

Women in the philippines

[Sociology](#), [Feminism](#)



WHAT MAKES A FILIPINO WOMAN? Looking Back in Our History, As a Reminder to Our Society Introduction According to an old emperor of China, "[t]he flower that blooms in adversity is the rarest and most beautiful of all. " This saying describes a particular woman who can persevere and triumph over the challenges she will encounter. This is a woman who will never allow any barrier to stop her and who will always come out of any problem a better person. This woman is none other than Hua Mu Lan. We all know how the story goes: an only daughter volunteers to take her father's place in an all-male army to spare him from injury and, possibly, death. She somehow manages to save China despite being a woman, and brings honor to her family. All this took place in ancient China during the 6th century. Until today, China is a very patriarchal nation, giving most importance and value to the men. Women were only second to men, and were often looked down upon. Despite being considered inferior, however, women like Mulan still continue to prove that they can play an important role in society. This statement holds true even in the Philippines. Even though we always think of Rizal, Bonifacio, and Aguinaldo when we hear the word 'hero', we must not forget about Teodora Alonzo, Melchora Aquino, Marcela Agoncillo, and the other women who have made an impact in Philippine history. Women in the Films (Documentaries) A. The Women of Ifugao In the documentary Ifugao, the roles of the men and women in the culture and tradition of the Ifugaos were shown in detail. Compared to what we are familiar of, it would seem like the roles they play in their way of life are different, or rather, the opposite. The Ifugao men do what the women of the typical society are doing, and vice versa. Contrary to what we believe and practice today,

majority of what we dub as 'hard labor' are done by the women of Ifugao. An example of which is cooking for their community. The only role of men in the cultivation of rice is the preparation of the field (payo). On the other hand, the rest of the chores such as cleaning, planting, and harvesting, are given to women. Ifugao women are expected to take part in the community's welfare. They play an important, nay, a vital role in the growth of the community itself. Zooming in the lives of Ifugao women, as expanded in the film, they are ultimately assumed to do domestic chores and child cares. As mentioned above, they take part in the boosting of the community's welfare. The domestic and agricultural activities that they engaged in is one thing which marks their precedence in the Ifugao community, or at least what gives justice to their struggle to keep up with the pace of the economic demand for their very own survival. With the absence of these Ifugao women, as mentioned in the film, their continuing edification of the payo is not for the sole purpose of large economic profit, but rather to maintain sustainability for their own families as well as the eradication and preservation of their culture. Given a further thought to what the film wanted to illustrate about the Ifugao women and the whole community itself, if they sold their payo and go along with the streaming flow of the economic globalization, there is a tendency that their life sustainability and culture preservation goal will be turned down. Instead, they will be one of those modern folks aiming for an upsized economic growth. One of the old Ifugao women in the film was interviewed why she is still the one tending their payo, where in fact, she is supposed to pass it down to her children to continue the nurturing of the land. She said that her children declined the

land grant because they prefer to go down from the mountains and look for a non-land tending work, for they said, what they gained from their harvest in the payo is no longer enough to define sustainability of their livelihood. On the contrary, there are still a lot of payo tenders at present. If they disappear, these noble Ifugao women, one can surely cannot picture out the mountains of Banaue. B. The Dreamweavers of the T'boli Similar to the role played by Ifugao women, the T'boli people recognize the relevance of their women in the preservation of their culture. The T'boli people are an indigenous group in South Cotabato, situated around Lake Sebu. They are known for their musical heritage and their T'nalak. The T'nalak is an exotic fabric made through a centuries-old process of tie-dye weaving. Currently, these fabrics are made into various products like bags and are greatly fancied by tourists. Due to the industrialization of the country and its commercialized economy, however, the process of creating these fabrics has changed. In order to satisfy the market and keep a sustainable economy, the T'nalak has become meaningless and the Dreamweavers forgotten. Traditionally, these fabrics are exclusively made by the T'boli women (the Dreamweavers) only because they are the only ones blessed to dream of designs and patterns for the T'nalak. Waking up, the T'bolilibon (tribeswomen) must start making the T'nalak. Some even claim to get seriously ill if they choose to ignore their dreams and designs. During the process, silence is observed by the members of the household. The T'nalak has become a cultural core for the T'boli women since it is what they often do. The weaving process does not only embody the culture of the T'boli's, but the cloth itself as well. The cloth is surrounded by superstition, and is

given a sacred value by its mere presence in a festival. These cloths can be handed down to generations as an heirloom, or given as a dowry offered to a chosen groom's family. Since these are traditionally made by women alone, the T'boli women become the cultural center of the group, while highly skilled weavers are prized among others. These skills are passed down from mother to daughter, and ultimately the women of the group. They embody the T'boli culture.

C. The Binukot of Suludnons/Tumandoks Much like the women from the T'boli group, the Binukots also embody the culture of the Tumandoks or Suludnons of the remote mountains of Capiz. Traditionally, a woman becomes a binukot in a community when she is selected as the most beautiful woman in their family, often a datu's family. They are treated like princesses; their feet must not touch the ground, nor must their skin feel the light of day. Sometimes though, this isolation would feel like imprisonment, since they are not allowed to leave their duyans unless they are carried off. Moreover, they cannot go to school to be educated, hence their illiteracy. Because of this, oral tradition has become their refuge in order to pass their culture and history from one generation to another. The binukots spend their time learning epics in the form of songs. These epics are learned orally from elder binukots, as it was a requirement for them to learn the history of their group and heroes. These epics can go on for hours, and the binukots know (and memorize) every syllable by heart. They also learn dances which they perform in special occasions like weddings. Years have gone and the population of these princesses decreased due to the prisoner-like treatment. Modern women of the groups want to be educated instead of being kept in a room all day. So rather than keeping these women from a life they want, a

