

Women in the Writings of Bonifacio and Jacinto: Trapped in the Cobwebs of History

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ABSTRACT

In general, women's perception of and participation in the Philippine Revolution of 1896 remain submerged and passive even when the principles of the revolution are read from the writings of Bonifacio and Jacinto which are theist and humanist in worldview. But when the same documents are re-read through the lens of *pantayong pananaw* and *babaylan* feminism (indigenous socio-cultural perspectives), women emerge as active and equal

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partners in the revolution. This re-reading adds to the heroic narratives on the Katipunan-led *Himagsikan ng Bayan* (Revolution of the People) in 1896.

KEYWORDS

Philippines—women's history 1500–1896, *babaylan* feminism, Bonifacio and Jacinto on women, Katipunan principles/ideology, *pantayong pananaw* concept

INTRODUCTION

To this day, women typically remain invisible, silent, or inadequately represented in historical accounts of the revolutionary period. Historians attribute this to the scarcity of data on women. But even when present in historical documents, women are subsumed in the historical narratives—rendered passive and feminine objects of male, elitist, and colonial ideas of what it means to be a woman in the midst of revolutionary ferment and struggle.

This paper re-reads the writings of Andres Bonifacio and Emilio Jacinto in search of women's role in the Katipunan-led *Himagsikan* of 1896. Were the avowed goals of the Katipunan for *kalayaan* or independence from Spanish colonial rule sensitive to and supportive of women's issues and equal participation in the revolution?

No one has located extant copies of *Kalayaan*, the Katipunan newspaper which published the original essays and poems of Bonifacio and Jacinto. So far, historians and writers depend for the original of their writings on Epifanio de los Santos, his son Jose P. Santos, and earlier sources such as *Muling Pagsilang* (*Renacimiento's* Tagalog edition), captured documents found in the Philippine Insurgent Records (PIR), and books by Wenceslao Retana, Francis St. Clair, James A. Le Roy, Manuel Artigas y Cuerva, and others.

For this paper, the reader-friendly transcriptions into modern orthography by Virgilio S. Almario found in his book, *Panitikan ng Rebolusyong 1896*, were used. Almario utilized the originals as found in Jose P. Santos' *Si Andres Bonifacio at ang Himagsikan* and *Buhay at mga Sinulat ni Emilio P. Jacinto* which were also consulted. The English texts of the same works are available in Teodoro A. Agoncillo's *The Revolt of the Masses* but this writer relied on her own translations. Two essays by Jacinto, "Sa Mga Sumanib sa Katipunan" and "Mga Aral nang K nang mga A.N.B." are found in PIR Reel 33, Folder 514/10 titled *Kartilla del Katipunan*, which were reproduced in Luis C. Dery's book, *Alay sa Inang Bayan*.

In using Tagalog, Bonifacio and Jacinto directly addressed the ordinary folks and were able to reach out to other ethno-linguistic groups such as Ilocanos, Kapampangan, Cebuanos, etc. Bonifacio and Jacinto also used literary forms familiar to the people from the poor and uneducated to the lower-middle class who were educated but not acculturated to the Spanish culture, unlike many of

the *ilustrado* and mestizo members of Philippine society at the time. Their essays, as noted by poet and critic Virgilio S. Almario (a.k.a. Rio Alma), alluded to the popular awit of the day such as “Bernardo Carpio” and “Florante at Laura,” and the widely-read “Pasyong Henesis” (a vernacular version of the Bible). Their writings also made references to “Urbana at Feliza” by Fr. Modesto de Castro, a book intended to mold the minds and manners of women during the period. Thus, the writings of Bonifacio and Jacinto were understandable and acceptable to the majority of the people, particularly the common *tao*. It is clear that Bonifacio and Jacinto were organizing from below and not from the top.

In re-reading these works, the lens of *pantayong pananaw* and of *babaylan* feminism were used. In *pantayong pananaw*, the cultural context of one’s discourse is crucial. It is grounded on the “F/Pilipino’s organic historico-cultural identity in F/Pilipino about, by, and for the F/Pilipino (emic).¹ In *babaylan* feminism, women’s history is premised on the existence of the *babaylan* consciousness prior to the entry of either Spanish or American concept of feminism. Here, women through *kalinangang bayan* or people’s culture are able to reclaim their ancient voice and vital place in historical narratives as active and equal participants in the revolution.

