

MONSTERS FROM THE FOLKLORE OF THE PHILIPPINES

by Graeme Davis

The folklore of the Philippine Islands contains a number of new and interesting monster types, which are treated here for the AD&D® game. Since the Philippines is an area with a number of native languages, the same monster may appear with slight variations under a number of different names; most of the local names are given for those treated here, and for a more complete survey, the reader is recommended to Maximo D Ramos' **Creatures of Philippine Lower Mythology** (University of Philippines Press, 1971).

Demons

Filipino demons seem to be creatures of a highly magical nature rather than inhabitants of another plane. Many of them live in large trees, and they are rarely pernicious or evil, content for the most part to frighten away those who intrude on their territories or fail to treat them with due respect, and only killing when greatly enraged. They are great pranksters.

All Filipino demons can become invisible at will, and each has a personal charm or jewel which is the source of its strength. If this can be won from the demon by wit or force, it will give the bearer the same strength (typically in the region 18⁰¹-23 — the DM may select according to the power of the demon or roll on d6). Bright sunlight banishes them.

While the DM might rule that Filipino demons should be turnable on the 'Special' line of the clerics vs undead matrix, they do not seem to be deterred by holy symbols, and some actually delight in collecting numbers of them from frightened villagers.

AGTA (Demon)

Frequency: *very rare*
No Appearing: 1
Armour Class: 3
Move: 12"
Hit Dice: 8
% in Lair: 90%
Treasure Type: R
No of Attacks: 2
Damage/Attack: *variable*
Special Attacks: *size change, fear*
Special Defences: *size change*
Magic Resistance: *standard*
Intelligence: *average-very*
Alignment: *Chaotic Neutral*
Size: *variable*
Psionic Ability: *nil*
Attack/Defence Modes: *nil*
Lvl/xp value: *Agta: VII/1450 + 10/hp*
Kapre: VII/1900 + 10/hp

The Agta, Bawo or Ungo appears as a muscular, black-skinned humanoid, and can vary its size instantly between 1ft and about 30ft. It is generally about 10-12ft in height, which may be its natural size.

As it increases in size, it becomes stronger, as follows: when it shrinks to 1ft, it has 2hp, attacks as a 1HD monster and causes 1d4 damage on a successful hit. It can enlarge itself to a maximum height equal to half its maximum hit points (as rolled on 8d8) in feet, ie an Agta with 54hp can reach a maximum height of 27ft. For every foot of its height, it will have 2hp, and for every 4ft of its height it attacks as a monster of 1HD and cause 1d4 damage. Thus, at 1-4ft it attacks as a 1 HD monster and causes 1d4 damage, at 5-8ft it attacks as a 2HD monster for 2d4 damage, and so on, up to a maximum of 8HD and 8d4 damage.

Agta live in large trees, particularly favouring banyans and mangroves, and resent any interference with their trees. They attack with two fists, and on a successful double attack can rend as a Carnivorous Ape (**Monster Manual**), causing additional damage as for two successful fist attacks.

Another type of Agta is the Kapre or Pugot, which has a shapechange ability in addition to the Agta's size change. Its favourite forms are those of a dark cat, dog or boar which has fiery eyes and breathes blue-green fire, a pure white fowl, or a headless and often mutilated corpse. In this last form it will caper along, singing merrily to itself and eating by pushing food into its bubbling neck-stump. Characters of less than 4th level who see it in this form must save vs spells or flee.

BATIBAT (Demon)



Frequency: *very rare*
No Appearing: 1
Armour Class: 4
Move: 12"
Hit Dice: 6
% in Lair: 80%
Treasure Type: R
No of Attacks: 2
Damage/Attack: 2-12
Special Attacks: *ride*
Special Defences: *none*
Magic Resistance: *standard*
Intelligence: *low-average*
Alignment: *Chaotic Neutral*
Size: L (8-10ft)
Psionic Ability: *nil*
Attack/Defence Modes: *nil*
Lvl/xp Value: V/ 475 + 6/hp

The Batibat is a relative of the Agta and Pugot, but does not have their shape-changing abilities. It is a dark-skinned humanoid, 8-10ft tall and broad enough to fill a doorway as it enters. The only magical ability it possesses is the ability to ride a sleeping victim in the same manner as a Night Hag (**Monster Manual**), although it will only do this under great provocation. In the one story where this occurs, the Batibat attacks members of a family which owns a large post — all that remains of its home tree, which it still inhabits. It is not known what happens to the souls of those ridden to death by a Batibat.

