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The Historian's Craft

Research Proposal

The Role of Women in the Philippine Revolution

The Philippines, one of the last remaining Spanish colonies in 1896, started its war for independence after over three centuries of being under Spanish rule. According to this newspaper report *El Comercio*, “A group of bandits comprised of 500 individuals, without organization nor arms, a few with firearms, and others with bolosm lances, and clubs. The group marched on orders of a mestizo whose characteristics, according to witnesses, correspond to those of a captain of cuadrilleros of Tondo.”¹ One of the leading revolutionary groups, the Katipunan, led by Andres Bonifacio organized uprisings, initiated armed resistance, and played a crucial role in the Philippine Revolution. The Katipunan's actions were instrumental in uniting Filipinos and laying the foundation for the fight for independence. Many Filipinos inspired or contributed to the revolution including national heroes such as Jose Rizal, Gregorio Del Pilar, and Emilio Aguinaldo. Even though the government or school textbooks have recognized a lot of Filipino people, there are few lessons given about women in the revolution. Filipino women played a variety of roles during the revolutionary period. Their contributions have been selectively ignored or made much of in the subsequent eras of American rule and independence.²

The role of women in the Philippine Revolution has been debatable for a long time because there are differing opinions on the extent of their involvement and the impact they had on the revolution's success. It is also a detailed topic because it specifically focuses on women's

¹ El Comercio. 27 August 1896

² Christine Doran. “Women in the Philippine Revolution.” *Philippine Studies* 46, no. 3 (1998): 361

contributions in the context of the revolution. The significance lies in challenging traditional gender roles and recognizing the often-overlooked and less-known female revolutionaries. For the thesis statement, Women played a crucial role in fighting for independence and equality in the Philippines, demonstrating bravery, leadership, and resilience but were often overlooked and sometimes forgotten by modern history. Their contributions were instrumental in shaping the nation's history and inspiring future generations.

Luckily this book explains the historiography of the revolution and fits clearly with the topic of the role of women otherwise this whole proposal would not make sense. This article called *Women in the Philippine Revolution*, explained that until recently, historians tended to agree that the revolution was triggered by liberal thought, agitation for reform, the influence of Jose Rizal on Andres Bonifacio, and nationalist sentiment. Historians have located the origin of the movement towards the revolution in the liberal enlightenment of the ilustrado class. However, significant and growing trends have diverged from this accepted model, especially in the role of the masses, the peasantry, vis-à-vis the educated elite. Around the same time, David Sturtevant studied rural unrest in the Philippines and found a theme of mysticism and millenarianism. Reynaldo Deto's study of the pasyort, a version of Genesis, the Passion of Christ, and St John's revelation, showed that the meaning of the revolutionary concepts held for Filipino villagers did not derive from the traditions of Western liberalism but from their everyday experiences of mysticism and Filipinized Catholicism. In the historical literature of the revolution, there has been an increasing awareness of class issues and a more nuanced understanding of ethnic identities. However, these writers have not yet acknowledged the disabilities of gender. The Filipino revolution was split into many factions, with rivalry for leadership between Andres Bonifacio and Emilio Aguinaldo, between the elite and peasants,

between those from Manila and those from the outside provinces, and between Catholics and some who were anti-clerical.³ Overall this article greatly describes the causes of the revolution and the role of women even though it may be a summary.

For this research proposal, I plan to approach it by combining primary and secondary sources. For primary sources, I need to look more into memoirs, quotes, and letters written by the actual women who were involved in the revolution. Quotes are very important for primary sources because they allow us to directly capture the words and perspectives of the individuals who were present during the event. For example, a direct quote by Gregoria de Jesus, wife of Andres Bonifacio about her experiences being part of Katipunan, “When I was about eighteen years old, I was married to Andres Bonifacio in the Catholic Church of Binondo, in March 1893 in deference to my parents. But the week following, we were married again in the house of our sponsors on what was then called Oroquieta Street before all the Katipuneros at their request, since they did not recognize as valid our marriage in the Catholic Church. On the evening of the same day, I was admitted to the Katipunan and assumed the symbolic name of “Lakambini”, swearing to obey its rules and fulfill its sacred purpose.”⁴ Another example is Marcela Agoncillo describing her experiences in making the first Philippine flag, “In the house at No. 535, Morrison Hill, where I lived with my family, exiled from our country on account of the national cause, I had the good fortune to make the first Philippine flag under the direction of an illustrious leader General Emilio Aguinaldo y Famy. It took me five days to make the national flag, and when completed, I delivered it to General Aguinaldo before boarding the transport McCulloch... General Aguinaldo is the best witness who can give the information on whether or not that flag

³ Christine Doran. “Women in the Philippine Revolution.” *Philippine Studies* 46, no. 3 (1998)

⁴ “Gregoria de Jesus – Bahay Nakpil-Bautista.”

was the first to be displayed in Cavite at the beginning of the revolutionary government against the government of Spain in these islands."⁵ This quote alone has enough details about this event.