WOMEN IN THE GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF THE KATIPUNAN

The inclusive character of Tagalog addressed the candidates and members of the Katipunan across

ethnicity, class, gender, and religious affiliations. It is only when Tagalog terms are translated into English that one encounters exclusions, particularly of women. Note these examples: *mga anak ng bayan* (sons of the country); *katipunan* (brotherhood); *pag-ibig sa kapwa* (love for one's fellowmen); and *lahat ng tao'y magkakapantay* (all men are equal). Since discussions and records of the Katipunan were in Tagalog, everyone certainly felt welcome into the association.

Jacinto also explained the Katipunan use of the word *Katagalugan* to refer to *ang lahat ng tumubo sa Sangkapuluang ito, samakatuwid Bisaya man, Kapampangan man etc.*² (all those born inhabitants of the archipelago whether Bisayan, Ilokano, Kapampangan, etc.). Tagalog, itself, is rooted in the word *alog* defined as *tubigan sa pátag o mababang lugar*,³ meaning "water on flat or low-lying areas." Thus, Tagalog literally means those living in wetlands and engaged in agriculture, the main economic activity throughout the islands. Tagalog which sounds ethno-centric and divisive to present-day readers may not have posed a problem to the members of the Katipunan, after all.

Inclusive and egalitarian in language, the founding principles of the Katipunan as articulated by Bonifacio and Jacinto were just as democratic, and in a unique sense theist, and humanist. The indigenous worldview of a *Maykapal* (Creator) who brought into existence *tao* (humans) and *kalikasan* (the universe) as interconnected is central to the ideology. Clearly present is the Filipino ancestor's concept of the Creator interacting with humans, unseen spirits, and

nature.⁴ This interconnection between the spiritual and material realms informs the entire ideological framework of the Katipunan. For instance, belief in Maykapal comes first in Bonifacio's "Katungkulang Gagawin ng mga Z.L.L.B." (Decalogue): *Sumampalataya sa Maykapal nang taimtim sa puso* (Have faith in the Creator with all your heart). The second duty elaborates the first, this time, in a more concrete and holistic sense: *Gunamgunamin sa sarili tuwina ang matapat na pagsampalataya sa Kanya ay ang pag-ibig sa lupang tinubuan sapagkat ito ang tunay na pag-ibig sa kapwa* (Bear always within you true faith in God, which is love for your birthland because this is true love for your neighbor or fellow human being). Again, in the tenth command or duty Bonifacio concludes his Decalogue thus: *...ang mga layong tinutukoy ng KKK ay kaloob ng Maykapal samakatuwid ang hangad ng Bayan ay hangad din Niya* (... the objectives which the KKK pursues are the Creator's will; therefore, what the people aspire for are also His or the Creator's). Note how the *Maykapal* (Creator), *bayan* (earth), *tinubuang lupa*, and *sarili, puso, kapwa* (humans) are present as integral, interactive parts of the whole/ *kabuuan* or ideology.

In "Liwanag at Dilim" ("Light and Darkness"), Jacinto expounds on who is a human being; how different and special humans are from nature, especially from animals because of two attributes given by the Creator to humans: *katwiran at kalayaan* (reason and freedom). Jacinto writes: *Ang katwiran ang ikinaiba ng tao sa hayop. Ang hayop ay hindi nakatatanto ng matuwid at nakaaabot sa dakila at magagandang gawa* (It is reason that distinguishes a human

being from an animal which is unable to comprehend righteousness and cannot accomplish great works).

Jacinto elaborates further: *Ang kalayaan ay biyaya ng langit at hindi ng dilang kagalingan at magandang asal* (Freedom is a gift from heaven and not the result of one's goodness and pleasant character). He also defines what freedom is: *Ang kalayaan ng tao ay ang katwirang tinataglay na talaga ng pagkatao na umisip at gumawa ng anumang ibigin kung ito'y di nalalaban sa katwiran ng iba* (Human freedom is actually reason that every person possesses to think and act in a way that does not violate another person's reason or freedom). Jacinto then proceeds to show the inter-relatedness of reason and freedom. He explains: *Maykapal ang puno't mula ng katwiran na dili maaaring magkaroon kung ang kalayaan ay wala* (The Creator is the source of reason that one cannot have without freedom). *Kung mangyayari na ang Kalayaan ay sinasakal ng mga mali at bulag na pagsampalataya, ng mga laón at masasamang ugali... anu mang gagawin ay di magbubuhay sa kaniyang pagkukusa* (If it should happen that freedom is shackled by false and blind faith, by old and evil customs... one's acts cannot be free, but from necessity or lack of freedom). In other words, it is freedom that gives people choice—freedom to choose reason or not. To Jacinto, enslaved people who surrender freedom to false beliefs and practices lose reason. Jacinto, then, concludes: *Kung kaya may katwiran dahil may kalayaan* (It is reason that gives us freedom). In other words, one is free when doing what is righteous based on *katwiran* (reason) which comes from *Maykapal* (Creator).

