and TTRPG tools that don't get used often in TTRPGs. That's one of the main ways to do it."

Three playtesters liked how Kamatayan is humanized and is "the reflection of what the world thinks of what we encounter," e.g. when Kamatayan grieves over the destroyed forests or the dying Tikbalang.

"It's kind of nice that we're getting "opinions" from Kamatayan" citing when Kamatayan deducted an Omen from a Katauhan after they bowed to the Kawal, or when Kamatayan grieved over the dying tikbalang encounter. "It helps with the worldbuilding and it helps us ground our characters more. [My Katauhan] treats Kamatayan as an old friend so they care about what Kamatayan thinks."

Catharsis in the Horrific and Traumatic and/or Horror Expectations

One playtester liked how scary the Kawal are.

Wishes

Mechanics Suggestions

One of the playtesters suggested that I use AnyDice to modify Moderate and Easy Challenge Ratings after I opened up how the playtesters were succeeding easily.

One of the playtesters suggested to change the terms of Passive and Active Tests since the Katauhan's actions in response to these tests are not necessarily passive or active. They suggested that the Passive Test is called Exploration or Investigation Roll, while the Active Test is called Danger or Drama Roll.

Kamatayan as NPC

One playtester wanted to know more about Kamatayan and to see more of Kamatayan's opinions, saying, "Does Kamatayan appear to everyone or are they mostly passive? Do they just let things happen? What are their goals? Is there something that they're working towards? Do they help in

certain ways? I want to learn about Kamatayan." Another playtester shared this interest, saying, "I want to test the relationship between the PC and Kamatayan."

Worldbuilding and Play Experience

One playtester wanted to see another Katauhan in Lambana. Similarly, another playtester wanted more opportunities for Katauhan interactions.

One playtester wanted more opportunities to roll using Attributes other than Wisdom.

Catharsis in the Horrific and Traumatic and/or Horror Expectations

One playtester wanted to see more chaos. This was seconded by another playtester who said they wanted to experience Combat and more complex situations, e.g. a Katauhan doing an Action that is disproved by Kamatayan.

Additional Notes

Physique and Sanity Transfer

One playtester wondered if it was possible to lose Physique instead of Sanity. "What if you suppress panic by biting your own lip, or slicing your palm open like in Ibong Adarna*? Maybe you can trade Physique with Sanity?"

*Folktale where a man cuts himself to stay awake long enough to catch the Adarna, a magical bird.

Session 3

NOTE: This was a shorter session because one of the players was absent and one had to leave early.

Stars

Worldbuilding and Play Experience

Three playtesters liked learning more about the world/setting (even for a short session).

One playtester liked the character interactions.

One playtester liked Empathy vs. Violence in the mechanics and NPC interactions. "[I like the] way that you allow us to interact with NPCs. It's both flavorful but also mechanically incentivizes to speak with people first especially since our means for advancing the game is gaining Secrets."

Two playtesters liked how characters are getting radicalized as they learn more about the world around them. One of them said in jest, "Class conscious is consciousing!"

Dice Rolling Mechanics

One playtester liked the usage of d6s. "Thresholds for dice are really good. Even if 15 is Difficult (on a 3d6), it really sells the idea that it's hard to reach this level of passing. It's really essential in a game like this that things are difficult to achieve. We're just people here and we're trying to tangle with something beyond us."

One playtester liked how I rewarded a Katauhan for rolling really high when Learning the Survival Skill. "It incentivizes players. Now we know [a vital Secret]. It incentivizes me to ask more questions so we can reach that level of important information."

Wishes

Worldbuilding and Play Experience

One playtester wanted more opportunities for character interactions.

One playtester wanted a fighting chance against the KADAYUHAN

One playtester wanted to see more of the Creatures in Lambana.

One playtester wanted to see Combat.

Katauhan Sheet Improvements

One playtester wanted a better way to show Physique in the Katauhan Creation since each HP is associated with a body part. They suggested showing the body parts in the Katauhan Creation. They also wanted a better way to track Recover and Learn as well. (These have been incorporated into the updated Katauhan Sheet)

More Omens

One playtester wanted more avenues to gain Omens. (This has been incorporated into the updated rulebook).

Additional Notes

Folklore Recognition

The players immediately recognized the tikbalang and nuno sa punso even without mentioning their name, e.g. one of the playtesters immediately went "Oh, shit!" as soon as I mentioned the old man on the termite mound.

Physique and Sanity Transfer

One playtester wondered if it was possible to exchange Sanity and Physique. "It makes it a balancing act between Sanity and Physique, giving players a choice."

Session 4

NOTE: This was a shorter session since one of the playtesters is ill while the other had to leave halfway through the session.

Stars

Worldbuilding and Play Experience

One playtester liked the worldbuilding.

Two playtesters liked the character of Makiling. One of them went on to explain that they liked how Makiling and Kamatayan were humanized, saying, "Love the eldritch aspect but the humanity of the divinities."