Both forms of this demon can also emit a great roar once per turn, which causes **fear** as the spell unless the appropriate saving throw is made.

One favourite trick of the Pugot is to rush between the legs of an unwary traveller in its boar form, increase its size and carry its victim off, never to be seen again.

TIKBALANG (Demon)

Frequency: *very rare*
No Appearing: 1
Armour Class: 1
Move: 12"/18"
Hit Dice: 6
% in Lair: 20%
Treasure Type: I+R+U
No of Attacks: 3 or 2
Damage/Attack: *feet 1-8, claws 1-4, bite 1-8*
Special Attacks: *see below*
Special Defences: *see below*
Magic Resistance: 10%
Intelligence: *very*
Alignment: *Chaotic Evil*
Size: M (6-7ft)
Psionic Ability: *nil*
Attack/Defence Modes: *nil*
Lvl/xp value: VII/ 1275 + 6/hp

The Tikbalang, Binangunan or Tulung is one of the most feared of Filipino demons. It is humanoid in appearance, tall and gaunt, with a horse's head armed with sharp teeth. Its straight black hair flows down over its shoulders, and its horse-like legs end in strong taloned feet.

It is, however, an adroit shapechanger, and commonly takes the form of an old man. It enjoys misleading travellers into the bamboo thicket where it lairs, usually in a small hut. Depending on its mood, it will then devour its victims or turn **invisible** and enjoy the spectacle as they try to find their way out. When a Tikbalang leads a victim into its thicket, it can cast over the victim a glamor similar to that caused by a **maze** spell — the victim will be trapped for the same length of time, although the effect does not include travel to another plane.



Apart from these abilities, the Tikbalang can **fly** at will by walking on air, and can cause **blindness**, **disease** and **insanity** once each per day. It can use a **word of recall** once per day, vanishing in a cloud of dust and falling stones similar in effect to the hailstone type of **ice storm**, which causes 1d6 damage to any within 10ft of the spot it vacates (saving throw halves damage). In its natural form, it can also roar once per turn, causing **fear** as the spell unless the appropriate saving throw is made. 5% of Tikbalangs can also **immolate** in the same way as a Type VI Demon (**Monster Manual**), the flames causing 3d6 damage to any within range.

If forced into hand-to-hand combat, the Tikbalang will assume its natural form, and can attack either with two claws and a bite or with its two talons.

The Tikbalang may be forced to surrender its charm if it can be ridden like a horse until exhausted. The stone is a rounded pebble which glows like a hot coal, and no Tikbalang stone confers less than 20 strength; some may also confer other of the Tikbalang's abilities. Tikbalangs have immense strength, and if pressed throw rocks as a Stone Giant (**Monster Manual**) or uproot trees to use as weapons.

Tikbalangs sometimes have great wealth, and are particularly enthusiastic collectors of holy symbols and other religious items, sometimes extorting them from villagers along with other valuables on a protection-racket basis.

ASWANG

Frequency: *very rare*
No Appearing: 1
Armour Class: 4
Move: 12"/18"
Hit Dice: 5
% in Lair: *see below*
Treasure Type: *nil*
No of Attacks: 2
Damage/Attack: 1-3
Special Attacks: *see below*
Special Defences: *see below*
Magic Resistance: *standard*
Intelligence: *average-very*
Alignment: *Chaotic Evil*
Size: *M (5-6ft)*
Psionic Ability: *nil*
Attack/Defence Modes: *nil*
Lvl/xp value: *Aswang: V/435 + 5/hp*
Balbal: V/360 + 5/hp



The Aswang, Mangalok or Boroka has the appearance of a normal human woman, and indeed exists as such by day, often living a normal village life. At night, however, she takes on her true nature, becoming a humanoid monster with a hag-like appearance, strong nails and a very long threadlike tongue. She may also shapechange at will to the form of a huge night-bird with the head of a woman.