Women were attracted to join the revolutionary secret society because of these general principles of the Katipunan. On the basis of one's *pagkatao* (personhood), women possessed the same attributes of reason and freedom. Like the men, they were admitted as members of the *Katipunan ng mga anak ng Bayan* regardless of class, ethnicity, and education. One finds this in Jacinto's "Liwanag at Dilim": *Ang lahat ng tao'y magkakapantay sapagkat iisa ang pagkatao ng lahat...ito'y ang itinatag na katalagahan ng lumalang sa lahat* (All persons are created equal because there is only one humanity...this was ordained by the Creator for all).

The same concept of equality is reiterated by Jacinto in his "Kartilya." The fourth teaching states: *Maitim man o maputi ang kulay ng balat, lahat ng tao'y magkakapantay; mangyayaring ang isa'y higtan sa dunong, sa yaman, sa ganda, ngunit di mahihigitan sa pagkatao* (Whatever the color of one's skin, be it black or white, all persons are equal; one may be superior in intelligence, wealth, beauty but not in one's personhood or humanity).

It was not only as persons that women were considered equal members of the Katipunan. The organization itself, conceptualized as *Kapatiran*⁵ is likened to a family whose members come from *Inang Bayan* (Motherland), *Tinubuang Lupa* (the land of one's birth). Here, woman is *kapatid* (sister). But unlike in the 19th century Western sense of sisters (feminine members of a family as weak and subordinate), the term in the context of *kalinangang bayan* stood for *babae* (woman) or *ina* (mother), highly regarded as a source of life, nurturance, and comfort—not in the physical sense alone but also in the mental, emotional,

and spiritual wellness called *ginhawa*. Note the following passages from Bonifacio's "Pag-ibig sa Tinubuang Lupa":

"Pag-ibig sa Tinubuang Lupa"

*Ay! Ito'y ang Inang Bayang tinubuan
Siya'y ina't tangi na kinamulatan
Ng kawili-wiling liwanag ng araw
Na nagbibigay ng init sa lunong katawan.*

.....

*Sa kanya'y utang ang unang pagtanggap
Ng simoy ng hanging nagbibigay lunas
Sa inis ng puso na sisinghap-singhap
Sa balóng malalim ng siphayo't hirap.*

(Oh! Motherland of one's birth
She is mother and only source of life
Wholesome warmth of the sun
That gives heat to the weak body.

.....

To her we owe the first breath
of air that gives relief
to the troubled heart drowning
in the deep well of miseries and sufferings).

In another essay by Jacinto, woman symbolizes *kalayaan* (freedom) where freedom is defined as a force for good, the source of what is great, praiseworthy, honorable, defended, and aspired for by humanity. It is with freedom that people get rid of tyrants and under freedom that people get to enjoy the good life. These can be found in the following passages of Jacinto's "Pahayag":

“Pahayag”

Ako (kalayaan) ay may simula ng mga bagay na higit na dakila, higit na maganda at higit na kapuri-puri, at marangal at iniingatan, na maaaring matamo ng sangkatauhan. Nang dahil sa akin ay nalaglag ang mga ulong may korona; nang dahil sa aking adhikain nabigo at napatay ang sigâ ng “Santong Inkisasyon”... napagkaisa ang mga tao... natimawa ang mga alipin.

(I (freedom) is the source of what is truly great, beautiful, praiseworthy, and honorable that humanity defends and aspires for. It is because of me that crowned heads fell; because of my advocacy that the flames of the “Holy Inquisition” were put out... that people were united... and slaves freed...)

Noong sinaunang panahon... nasa ilalim ko ang bayang Tagalog... Siya ay maligaya at sinisimsim ang simoy na nagdudulot sa kanya ng buhay at lakas ng katawan.

(In ancient times when the land of the Tagalog was under my care, the people were happy breathing with pleasure the air that gives life and strength to the body).