One playtester liked how the Katauhan had character development.

One playtester said, "I like how you treated the PCs in this campaign." which may be due to the safety tools implementation.

One playtester found the ending satisfying, saying, "I love how everything tied together in the end."

Pray (Omen Reward) Mechanic

One playtester liked the inclusion of the Pray Respite Action (helps Katauhan gain Omens during Respite). They said, "I like Omens and the Prayer Respite Action for Kamatayans that are not as generous since Omens function where players are encouraged to do cool things which they use for their rolls."

Kamatayan as NPC

One playtester liked Kamatayan's character development

Secrets and Histories Mechanic

One playtester liked the History of Makiling and the First Son.

Healing Mechanic

One playtester liked the mechanic of sharing Sanity and Physique, saying, "I've never seen other TTRPGs do that."

Dice Rolling Mechanics

One playtester liked how Difficult rolls are always difficult.

Catharsis in the Horrific and Traumatic and/or Horror Expectations

One playtester liked how the storytelling explored grief. “[I like how] this campaign is a campaign about grief, and each PC and NPC show their grief differently.”

One playtester liked how the system and mechanics “provides the Darkest Dungeon [with the emphasis on] stress and sanity.”

Wishes

Worldbuilding and Play Experience

Two playtesters asked for another (or longer) campaign.

One playtester wanted the completed rulebook to see more of the worldbuilding and lore.

One playtester wanted more opportunities for PC interactions.

Potential Rulebook Additions

One playtester asked for a pronunciation guide.

One playtester wondered if it was possible to have a 2d6 Test instead of just 1d6 (Easy) and 3d6 (Difficult).

Playtest Group 3

Has two players.

Session 1

Stars

Worldbuilding and Play Experience

Both playtesters liked the immediate hook (since I used the dream from one of the PCs’ Katauhan Sheet) which allowed players to get immersed into the world from the very start and set the tone for the campaign. However, there’s enough space for playtesters to have fun as well, e.g. “With that immersion comes both the balance when it’s time be spooky and have shenanigans for interactions.”

One playtester liked seeing the mechanics in action helped vs. only reading the rulebook. They also appreciated the minimal math (“Not fond of the math in [D&D] 5e”) and the usage of d6s (“I start to see why many TTRPGs use d6s”). They also liked how there are sample scenarios in the rulebook itself.

Connections Mechanic

Both liked the interaction between PC and NPCs, e.g. one of the playtesters wanted to see an NPC evolve or change Convictions (from Loyalty to the Datu to Liberation).

Katauhan Sheet

One playtester liked how the Katauhan Sheet shapes the character. (NOTE: we used Google Sheets to test out the Katauhan Sheet layout)

Secrets and Histories Mechanic

One playtester liked the Secrets/Histories mechanics.

Representation

Both playtesters commented that while they enjoyed exploring the world since they were Filipino, they admitted that they struggled to roleplay (e.g. responding in straight Tagalog) since they fell back on Western fantasy tropes (since they were accustomed to Western fantasy TTRPGs)

Conversations about Real-Life Issues

One playtester called an NPC “tuta ng Datu” (transl. Datu’s dog) which references how civilians and activists call local political leaders who endear themselves to foreign imperial countries at the cost of their own people.

Wishes

Worldbuilding and Play Experience

Both playtesters wanted to know more about the world and the people/creatures they would encounter, They also wanted to see more of the mechanics used in play, e.g. the Passive and Active Tests, Skills.

One playtester was curious to see how their Connection with their fellow Katauhan would develop throughout the campaign and wanted to see more connections between PCs and NPCs in general.

One playtester observed how important it was for a GM and player to collaborate through Katauhan Creation to build up on the story of the campaign. "I feel guilty for [the GM] because some of my answers are still blank. I want to contribute. I want to know more about the story, I want to know more about the world if I finish more of the question. I want to know more."

One playtester expressed concern that there may be too many mechanics which may overwhelm new players, especially those who are inexperienced with TTRPGs. "[I'm worried] about how there's a lot of things to manage, e.g. Physique, Sanity and the table of injuries."

Sanity Mechanics

One playtester pointed out that using time duration for Sanity injuries may not work since it's easy to ignore in the fiction. "How long do injuries stay? How do you make them matter more? How does that affect the play? (Since the 30 mins can be easily ignored) How do you keep track of it as Kamatayan?" This mechanic has since been revised.

Additional Notes

Roleplay-Heavy System

One of the playtesters observed that *OTBOB* would be a roleplay-heavy system since Katauhan Creation which was then affirmed during the first session.

Southeast Asian vs. Western Audience

Both playtesters hypothesized that Southeast Asian players would have an easier time playing *OTBOB* compared to a Western audience, e.g. pronouncing Tagalog words.

Conversations about Real-Life Issues

Without prompting, the playtesters associated the Kadatuan with imperial Manila. One of them also associated the Second Settlement with Mindanao, saying, "I know [*OTBOB*] is Tagalized but I'm also thinking about the Islamic [Tagalog history]."