The Aswang can sense death in the same way as the Segben, at a distance of up to 1 mile, and will sit on the roof of a house where the corpse lies, sucking out its blood and organs through her long tongue. The tongue may be extended up to 12ft in length, and has a sharp point, but is so fine as to be undetectable 90% of the time, except to individuals with the ability to see invisible. She will attack the living in the same way, piercing the

jugular vein with her tongue as the victim sleeps, and draining blood at the rate of 1hp per round. Her saliva contains a local anaesthetic, which requires sleeping victims to save vs poison or continue to sleep through the attack. When fully gorged (having taken blood equal to half her original hit points) the Aswang's humanoid form appears swollen as if with an advanced pregnancy, and her movement rate is halved. The Aswang is particularly vulnerable at this time, and takes great care not to be seen.

The Aswang will only fight if she cannot flee. She uses her strong nails or the talons of her avian form in self-defence, a successful hit causing 1-3 points of damage in either case.

A human may become an Aswang in one of four ways:

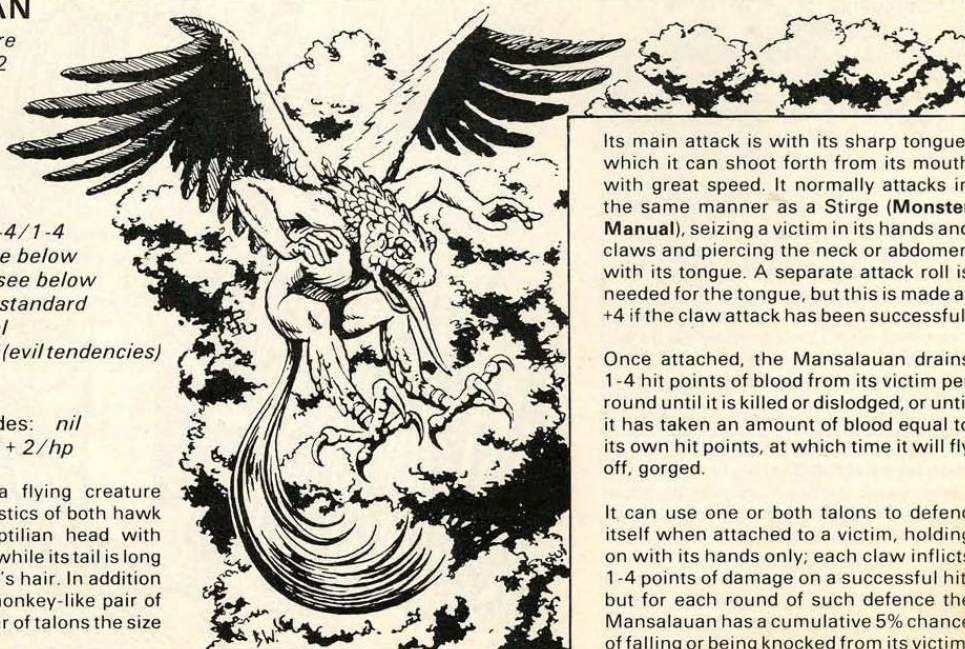
- i) by the application of a magical ointment compounded of chicken dropping dissolved in coconut oil and mixed with human flesh and blood, along with certain other magical operations;
- ii) the daughters of an Aswang will inherit her condition;
- iii) the kiss of a dying Aswang will pass on her condition to one willing initiate;
- iv) an Aswang may force her condition upon another by lacing their food with human flesh or with her own saliva.

The ointment is the secret of the transformation ability; normally hidden about the house in a stoppered bamboo tube or clay jar, it is used every night to effect the transformation. Human form may be regained by exposure to sunlight, or by washing off the ointment in fresh water. The Aswang is repelled by salt, vinegar and certain spices in the same way as a

MANSALAUAN

Frequency: *very rare*
No Appearing: 1-12
Armour Class: 7
Move: 4"/18"
Hit Dice: 1+1
% in Lair: 20%
Treasure Type: *nil*
No of Attacks: 2
Damage/Attack: 1-4/1-4
Special Attacks: *see below*
Special Defences: *see below*
Magic Resistance: *standard*
Intelligence: *animal*
Alignment: *Neutral (evil tendencies)*
Size: *S*
Psionic Ability: *nil*
Attack/Defence Modes: *nil*
Lvl/xp value: *II/44 + 2/hp*

The Mansalauan is a flying creature sharing the characteristics of both hawk and bat. It has a reptilian head with glowing gemlike eyes, while its tail is long and fine, like a woman's hair. In addition to its wings it has a monkey-like pair of hands, and a strong pair of talons the size of human feet.