In the language of the Katipunan, therefore, woman as *Tinubuang Lupa* to Bonifacio and as *Kalayaan* to Jacinto—evokes a mother’s love that gives life and *ginhawa*

(lightness of being) to the *bayán* (people). Attaining *ginhawa*, Bonifacio and Jacinto both assert, was a major goal of the Katipunan-led revolution:

Dapat ninyong mabatid na ang kadakilaang ating pagugugol ng lalong mahalaga sa loob at sampu ng ingat na buhay, ay nang upang tamuhin at kamtán yaong nilalayong kalayaan ng ating Bayang tinubuan ay siyang nagbibigay ng buong kaginhawaan at magbabangon ng kapurihan na inilugmok ng kaalipinan...

(You should realize that the greatness of one's devotion and offer of life, is to obtain our desired freedom for our country that gives wholeness and honor that enslavement has brought to ruin...)

WOMEN IN THE SPECIFIC TEACHINGS OF THE KATIPUNAN

More than the inclusion of women in the general principles of the Katipunan is the well-deserved place of women as equal partners of men in the organization. In specific references, Bonifacio and Jacinto showed great sensitivity to and a high degree of consciousness about the oppressed condition of women under Spanish colonization not only as members of a class and race but especially as women. Below are excerpts of the sentiments and ideas of Bonifacio and Jacinto on women.

From “Ang Mga Cazadores” by Bonifacio:

*Sa mga babae na matatagpuan
Mga unang bati’y ang gawang mahalay;
Kamuntik man lamang di nagpipitagan
Sa puring malinis na iniingatan.*

(To women that (the Cazadores) encounter
Their first “greeting” is to sexually harass them
They show no respect whatsoever
For the dignity that women care for).

From “Katipunang Mararahas ng Mga Anak ng Bayan” by Bonifacio:

*...yaong paglapastangan at pagdungis sa kapurihan
ng mga babae na di pinakundangan ang kanilang
kahinaan... ay humihingi ng isang masiglang
paghihiganti at matinding kaparusahan.*

(...this physical violence that dishonors women
who are defenseless... deserve vengeance and severe
punishment).⁶

From Jacinto’s “Pahayag”:

*Sabi ng aking mga kapatid: ‘Nahalay ang aking puri
ng isang kura, ng isang Kastila, ng isang mariwasa,
at ang hukom na matibay na haligi ng hustisya ay
tutugon: Ang taon iyan ay tulisan isang bandido at
isang masamang tao: ikulong sa piitan!’*

(My sisters declare: ‘I was raped by a friar, by a Spaniard, by the wealthy, and the judge who is the pillar of justice would reply: Away with them who are robbers, bandits, and evil people, imprison them!’)

Here, rape as a crime against the dignity of woman as a person—not just her chastity—is recognized. And as a crime against personhood, sexual assault deserves severe punishment.

Feminists from the West, however, may find certain Katipunan teachings somewhat patronizing. For instance, Bonifacio’s idea that women, because they are physically frail, should leave the dangerous task of fighting to the men, is quite sexist.

“Katipunang Mararahas ng Mga Anak ng Bayan”

Sa inyong pamimiyapis mangyayaring abutan ang kayo’y tanghaling bangkay sa gitna ng parang ng pakikidigma. Ngunit ito’y kapurihang maipapamana sa ating Bayan, sa ating lahi, at sa ating angkan.

(In the fierce struggle, you (the men) can lose your lives in the battlefield. But this is an honorable heritage you give for one’s country, race, and family).

In contrast, Bonifacio refers to the women as:

Yaong pinapangulila... yaong walang tilang agos ng luha sa mga nawalay sa piling ng kanilang mga anak, asawa, matatandang magulang...

(Women are those orphaned... those whose ceaseless tears flow because of separation from their sons, husbands, and old parents...)

In fact, the men in the family when called upon to fight leave everything and everyone behind:

Ang anak, asawa, magulang, kapatid, isang tawag (ng Bayan) ay tatalikdang pilit.

(Children, wives, parents, brothers and sisters, they (the men) leave behind when called upon to serve.)

In a similar vein, feminists may react negatively to Jacinto's "Kartilya" where he instructs how male members should regard and treat the women. Katipunan teaching number nine states:

Sa daang matinik ng kabuhatan, lalaki ay siyang patnugot ng asawa't mga anak; kung umaakay ay tungo sa sama, ang patutunguhan ng inaakay ay kasamaan din.

(In the thorny path of life, man is the leader of his wife and children; if the one leading is on the evil path, he will bring those he leads to the same evil path).

This re-asserts male dominance over women as preached and practiced under Spanish colonial rule. Feminists have a basis to find it offensive but only when

understood within the Western European perspective. One needs to relate this particular teaching to the next:

Ang babae ay huag tingnan isang bagay na libangan lamang, kundi isang katuwang at karamay sa mga kahirapan nitong kabuhayan; gamitan mo ng buong pagpipitagan ang kanyang kahinaan at alalahanin ang inang pinagbuhata't nag-wi sa iyong kasanggulan.