For secondary sources, I need to look more into their life and what they are commonly known for. Secondary sources provide a more detailed understanding of the historical, social, and cultural factors that influenced women's role in the Philippine Revolution. For example, I can use this secondary source about this famous Filipina, Melchora Aquino, who assisted the cause by providing refuge, feeding soldiers, and nursing the wounded.⁶ For the outline of the research, I can just follow the format of most research papers I have done in the past including thesis statement, introduction, main body, and conclusion unless a rubric specifies what I am supposed to do. I can also analyze the long-term effects of women's involvement in the revolution and their contributions to the present-day Philippines. Hopefully, this research proposal will help me further my knowledge of Philippine history and spread awareness about lesser-known events such as the role of women in the Philippine Revolution to the outside world.

⁵ The Kahimyang Project. "June 24, 1859, Marcela Agoncillo Was Born in Taal, Batangas."

⁶ Christine Doran. "Women in the Philippine Revolution." *Philippine Studies* 46, no. 3 (1998): 364

Annotated Bibliography

Primary Sources:

1. Alvarez, S. V. 1992. Recalling the revolution: Memoirs of a Filipino General Translated by P.C.S. Malay. Madison: the University of Wisconsin Center for Southeast Asian Studies.

According to the book description, these memoirs recount all aspects of the Philippine Revolution from its factionalism and corruption to its dignity and glory.

2. Bernad, Miguel A. "The Poets of the Philippine Revolution." *Philippine Studies* 22, no. 1/2 (1974): 81–92. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42634544>.

Contains poems written during the time of the revolution including the details of the event.

3. El Comercio. 27 August 1896

Describes the first written reports of the Philippine Revolution in a newspaper. (One of the sources from the Cry of Balintawak: A Contrived Controversy)

4. "Gregoria de Jesus – Bahay Nakpil-Bautista." n.d. <https://bahaynakpil.org/gregoriadejesus/>.

Quotes about her experiences during the Philippine Revolution. Lakanbini (ruler) of the Katipunan Revolutionary Movement Custodian of the movement's documents, secret codes, and seal Married Julio Nakpil after the revolution and lived with the Nakpil Family in Quiapo.

5. The Kahimyang Project. "June 24, 1859, Marcela Agoncillo Was Born in Taal, Batangas." 2013. The Kahimyang Project. October 26, 2013. <https://kahimyang.com/kauswagan/articles/1637/today-in-philippine-history-june-24-1859-marcela-agoncillo-was-born-in-taal-batangas>.

Explains the life of Marcela Agoncillo. When her husband was branded a filibuster, she and her family went to Hong Kong. She sewed the first Philippine flag with the help of her daughter and Delfina Herbosa Natividad.

Secondary Sources:

1. Borromeo-Buehler, Soledad, and Soledad Masangkay Borromeo. 1998. *The Cry of Balintawak*. Ateneo University Press.

The book description talks about the rigorous analysis of eyewitness and contemporary sources about the events of the Philippine Revolution.

2. Doran, Christine. "Women, Nationalism and the Philippine Revolution." *Nations and Nationalism* 5, no. 2 (1999): 237–58. doi:10.1111/j.1354-5078.1999.00237.x.

The Abstract explains that Filipino women actively participated in the revolution performing a wide range of tasks essential to sustaining the revolutionary challenge against Spanish and American imperialism.

3. Doran, Christine. "Women in the Philippine Revolution." *Philippine Studies* 46, no. 3 (1998): 361–75. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42634272>.

Summary of the role of women in the revolution. It explains their contributions.

4. Foundation for Media Alternatives. 2017. "This Day in #Herstory: Courageous and Strong Women of the Katipunan." Foundation for Media Alternatives. November 30, 2017. <https://fma.ph/2017/11/30/day-herstory-courageous-strong-women-katipunan/>.

A blog about the famous Filipino women in the revolution.

5. Goodman, Grant K. "The Political and Constitutional Ideas of the Philippine Revolution. By Cesar Adib Majul. Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 1967. Revised Edition, Xiii, 215 Pp. Index, N.p." *The Journal of Asian Studies* 28, no. 4 (1969): 915–16. doi:10.2307/2942486.

One of the sources from the Women of the Philippine Revolution article.

6. "The Tandang Sora Bicentennial | GOVPH." 2011. Official Gazette of the Republic of the Philippines. 2011. <https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/the-tandang-sora-bicentennial/>.

Melchora Aquino, known as Tandang Sora, aided the revolutionaries and provided them with provisions. She was arrested by the Spaniards, interrogated, and deported to Guam. After seven years of exile, she was repatriated by the Americans and spent her last years living in Balintawak and passed away at the age of 107.