

## HISTORY OF STATUS OF MEN AND WOMEN IN THE PHILIPPINE HISTORY

### Pre-colonial Philippines

- Before the advent of the Spanish colonial rule, the Philippines was composed of self-sustaining communities of various sizes.
- In these communities, women played key roles in economic production and management of community affairs such as resolution of family and community conflicts and pacification of warring parties mainly through religious and peaceful means.
- Unlike other Asian cultures who practiced unilineal kinship, Pre-colonial Filipinos reckoned consanguineal relationship bilaterally (making no tribes in the Philippines). In this kinship, families is traced both of their descendants and ancestors from both father's and mother's side in which no distinction was made as to which of the two was dominant.
- Barangay also is the basic unit of the society which residents were closely related to each other through consanguineal and affinity kinship.
- THE FOUR AUTHORITIES IN A BARANGAY
  - The **datu**, who was the local chieftain, took charge of the economic and political organization of the barangay.
  - The importance of specialists with particular skills was emphasized by the bestowal of the title '**panday**', in recognition of mastery of an art, an applied science. Skills in various materials were specified: panday-ginto, panday-bakal, panday-anluagi
  - The **babaylan** was the "specialist in the fields of culture, religion, medicine and all kinds of theoretical knowledge about the phenomenon of nature, a pro-scientist.
  - The **bagani** or bayani (chief warrior or hero) who took card of the maintenance of law and order, peace and stability of the barangay.
- Babaylan or Katalonan were dominantly women. Men had to be like women to perform this societal function.
- Though datu was commonly held by men, there were women who became chiefs of their barangay like Princess Urduja and Queen Sima.
- Customary laws and traditions gave women the power and opportunities to perform their duties and roles within a family and kinship units, in economic productions, and village affairs. They were able to own and pass properties.
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- They can obtain divorce easily and remarry (a woman should return the dowry to the ex-husband or his family with additional amount equal to the given dowry.
- Same kind of punishment was usually meted out to both sexes in cases of marital infidelity and other violations of family values and norms. In other cases, women who are concubine of village chieftains were sometimes exempted from punishments.
- On the other hand, men were usually educated with military, arts and crafts, carpentry while women with weaving, childcare, and housekeeping.
- **BATHALA**
  - BA - The first consonant 'ba' is the the first syllable of 'babae' which symbolizes generation
  - THA - Joined by a middle consonant an inspired H which means light
  - LA - The third consonant 'la' is the first syllable of 'lalake' which symbolizes potency
  - BATHALA means **Union of man and woman in Light**
  - Reversed – **LAHATBA (Total generation, total creator (todo creador) or Union and mutuality**
- Leadership in the community was usually assumed by the oldest member of the kin group and one who had extensive knowledge of local lore and traditions. Mostly, the leadership was **egalitarian** too.
- On the surface, the Philippines may be mistaken for a male chauvinist macho country, but it is in essence a matriarchal society with many women actually holding sway over families, businesses and politics.
- Most of our language in the archipelago are gender neutral, making our culture gender neutral too.

- **Babaylan/Katalonan**
    - **Balaanon or Divine** - Babaylan were our pre-colonial spiritual leaders who practiced animism. They were a matriarchy that allowed queer men in their ranks. They meant that they were linked to the divine. And were revered as such.
    - Kusgan or Strong - The Babaylan has a spirit familiar, the Abyan, a gift from the ancestors during initiation. They are the guides and guardians who accompany the Babaylan when they traverse the spirit world so they do not get lost.
    - Mananambal or Healer - The Babaylan's most important role is the healer of both natural and spiritual illness. They believe that people have twin souls – Ginhawa and Kalag
    - Mahinungdanon or Important - The Babaylan performs rituals and sacrifices to appease, honor and converse with the various diwata and deities. These traditions ensure a bountiful harvest, a positive outcome in war and serve as oracle for decisions in trade, travel and marriage.
    - Tigsaysay or Historian - Babaylan were gifted orators who kept the traditions and culture of the community alive. They passed on the tribe's histories and lore through chant, song and dance.
  - **Babaylan were queer and much respected**
    - The Babaylan were highly respected members of the community, equal to the noble ruling class. It was said that their healing feminine energy balanced the destructive masculine energy of the Datu (the head of the tribe). They also served as counsel to the Datu on campaigns, as their link to the divine allowed them to read omens and foretell outcomes of war.
    - The babaylan could freely marry and have sexual relations with any gender. They could have children of their own if they so wished. They were an integral part of the community – keeping the culture, traditions and its people alive – they were never reduced to labels based on sexual preference.
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## SPANISH OCCUPATION