(Do not treat woman as a plaything or as an object, but as a helpmate and companion in life's difficulties, regard with utmost respect her physical frailty, remembering one's mother who gave you life and nurtured you from infancy).

And to another teaching where the golden rule is applied specifically to women members of the family:

Ang di mo ibig gawin sa asawa mo, anak mo at kapatid, ay huag mong gagawin sa asawa, anak at kapatid ng iba.

(What you do not want done to your wife, daughter or sister, you should not do to the wife, daughter or sister of another).

Within the *kalinangang bayan* perspective such concepts of gender roles, particularly of women under the direction and protection of men makes sense. To men and women of the period especially among the ordinary folks, women because of their fragile physique need to be protected by the physically strong. This fits well within the

accepted concept of equality despite the differences such as in physical strength. It is only fair that the physically weak be protected from assault by the physically strong. This also explains why men are expected to do the physical fighting in the battlefields. But this does not preclude women's participation in other forms—as *katuwang* at *karamay* (partner and companion) in all of life's struggles and difficulties. These include women's reproductive tasks at home and productive work outside, and women keeping the seals and documents of the Katipunan at the risk of their lives and persons as women (sexual violence). They also acted as decoys while the men held secret meetings; nursed the sick and wounded in the battlefields; and helped recruit and finance the secret society. When a few or some women joined in the fighting, no one (male or female) objected to or belittled their participation. Teresa Magbanua, Trinidad Tecson, and Gabriela Montoya, among others, are examples of women who fought in the battlefields.

Babaylan feminists would have a different sense of the same texts. With a historical memory grounded on the leadership of women called *babaylan* (equal partner of the *datu*, *panday*, and *bagani* in the ancient barangay),⁷ they have this foreknowledge of what happened to women under Spanish colonialism. They would be well aware of how women were domesticated by the friars through distorted beliefs and practices in Christianity; and in the case of the *babaylan*, how these women priests/leaders because of their rebelliousness were eliminated through texts of terror and physical violence.⁸ Add to this, how the subtle influence of secular readings such as “Urbana and Feliza” reduced women

into modest, submissive, and lovesick creatures like Maria Clara—Rizal’s tragic heroine in *Noli Me Tangere*. Thus, in re-reading the texts of Bonifacio and Jacinto using the lens of *babaylan* feminism, one can uncover renewed meanings where women though physically weak and relegated by the colonial regime to domesticity or the nunnery, were upheld as equal helpmates and companions in the struggle as life-giving and nurturing mothers, wives, sisters, and sweethearts as well as rebels of old. Here, women’s ancient roles in the public and private spheres are reclaimed—without separating the personal from the political; the political from the personal.

Jacinto’s poem specially dedicated to women appears most challenging to feminists. Entitled “Sa Mga Babae” (“For the Women”),⁹ the poem begins with Jacinto referring to women as:

*Kayong mga mutyang aliw ng binata
puri ng magulang, na mapagkalinga
kayo nga ay anghel nating taga-lupa
na dapat alayan ng suyong sagana*

(You, pearls of joy to men
pride of caring parents
you really are angels on earth
to whom we should offer generous praise).

Jacinto compares women to pearls which are priceless for their beauty and purity. Women with such qualities give honor to parents who nurtured them, and provide inspiration to young men who look for guidance.

In the second stanza, Jacinto elaborates further:

*Kayo rin ang talang dapat gumabay
sa mga lalaking ngayo'y naglalamay
sa dilim ng lungkot, buhay ang puhunan
sa pagmamasakit ng naabang Bayan*

(You are also the star that should guide
the men now active in night-long vigils
in the darkness of sorrow, with one's
life as the price to free the enslaved country).

Amidst dangers and difficulties in the struggle, men look up to women for support, for comfort, and aid which they compare to the gentle light of the stars in heaven and the healing touch of angels. This may sound like flattery to some, but not to the men who regarded women, then, as a source of strength and companions in the struggle.

In the third stanza, Jacinto, aware of the generally passive state of women, admonishes them to awaken:

*Ang pagkababai'y huwag isaisip
nariyan si Ester, nariyan si Judit
Ito'y mahihinang inyo ring kaparis
datapuwa't sa Bayan siyang nagtangkilik*

(Do not belittle one's womanhood
just like Esther and Judith
though frail like you
they freed their country).