Its main attack is with its sharp tongue, which it can shoot forth from its mouth with great speed. It normally attacks in the same manner as a Stirge (**Monster Manual**), seizing a victim in its hands and claws and piercing the neck or abdomen with its tongue. A separate attack roll is needed for the tongue, but this is made at +4 if the claw attack has been successful.

Once attached, the Mansalauan drains 1-4 hit points of blood from its victim per round until it is killed or dislodged, or until it has taken an amount of blood equal to its own hit points, at which time it will fly off, gorged.

It can use one or both talons to defend itself when attached to a victim, holding on with its hands only; each claw inflicts 1-4 points of damage on a successful hit, but for each round of such defence the Mansalauan has a cumulative 5% chance of falling or being knocked from its victim.



Vampire is repelled by garlic. Although the Aswang has certain vampiric tendencies, it is not classified as Undead and is not vulnerable to holy symbols or other religious objects.

The **Iqui** is the rarer male Aswang.

The **Balbal** is a variant form of Aswang. It is a forest-dweller, and does not change form, always appearing as a gaunt humanoid figure with very loose skin, which it can use to glide for distances of up to 60ft after the manner of a flying squirrel. Its tongue is thicker and stronger than that of an Aswang, and its modus operandi is to use its tongue to lift a corpse through a hole in the thatch which it has made with its strong nails. The corpse is then taken back into the forest to be devoured. In all other respects, the **Balbal** is identical to the Aswang.

SEGBEN

Frequency: *very rare*
 No Appearing: 1-3
 Armour Class: 7
 Move: 18"
 Hit Dice: 2+2
 % in Lair: 10%
 Treasure Type: *nil*
 No of Attacks: 1 or 2
 Damage/Attack: *hooves 1-3, bite 1-4 + special*
 Special Attacks: *see below*
 Special Defences: *see below*
 Magic Resistance: *standard*
 Intelligence: *low*
 Alignment: *Chaotic Evil*
 Size: *S (3ft at shoulder)*
 Psionic Ability: *nil*
 Attack/Defence Modes: *nil*
 Lvl/xp value: *III/ 120 + 3/hp*

The **Segben** is similar in appearance to a hornless goat, with glowing eyes and large ears. It exudes a sickening charnel smell which requires any character coming within 5ft of the beast to save vs poison or attack at -1 for 2-8 turns through nausea.

Segben are destroyed by sunlight, and generally hide in the darkest recesses of the forest until dusk, when they appear under the floor of a house where someone lies gravely ill or dying. They can sense the smell of death at a distance of up to a mile, and will seize any opportunity to make off with an unguarded corpse. They are not known to frequent graveyards, however, apparently preferring to move in immediately after death.



If surprised at their feast **Segben** will usually flee, fighting only if cornered or if the odds are heavily in their favour. They can attack by lashing out with their small forehooves, but their most feared attack is their bite — if they successfully bite any victim, or even his shadow, the victim must make a System Shock roll or die immediately.

Although they have a number of ghoulish characteristics, **Segben** are not Undead and are not affected by holy symbols or the like.

MANTABUNGAL

Frequency: *very rare*
 No Appearing: 1-6
 Armour Class: 7
 Move: 15"
 Hit Dice: 4
 % in Lair: 20%
 Treasure Type: *nil*
 No of Attacks: 2 or 3/2
 Damage/Attack: *hooves 1-4, tusks 1-10*
 Special Attacks: *nil*
 Special Defences: *nil*
 Magic Resistance: *standard*
 Intelligence: *animal*
 Alignment: *Neutral*
 Size: *L*
 Psionic Ability: *nil*
 Attack/Defence Modes: *nil*
 Lvl/xp value: *III/ 85 + 4/hp*



These ferocious beasts are described as having a bovine body with a shaggy coat like a yak. They have no horns, but their jaws are equipped with two sets of huge boarlike tusks, one pointing upwards and the other downwards. **Mantabungal** are forest-dwellers, and appear to be similar to wild boars in their habits. They are extremely aggressive, and will attack on sight.