local man, the son of a binukot, has put up a school teaching little princesses the things that binukots exclusively learn. Comparison with Pre-Hispanic Women The women in the documentaries play a significant role in our society. Aside from aiding in the preservation of our culture and traditions, they are also one of the remaining threads connecting us to our history, tracing back to the Filipino people even before colonization. The arrival of the Spaniards and Christianity in the Philippines brought along with them an outlook on women. This perspective has highly diminished the status of Filipino women in the society. We have been influenced in such a way that women are seen as the weaker sex, and that men are more dominating and powerful. This is probably because women were not given positions when the Spaniards conquered us. Three hundred years of being a Spanish colony has swayed us from old way of viewing women. It would seem that we have forgotten how important women were and still are. During the pre-colonial era, Filipino women enjoy a prestige that only they have experienced, in comparison to women from other countries that time. There were a number of important roles and responsibilities that were specifically given to women, a perfect indication of the significance of women in society. Aside from having the oft-mentioned freedom to commit adultery, public and domestic tasks were likewise entrusted to women. They were able to practice certain trades such as the art of weaving, as demonstrated by the T'boli and their T'nalaks. Present-day T'nalaks may be passed on to the next generation like how pre-hispanic Filipinas can own a property of their own even after marriage, which they can consequently pass on to the their heirs. Perhaps also one of the most important roles of women during the pre-hispanic era

would be that of a babaylan. The babaylan is one of the three main leaders in a barangay, levelled with the datu and the panday. The babaylan's position is given solely to women; they are tasked to serve as the mediator between the physical and spiritual world. Her domain does not only encompass the spirituality, but intellectual and psychological aspect as well. She acts as a priestess, and was so powerful and influential that the Spaniards immediately identified them as a threat, and hence, they began destroying their reputation. Maybe it is also be due of their immense power and influence that there were many accounts of men who disguised themselves as women just to be eligible for the position. This manner of service that pre-hispanic women deliver can be greatly related to the Dreamweaver's dreams. For one, they are an indirect connection between the real world and the spirits that provide them with the patterns in their dreams. There was even one claim of having been ill if they do not weave the patterns from their dreams immediately. Such close link between the spiritual world and our world is usually attributed to a woman's life-giving capabilities, or fertility. Other than the value early people give to the virtue of fertility as an indication of a woman's desirability of becoming a wife, their fertility may also be the reason why they are more inclined to do the jobs for agricultural production. This is perfectly demonstrated by the Ifugaos — the men merely prepare the payo, while the women do the rest of the farming tasks. In line with the somehow matriarchal political element shown by women, via the babaylan and the present-day bai (female leader) of the T'boli, are the matriarchal influence exhibited in the sociocultural element during the pre-colonial women. This may be associated to the binukot's sung

epics. Finally, it is essential to note that being female also heightens a child's economic value back then since a possible spouse must pay a price and provide a service for her bride, as was (and still) practiced by the Ifugaos.

Conclusion Ultimately, the women are the cultural epicenters of the indigenous groups. Though times have changed and they have to adapt to modernization, they continuously make an effort to preserve their rich cultures. The women singing the story of the Ifugaos as they harvest, the Dreamweavers of the T'boli, and the Binukots of the Tumandoks have decreased through time, although some are still in existence. These women incessantly try to live out and preserve their cultural history as they have been taught. While taking the contemporary times into context, the society at large aims to promote and gain gender equality, as what the masses (women in particular) want. In reality though, the thought of gender equality is not entirely new in the Philippines. The country was, in fact, not as particular in gender as in other parts of the world. Men and women were given equal chances and opportunities by the society. The problem of sexism was not a problem as to women was not given "special" attention by the society — meaning women are not looked down upon. Women are part of the society as to what men are treated by it. Indeed, throughout our country's history, women have always played an important role. What is thought of as a patriarchal society is actually a matriarchal one, where the men pay homage and deference to women (specially mothers, wives and sweethearts). They were equal to their male counterparts in terms of bravery, perseverance and love of country. Filipino women are leaders in their own rights, not only in battles or politics but also in everyday life when

they play their roles as mothers, wives, sisters, cousins and friends. In a nutshell, many have tried to depict what a Filipina is all about. By watching the three documentaries and looking back into our unadulterated Philippine history, our group had tried to grasp the essence it tells us concerning women in our society, be it in the past, in connection to this day or in looking forward to our future. But we are afraid, we have still drawn an inadequate picture. We believe that there are things we cannot comprehend yet, feelings we cannot figure out, and experiences we cannot all have. Still, the very essence of every Filipino woman is not only attributes that we have read about nor do they simply exist on books. We have seen them in our grandmothers and our mothers. We have seen them in other women in our family and circle of acquaintances. In our society, we have seen them in Filipinas who are leaders and those who are ordinary. Does it matter if what we are talking about is Filipina from the past or Filipina of today? We hardly think so. She retains them. She may add to it, but essentially, what makes her Filipina remains. Reference: - Garcia, Neil. Philippine Gay Culture: Binabae to Bakla. Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press. 1996. - Santiago, Lilia. Tales of Courage & Compassion, Stories of Women in the Philippine Revolution. Quezon City: Diwata Foundation, 1997. - Caoile, Gloria T., " In Celebration of Filipino Women", Tambuli Magazine, IMDiversity. com, retrieved on: April 29, 2012 WOMEN IN PHILIPPINE SOCIETY Submitted by: Yao, Christelle Aleeza C. Rapiz, Thelani Dawn V. Peña, Lorenz Jonathan S. Bulatao, Ralaine Princess R. Bacas, Danielle Alcoser, Geraldine H. KAS 1 X4 Group 2 Submitted to: Professor Jely A. Galang May 4, 2012