- The imposition of Spanish laws in the Philippines brought radical changes in the status of women. All mentioned privileges before were not given this era.
- The Spanish Civil Code of 1885 – curtailed the freedom of women, especially the marriage
  - women must be protected, but she 'must obey' him.
  - follow the decision of the husband
  - husband shall decide where to live
  - selling of properties without wife's consent
  - take the nationality of foreign husband.
- The husband was the administrator of conjugal properties and the wife was prohibited to acquire or dispose conjugal properties without the consent of the husband which includes purchase of personal items such as jewelries and house furniture.
- Widows were prohibited from remarrying until after 301 days from the death of her husband or after delivery of child if pregnant on the death of husband.
- A widow will lose parental authority over her children unless a will allowed the widow to have a legal custody even if she remarries.
- Divorce and dowry system were recognized during Spanish occupation. Parents of the woman are required to give dowry from their conjugal property.
- Only aggrieved spouse could petition for divorce:
  - maltreatment by deeds or serious insults;
  - adultery of wife; husband committed public scandal or disgrace to his wife;
  - violence and force to change religion
  - prostituting his wife
  - attempt to corrupt or prostitute their children
  - conviction of spouse to the punishment of cadena or reclusion perpetua.
- Filipinas had limited access to education too. Spanish was the official medium of instruction and compulsory for school children ages 7-12. Only elementary levels were exclusive for girls. Out of 1474 village schools, only 590 were exclusive for girls.
- Writing, Reading, Arithmetic, Geography, Doctrina Cristiana, Spanish Language and Grammar, and Music were taught. Boys were given agriculture while girls were needle works. Most of women in schools were from well-to-do families.
- Some schools for girls were:
  - Colegio de Sta. Isabel (1632)
  - Colegio de Sta. Catalina (1696)

- Beaterio de San Ignacio (1699)
  - Colegio de Sta. Rosa (1750)
  - Escuela Maestras (1864)
  - Colegio de Inmaculada Concepcion (1868)
  - Colegio de San Jose de Jaro (1872)
  - Assumption Convent (1892)
  - Superior Normal School for Women (1892)
- Women's curriculum were based on 3 German K's – kirche, kuche, und kinder or 'church, kitchen, and children'.
- All women were taught to follow the Castilian values and norms of sexual behavior and being subservient to males:
  - remained chaste until married;
  - concentrate on developing skills to become excellent daughters, housewives, mothers, and servant of God.
  - low-income women were expected to be active in economic production, farming, weaving, folk healers, and conflict mediators.
- Different manuals were given to educate young girls according to Iberian concepts of femininity:
  - Paginas de la Virtud: Lectura Moral Para Las Ninez (Pages of Virtue: Lecture/Reading on Morality for Girls)
  - Reglamento o Regla de Vida que debe Seguir la Mujer (Regulations or Rules of Life that Women Must Follow)
  - Que Aspire a la Perfeccion (May I Aspire to Perfection)
  - Mga Tagubilin sa mga Dalaga
  - Formacion de la Mujer Cristina
  - With these, women, especially the unmarried or 'dalaga' avoid committing sins in accordance with the injunction of St. Jerome like:
    - talking with men, if necessary, with the least words possible.
    - careful of what they read (books).
    - cultivate the trait of patience
    - keep virginity until marriage
    - avoid being idle
    - stay at home and devote their time on chores and prayers
- Some schools for boys were:
  - Colegio de San Ignacio (1595)
  - Colegio Real de San Jose (1601)
  - Colegio de Sto. Tomas (1611)
  - Colegio de San Juan de Letran (1640)
  - Escuela Pia or Ateneo de Manila
  - Courses on philosophy, Latin and Greek languages, physics, metaphysics, logic, ethics, canon law, Roman law, and among others were offered among boy's schools.
- In labor such as farming, fishing and other economic activities, there were also sexual division.
  - Examples are gleaning, reef fishing, and trading.
  - Backyard manufacture – drying (pagtutuyo), and fermenting (pagbuburo at pagbabagoong).
  - Men were mostly seining, scoops and traps, hook and line, and many more.
- During the Spanish occupation, majority of people followed the impositions of the colonial government, there are group of people who resisted. In 1892, La Liga Filipina failed to achieve independence through peaceful means. A new group came about but opted armed struggle, the KKK or simply as the Katipunan. Most of the members were men but women have special participations.
- During the Spanish period, women joined the underground resistance movement KATIPUNAN in the struggle against colonialism. They fought alongside the men and acquired significant political skills and know-how. Such struggle enabled women to go beyond the traditional roles (i.e of homemaker and caregiver) which the highly patriarchal Spanish regime had imposed upon them.
- There were Women's Chapter which composed most of the wives and daughters of Katipuneros. They were the nurses of the wounded katipuneros. Sets up parties to secret their meetings, and movers of communication.
- Some known Filipinas were Gregoria de Jesus, Melchora Aquino, Trinidad and Soledad Mercado.
  - Teodora Alonzo, mother of national hero Jose Rizal is recognized for her independent political views which drew the anger of the Spanish friars. For refusing to pay land taxes, she was made to walk under heavy guard for some 10 kilometers to the provincial jail and imprisoned for two and a half years.