Session 2

Stars

Worldbuilding and Play Experience

One playtester liked how they felt like a child in Lambana.

Both playtesters liked the worldbuilding/setting and the "various grotesque implications in the world."

One playtester liked how the challenges "build up the story or lore." E.g. how the tikbalang and nuno sa punso encounters revealed more about the world.

One playtester liked how, as a GM, I used prompt questions such as "What do you do/feel in this moment?" since it helps players who struggle with role-play to "use their RP muscle." "When you notice [a player's] silence, you help prompt them, "How [you] feel about this? What do [you] think about this?" Love a proactive DM."

Secrets and Histories Mechanic

Both playtesters liked the character revelations (Secrets/Histories tied to the Katauhan). They also liked how they had theories during the play session.

One playtester liked the Katauhan interactions (based on the Connections). "I liked the character interactions between [the Katauhan], how the initial hostility (from their chosen Connection) faded and led to a more cooperative thinking, even if both still give shade to each other."

One playtester liked how the [Secrets/Histories] mechanics are tied with the story. "It makes us interact with the narrative."

Conversations about Real-Life Issues

One playtester loved the metaphors present in worldbuilding and storytelling.

GM as Kamatayan Mechanic

One playtester loved that Kamatayan was accompanying the Katauhan.

Catharsis in the Horrific and Traumatic and/or Horror Expectations

One playtester loved how the Katauhan lost their arm during the confrontation with the Kawal. Liked how there were clear expectations with gore, violence, etc. given the horror genre, so they weren't taken off-guard when it happened.

Wishes

Worldbuilding and Play Experience

One playtester wanted to know more about the world following the revelations from this session.

One playtester wanted more opportunities for “out-of-the-box problem-solving when confronting the deities and monstrosities.”

Secrets and Histories Tracking

One playtester wanted a way to keep track of used Secrets and Histories

One playtester wanted to be tortured more emotionally. They also wondered how the ending would turn out. “Is it pointless like in *Ten Candles*? [If so, then] how do you make the last moments matter? Or is it more a tragedy with a glimpse of hope?”

Additional Notes

Folklore Recognition

The players immediately recognized the *tikbalang* even without mentioning their name, e.g. the playtesters became nervous when I showed a picture of hoofprints on the ground.

Session 3

NOTE: This is the final session due to time constraints and scheduling issues.

Stars

Worldbuilding and Play Experience

One playtester loved the worldbuilding/setting which they found immersive.

One playtester loved how “the metaphors and parallels to [Philippine] history, mythology, and sociocultural commentaries were interwoven so well.”

One playtester loved how roleplay-heavy the system was. “[The game] is an excuse to really get into role-playing especially with the NPCs and PC.”

One playtester enjoyed interacting with the hostile *Makiling* (when She mistook one of the *Katauhan* as Her deceased daughter).

One playtester developed an attachment for their *Katauhan*, messaging me a few weeks after the campaign to say that they missed them.

Connections Mechanic

Both playtesters liked the *Katauhan* interactions (based on *Connections*). One of them said, “The interactions between [the *Katauhan*] during the climax are the high points in the entire campaign. To think that our character motivations were all from the *Katauhan* guide... it's quite impressive at the flexibility in making the character arcs.”

Meanwhile, the other playtester developed an attachment to NPCs.

Secrets and Histories Mechanic

One playtester loved learning about the History between *Makiling* and the First Son, *Kahaya*.

GM as *Kamatayan* Mechanic

One playtester liked GM as *Kamatayan*. “I just really overall still loved *Kamatayan* accompanying us on our journey and what that represented both symbolically and literally.”

Wishes

Worldbuilding and Play Experience

Both playtesters wanted more time for the campaign, e.g. longer sessions and longer campaign. One of them said, “I want to know more [about the lore].”

Mechanic Opportunities

One playtester wanted more opportunities to use the mechanics, e.g. using Skills, upgrading Attributes, using *Connections*. They suggested finding “a way to integrate those more actively on the part of the GM and to incentivize actively wanting to do those actions on the part of the Players”

Horror Expectations

One playtester expected *OTBOB* to be more horrific, saying, “I wish we felt the consequences of failed rolls a bit more (in terms of really letting us feel it and settle, even permanently sometimes), and a cap on the opportunities to gain Omens to make the different mechanics more seamlessly integrated with the narrative direction. I say this because I was working under the assumption that we were playing a horror genre-oriented TTRPG system [...] where the narratives and mechanics work to balance the feeling of powerlessness against forces beyond the Player Character's control and the feeling of having just enough power (literal and figurative) to make a change (even if it's not always the kind of change they want to make). Although that's more a comment on the expected genre than anything else!”

Additional Notes

Conversations about Real-Life Issues

One of the playtesters brought up the recent senatorial elections during play without prompting.