

Celestial Maidens in Japan and the Philippines—Articulating Commonalities and Appreciating Distinctiveness is a study that explores a shared oral literary and performance tradition between the Philippines and Japan.

The celestial maiden narrative is about the story of a winged maiden from heaven who comes down to earth to take a bath. A mortal falls in love with her and hides her wings to prevent her from going back to heaven. She is “tricked” into marrying this mortal and bears a child. She discovers the trickery and years of marital bliss do not convince her to stay on earth. She returns to heaven.

Numerous variations of the celestial maiden narratives can be traced to different areas and localities in Japan and the Philippines. This study focused only on the narratives in Miho no Matsubara of Shizuoka Prefecture and in Yogo Lake, north of Lake Biwa in Shiga Prefecture of Japan and of the Tausugs in Bongao, Tawi-Tawi and the Igorots of Bontoc, Mountain Province of the Philippines.

In the tradition of blurring the divide between mythology, history and reality, the maiden and the mortal in these fascinating stories are perceived to be the ancestors of those who eventually ruled Yogo-cho and the Mt. Province. Moreover, the body of water where the maiden is said to have taken a bath and the tree where the maiden is said to have hung her wings can be seen to this day in both Miho no Matsubara and Yogo Lake while the soft, but now muddy spot at the foot of Mt. Siniblawan in Mt. Province is said to be the exact location where the hunter saw the maiden while she was swimming and dancing.

Furthermore, these captivating stories have inspired Japanese and Filipinos throughout the centuries to “translate” them into performances. The 14th century Japanese Noh actor-playwright Zeami re-wrote the Japanese folk literary piece *Hagoromo* for performance as a Noh play, which is still considered, as one of the most beautiful Noh plays performed today. On the other hand, the Igorots of Bontoc consider their eagle dance, as the dance of the celestial maiden, which is still performed today during rituals connected to wedding celebrations and harvest festivals. The role that culture bearers play in keeping the celestial maiden narratives and performances distinctly traditional, contemporary and dynamic is given primary importance in this study.

To underscore the commonalities and differences of the celestial maiden narratives and performances, culture bearers were invited to present papers, give workshops and perform excerpts of their dances during **The UPCIS Workshops, Colloquia and Performances on Living Traditions: The Celestial Maidens of Southeast Asia and Japan** on March 12 – 14, 2009. A Japanese literature scholar, a playwright of new Noh plays, a Noh master from Japan, a scholar, musicians and dancers from Bontoc and a three-generation Indian-Singaporean Bharata Natyam dancers-choreographers were invited to present papers, give workshops and perform excerpts of their dances. This event is recorded in book form as **Celestial Maidens of Southeast Asia and Japan: A Dialogue of Cultures** published in 2009.

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Amparo Adelina C. Umali, III, Ph.D. Project Director

September 14, 2009

Lenexpo, St. Petersburg

Pilipinas Muna

Learning from the Masters: Teaching Ifugao Hudhud Chants, San Dionisio Komedyas and the Eagle Dance of the Igorot of Bontoc in the Classroom

Amparo Adelina C. Umali, III, Ph.D., Presenter

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