- The list of prominent Filipino women in history include Gabriela Silang, Gregoria de Jesus, Agueda Kahabagan, Teresa Magbanua, Melchora Aquino, Trinidad Tecson among others. These women did not only attend to the sick and wounded or solicit food and money for the revolution; they also served in the more dangerous tasks of transmitting messages and hiding documents. A few actually fought and reached the rank of general in the revolutionary army.
  - There was also Greogoria Montoya who led 30 Katipuneros, holding Philippine Flag and bolo. Teresa Magbanua led forces in Visayas. Rosario Lopez in Negros donated firearms. Hilaria del Rosario Aguinaldo headed the Red Cross organization.
  - They also aided the troops through sewing their clothes and cooking of meals.
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## AMERICAN REGIME

- During this time, free education for all, both boys and girls, were imposed, from elementary to tertiary. School of Household Industries was established for women.
  - But there was segregation of programs/ courses among sexes which marked the sexual imbalance and stereotypes in various occupations.
  - Different universities were also established:
    - Silliman University, Dumaguete City
    - Central Philippine University, Iloilo City
    - University of the Philippines and Philippine Medical School (UP College of Medicine).
    - Philippine Normal University
    - Polytechnic University of the Philippines and other six other state universities in the provinces.
  - Literacy Rates increases (1903 to 1948):
    - Girls – from 10% to 57%
    - Boys – from 30% to 60%
    - According to records and researches, despite the improvements number of women enrollees in secondary and tertiary decreased
  - Through these, women were able to become professionals. First set of new female doctors, lawyers, and leaders emerged. But among lower-class women, they remained in the farming, fishing, or other cottage industries. Beyond these opportunities, unequal treatment and compensation were still a problem during this tim
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## JAPANESE CONTROL

- There were women became ‘comfort women’ to the Japanese Soldiers during WW2. They were forcibly brought to brothel camps where they served Japanese soldiers as sex slave hostages. Most of men who resist Japanese forces became guerillas and/or HUKBALAHAP.
  - Men mostly revolted the Japanese forces in the mountains. Some were executed innocently. There were public executions were administered to spread fears. American and Filipino captive soldiers experienced violence such as the Death March and Kempeitai punishments.
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## POST-WAR ERA

- After the invasion of foreign forces in the country, the Philippines struggled to stand as a nation and as a state. National identity was not easily crafted due to the mix of Spanish, American, Japanese, and Local influences. Nonetheless, Civil Code of 1949 paved the way to more powers and rights among Filipinas.
  - Women age 21y/o and above were qualified for all acts of civil life (based on law).
  - Legal separation is allowed (especially concubinage and adultery cases)
  - Wives can exercise their profession, occupation, or engage in businesses
  - Husband and wife shall have both consents over their conjugal properties.
  - Parental authority to both parents
  - A mother shall be with her child (if 7y/o and younger), except for compelling reasons
  - A wife can repudiate an inheritance without husband’s consent
  - Women were able to open and manage bank accounts
  - Women can enter military (started to single/unmarried women).

- Constitution and statutes empower women with rights such as employment, work opportunities and compensations, and the founding of Philippine Commission on Women that facilitates policies and programs on gender equality across government branches.
  - Women became active in politics up to the point of EDSA People Power after the ouster of the dictator Ferdinand Marcos Sr., Corazon Aquino became the first female President of the country. The 1987 Constitution, Art. II, Sec. 14 states the role of women in nation-building and ensure fundamental equality among sexes.
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## **CONTEMPORARY TIMES**

- In the Fifth Republic, Filipinos started to pass laws and programs to address different gender issues, together with different NGOs. Several groups and agencies studied and researched the causes and effects of misogynist beliefs and practices such as UP Center for Women's Study.
- Various gender-based violence: battering of partner, student prostitution, rape, sexual harassment, physical and domestic abuse. Nowadays, gender equality rights and children's rights are also raised as these groups are considered minorities, oppressed and marginalized in the society.