Their main weapon is their tusks, with which they can attack three times in two melee rounds; they have been known to engage two opponents at once, attacking each alternately. They can also lash out with their forehooves, but not while fighting with their tusks. They are sometimes thought of as demons, but have no personal charms nor any of the typical abilities of other Filipino demons; this reputation may have arisen as a result of their ferocity.

Other Monsters



The descriptions given above are for some of the more distinctive Filipino monsters; the folklore of the Philippine Islands contains several other creatures which can be equated more or less precisely with European counterparts.

Aghoy, Encante, Mangmangkit, Mahomanay, Palasekan and Tahamaling are some of the local names given to a race of creatures almost identical to the Sylvan Elf (MM). Their physical appearance is the same as Tolkien's Elves, and their activities are the same as those of British Elves or Faerie, although they dress like ordinary Filipino villagers.

Calanget, Lampong, Lupa, Matanda and Tianak are beings similar to Dwarves and Gnomes (MM). Their underground dwellings are usually guarded by large termite mounds, and they are reputedly very wealthy, although their gifts of gold and gems to humans frequently turn into dung or pebbles after a short time. They have the power to ruin crops if offended.

The **Catao** and **Ughoy** are the Merfolk (MM) of the Philippines. Being partly fish and partly mammal, they attack those who eat fish or meat, and they have the **charm** ability of Nixies (MM). They generally drag victims underwater to drown, but have been known to become enamoured of charismatic humans, kidnapping them and casting **water breathing** on them in the same way as Nixies.

Several types of Giant and Ogre also inhabit the Philippines. The **Bannog** is a giant bird similar to a Roc (MM), and the **Ikugan** is a giant monkey, but the others are similar to Hill and Stone Giants (MM) and the Mountain Giant (FF). Filipino Ogres are, for the most part, identical to their European cousins (MM); their names include **Kumao, Sir'ing, Ta-awi, and Tarabusao**. The **Busao** is a Cyclops type, and the **Dato-Busao**, or King Busao, has a forehead horn. The **Kurita** has two or three pairs of arms. Some Filipino Ogres have the ability to shapechange into human or animal form. Strangely, the Indian **Garuda (Deities & Demigods — now Legends and Lore)** is known in the Philippines, but has the habits of a bloodthirsty Ogre.

Certain types of **Aswang, Iqui and Boroka** (see above), as well as the **Manananggal**, seem to be identical to the **Penanggalan** of Indonesia (FF); they may be related, but the description of the Aswang given above deliberately excludes the separable head characteristic of the Penanggalan, since the Aswang is almost always a normal human with the ability to transform, rather than an Undead monster taking possession of a headless body.

Since a great number of Filipino monsters have the ability to shapechange into animal form, it is difficult to tell whether there are creatures which can be described as Lycanthropes (MM), although

the **Malakat** and an unnamed beast from Apayao do appear to be European-style werewolves. The latter may even be a Jackalwere (MM) or something similar, since it has a doglike smell even when in human form. At any rate, an iron knife with which one was attacked passed through its body without causing it any harm.

Lastly, the Philippines abound with witches and wise-women, who, like their European counterparts, can cause and cure all kinds of diseases and ailments and assume the form of various animals.

There are also a few unique and extremely powerful monsters, which seem to be an attempt by the natives to explain solar and lunar eclipses. The **Minokawa** or **Baua** is a huge bird, the **Baconaua** is an immense shark, and the **Mamelu** or **Marcupo** is a huge snake, all of which swallow the sun or moon from time to time, but are persuaded to release it by the noise and music made by the Filipinos at the festival of each eclipse.

— **Graeme Davis**

Coming soon: next in the series of our culture specials

The **NORSE**

IMAGINE magazine, April 1985