Jacinto displays his familiarity with the Bible by referring to the courage of Esther and Judith in liberating their people from captivity despite their physical frailty. In the succeeding stanzas, Jacinto details how these women achieved victory:

*Masagip lamang ang bayan sa hirap
buhay ibiningit sa pagkapahamak
kaya naman ngayon siyang nahahayag
ang dangal ng ngalan sa Sangmaliwanag*

(To save the country from miseries
they offered their lives though endangered
thus now the glory of their names
is proclaimed throughout the land).

*Hindi nangilabot silang sumagasa
sa nagbabalang sungit ng sakuna,
sapagkat sa puso'y taglay palibhasa
pagasa sa Diyos nagmula ang awa*

(They did not fear rushing forward
in the face of threatening dangers
Because in their hearts resides
hope in God from where mercy comes).

Jacinto ends his poem with a call for women to join the revolution where their spiritual strength could throw light in the struggle.

*Di kung magkagayon ang babaeng hirang
tala at bulaklak nitong Silanganan*

*magiging bituin ng kaginhawaan
pamawi sa hirap nitong ating Bayan*

(Therefore, women as the beloved
morning star and blossom of the East,
will be the star of wholeness, the
relief of our suffering people).

*Kaya nga kilos na, kayong taga-langit
mga binibining salaming malinis
timiin ang puso't imulat ang isip,
piliting umiral ang banal na matuwid.*

(Act now, you who come from the heavens
Maidens who are mirrors of purity.
Temper your heart and open your mind
Let hallowed reason prevail).

In these last stanzas, Jacinto raises women from their oppressed state to equal heights of heroism and recognizes their contributions to the revolution as women. For him, women's strong faith and hope in the Creator can temper the terror and violence in the battlefields. And when women open their minds to reason, the pursuit of freedom to bring about *ginhawa* has a greater chance of success not only because of their numbers but also because of their great moral influence on families and communities as a whole. Jacinto knew well that in the culture of the ordinary folks, women especially as mothers hold the key to stability and wholeness.

CONCLUSIONS

At the heart of the Katipunan ideology is having faith on a Creator, the first commandment in Bonifacio's "Decalogue." It is a Creator whose essence or light represented by the sun in the heavens gives heat to the earth making life possible for humans, animals, and plants and where humans and nature constitute *kabuhayan* (material existence on earth). Bonifacio expounds on the meaning of faith as *pag-ibig at gawa* (love and acts) of caring for one's environment, family, community, and finally one's country or people.

Jacinto further deepens the concept. In his comprehensive essay, "Liwanag at Dilim" ("Light and Darkness"), he puts *tao* (human beings) at the center of material life. According to him, it is human beings gifted with *katwiran at kalayaan* (reason and freedom) who can bring about *ginhawa* (wholeness)—the end goal of human love and acts. In fact, Jacinto puts the sole responsibility on human beings. He wrote: When people surrender their freedom to false faith and glitter of materialism, they lose freedom, and without freedom, they lose reason or light. Thus, people are blinded and deceived. To counter this, Jacinto points to love, the greatest emotion that each one should develop. It is love that motivates one to do good to all regardless of ethnicity, class, and gender. It is such love that brings about mutual help and unity that could end oppression or slavery:

...kung ang lahat ay nag-iibigan at magpapalagayang tunay na magkakapatid mawawala ang pag-aapihan.

...if there is love for one another and everyone is treated as a member of one's family, then there would be no oppression.

However, aware that individuals and families on their own could not bring about social change and that institutions must be set up to create the intended impact, Jacinto's spells out the Katipunan's concepts of power, leadership, and governance:

Wala na kundi ang kaginhawahan ng Bayan ang tunay na sanhi ng alin mang kapangyarihan sa ibabaw ng lupa.

(There is no other reason for power except the well-being of one's people on this earth).

Ang pinuno'y kapantay din ng lahat... Ang pagsunod at pagkilala sa kanila ay dahil sa kapangyarihang ipinagkaloob ng Bayan.

(Leaders are equal to the rest... Adherence and recognition due them come from the authority granted to them by the people).

Ang kautusan nga, dahil nagbubuhay sa loob ng Bayan, ay unang dapat na igalang at sundin bago ang mga pinuno pagkat ito'y mga katiwala lamang.

(Laws are obeyed because these come from the will of the people while leaders are the people's stewards or servant-leaders).

It is clear that Bonifacio and Jacinto preferred a people-centered form of government to replace the autocratic and monarchichal form of government that Spain had set up in the colony. It is not a government by one or a few who should wield authority but the people through their hand-picked and deserving representatives who in turn are accountable to the people.

Una sa lahat na sukat makapagbibigay ng magandang ayos, makapagpanatili ng tunay na pagkakaisa, makapag-akay sa hangganang ninanais.... Ano pa mang mangyayari, ang mga Pinuno ay siyang mananagot.

(Above all (they) should be able to bring order (in society), able to sustain genuine unity, and lead the people to the desired end.... Whatever happens, the leaders are accountable to the people).

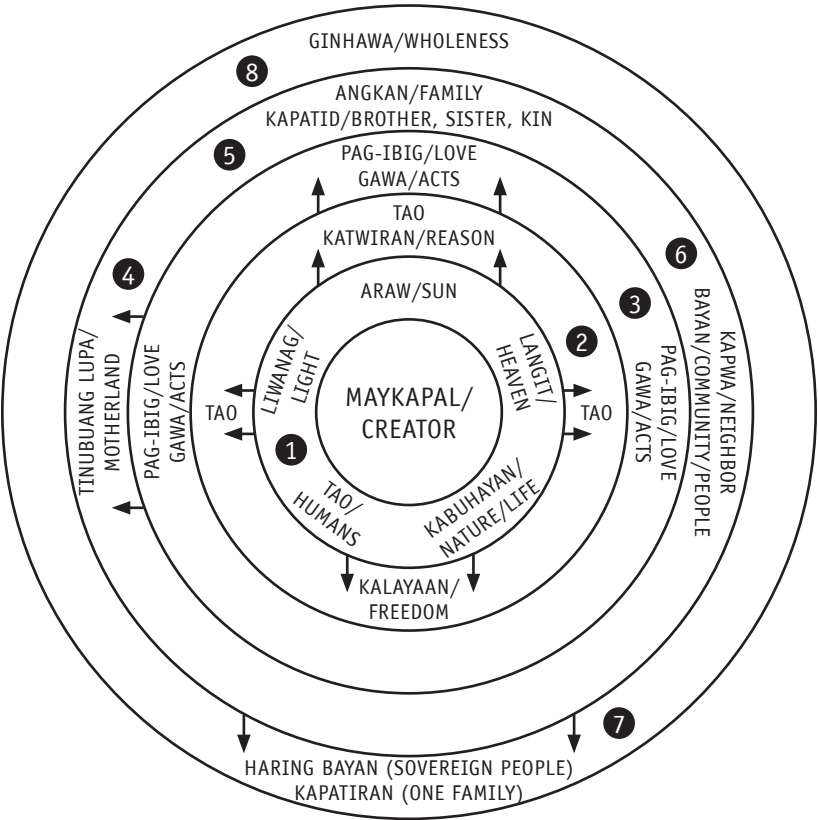
In particular, Bonifacio and Jacinto's philosophical idea of *Haring Bayan* must have attracted women to join the Katipunan. In *Haring Bayan* (should this become a reality), all—man, woman, old, young, educated or not—are to be treated with respect and equality as human beings belonging to one people akin to a *kapatiran* (family). And it is to women in the family especially as mothers to whom (more than the men) that Bonifacio and Jacinto attributed guidance, strength, and faith that could bring love, true freedom, and equality:

Sa tunay na pagsampalatayang ito nabubuhol ang pag-ibig at pagganap ng tunay na kalayaan at pagkakapantay...(kung saan) nagbubuhat ang

pagkakaisa—ang binhing tangi ng kasipagan, lakas, kapayapaan, at ginhawa.

In true faith is love intertwined and the attainment of true freedom and equality...(that bring) unity—the source of one’s productivity, strength, peace, and wholeness.

The following is a graphic presentation of the Katipunan theory and practice of revolution:



Strange to most readers is this high regard for women at a time when women was subordinated and oppressed within the dominant colonial culture and institutions. But it is not so to Bonifacio and Jacinto. Their consciousness to shake off Spanish political and economic structures included people's culture or *kalinangang bayan* as integral and crucial to one's identity and independence as a people. This is evident, first of all, in Bonifacio's insistence that Tagalog be the spoken and written language of the Katipunan.¹⁰ The use of *baybayin* (indigenous syllabary) in place of the Roman alphabet is another. A third and the most important is the reclaimed ancient view of a compenetrant world of the spiritual and the material realms, the *kabuuan* framing the Katipunan ideology where women, as noted earlier, served as the source of spiritual guidance moral strength, and unity in the community.

Bonifacio and Jacinto may not have consciously articulated the *babaylan* in their writings. But the memory of women's heroic lives as wives and mothers in their own homes, the industry of women in the workplace, and the courage of women as members of the Katipunan and as source of spiritual strength in times of crisis must have left imprints in their hearts and minds. Hence, their allusions to women as *katuwang* (comrade), *Inang Bayan* (Motherland), *kalayaan* (freedom) and as *mutya* (pearl), *tala* (morningstar), and *anghel sa lupa* (heavenly creature). All these may have served as pointers to a "political unconscious" of a time past when women (as *Babaylan*) held equal and positive roles in ancient society as the community's priest, healer, epic chanter, counselor, and visionary, as well as fierce leaders in the anti-colonial resistance to early Spanish colonization

and Christianization. True, the writings of Bonifacio and Jacinto have been read from various standpoints: as Masonic in influence, Liberal Enlightenment in content, and, lately, as having their own cultural language and spirit. Still, if their texts continue to be read within the European perspectives of nationalism and feminism, Bonifacio and Jacinto's teachings on women's rights and participation in the revolution, including their poetic allusions to and praises of women, may seem patronizing platitudes and sentimental outbursts. But re-interpreted under the lens of *kalinangang bayan* and *babaylan* feminism, women in the writings of Bonifacio and Jacinto are freed from the cobwebs of historical documents and narratives and are able to emerge as visible, equal, and heroic participants in the Katipunan-led *Himagsikan ng Bayan* (Revolution of the People in 1896).

BONIFACIO, JACINTO AND WOMEN OF THE KATIPUNAN



Andres Bonifacio



Emilio Jacinto



Gregoria de Jesus



Teodora Alonzo



Melchora Aquino



Teresa Magbanua



Pagdiwata babaylan Tagbanua (Palawan) in
Robert Fox *Filipino Heritage II*: 384, 1977



Gabriela Silang artwork by Sta. Maria.



Painting by Rafael del Castillo from
Nicanor G. Tiongson's *Women of Malolos*, 2004



Trinidad Tecson

ESSAYS OF BONIFACIO AND JACINTO

ANDRES BONIFACIO

“Ang mga Cazadores” in Almario (1993), 140.

“Ang Dapat Mabatid ng mga Tagalog” in Almario (1993), 152–153.

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“Katungkulang Gagawin ng mga Z.L.L.B.” in Almario (1993), 151.

“Pag-ibig sa Tinubuang Lupa” in Almario (1993), 141.

EMILIO JACINTO

“Mga Aral ng Katipunan ng mga A.N.B.” in Almario (1993), 157–158.

“Ang Kasalanan ni Cain” in Almario (1993), 164–165.

“Liwanag at Dilim” in Almario (1993), 166–182.

“Sa May Nasang Makisanib sa Katipunang Ito” in Almario (1993), 156–157.

“Pahayag” in Almario (1992), 160–163.

“Sa mga Babae” in Encarnacion Private Collection of Katipunan Papers

NOTES

- 1 Portia L. Reyes, Abstract, "Pantayong Pananaw and Kasaysayan in the New Filipino History of Ideas," (PhD diss., Universitat Bremen, 2002).
- 2 Emilio Jacinto, "Sa mga Nasang Sumanib sa Katipunan," in Virgilio S. Almario, *Panitikan ng Rebolusyong 1896* (Diliman, Lungsod Quezon, Filipinas: University of the Philippines Press, 1993), 156.
- 3 Virgilio S. Almario, Punong Editor, *U.P. Diksiyonaryong Filipino*, (Ikalawang Edisyon) Diliman, U.P. Sentro ng Wikang Filipino and Anvil Publishing, Inc., 2010), 40.
- 4 Fe B. Mangahas, "The Babaylan Historico-Cultural Context," *Centennial Crossings: Readings on Babaylan Feminism in the Philippines*. Fe B. Mangahas and Jenny R. Llaguno, eds., (Quezon City, C & E Publishing, 2006), 23–24.
- 5 *Kapatiran* which is brotherhood in English is a non-sexist, non-racial, and non-class term in Tagalog. It is an inclusive and egalitarian term within the culture of the Katipunan.
- 6 Even present-day feminists will find the Katipunan discourse on rape quite progressive.
- 7 Mangahas, "The Babaylan Historico-Cultural Context," 22–24.
- 8 Mangahas, "The Babaylan Historico-Cultural Context," 37–39.
- 9 From a document on exhibit at the Museo ng Katipunan, Pinaglabanan, San Juan City, (Encarnacion Collection).

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