



Hanap-buhay: Finding Heritage of Spirituality in the workplace in Filipino Context

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Abstract: This study investigates and tries to find heritage of spirituality in the Filipino experience of work. Work for many Filipino workers throughout history is experience as a struggle and as a survival that would not render service to nourish workers' dignity. This contradicts the faith of Catholic spirituality that work should offer service to people for them to have dignity. Through the review of relevant literature and studies, the interweaving of spirituality and work in the precolonial period had been disregarded by the system and management of feudalism and capitalism that focus on productivity and profit and not on the worker's dignity and wellbeing. However, management today has emerged from an industrial revolution and capitalist paradigm of productivity and profitability to an admission of spirituality as a relational dimension in the workplace. Spirituality at the workplace could help transform the struggle of Filipino experience of work i.e. from doing things just for the sake of doing into *hanap-buhay* i.e. finding life at work more than a living but a way to make the dignity of human lives reach its fullness. This is indeed a spiritual social transformation but does not only present challenges but as well opportunities to partake the works of the Creator, that amidst the struggle as Lasallians we say "Lord the work is yours!"

Key Words: Work, Feudalism, Capitalism, Spirituality, Spirituality at the Workplace, dignity, faith and *hanap-buhay*

1. INTRODUCTION

Pope Francis said that "work should offer service to people so they may have dignity."¹ But how could this be possible if in the context of poverty, work is a matter of survival? In the Philippine context, issues of unemployment and struggles of workers both local and abroad is indeed a reality. Labor issues such as different forms of contractualization, struggle and survival of workers are reflected in the news, social media, even in commercial advertisement (as to that of Jollibee commercial "sunod ako sa payday"). The daily life of a Filipino worker is a daily struggle -- a matter of survival indeed. It is a struggle of a human individual to create something out of one's existence. We could see beautiful malls, condominiums and buildings, but the public transportation is horrible. The subways known to be MRT and LRT are constantly jammed with people. People would line up for about 1 hour and 30 minutes before getting a slot and space to ride the subways. Adding the discomfort, air and noise pollution would give a day of stress to an individual worker in an early morning rush. Life for most Filipino worker is indeed hard!

"Work is dangerous than war"², as Salamat (2011) report states that the International Labor Organization (ILO) concluded in their study on global health and safety at work. The ILO study revealed that globally, at least one worker dies at work every 15 minutes.³ This is reflected in the Philippine context as a non-government

¹ Glatz, Carol. Catholic News Service, Pope Francis addresses the dignity of work.

<http://dioceseofraleigh.org/news/pope-francis-addresses-the-dignity-of-work> retrieved January 2017.

² Salamat, Marya. <http://bulatlat.com/main/2011/07/22/worsening-conditions-for-the-filipino-worker/> retrieved December 2016.

³ Ibid.



occupational health and safety institute criticized the lack of concern for health and safety at work as highlighted by the deregulation of labor inspection as contained in a Department of Labor and Employment order.⁴ Accidents of worker are common events in the workplace in the Philippines such as the death of a worker in Hanjin Company in Subic, Zambales, the fatal fall from Lucio Tan-owned construction site that killed 10 construction workers⁵ and deaths of over 70 people when a fire hit a factory of Kentex Manufacturing Corporation in Valenzuela City.⁶ These events are all over the news and in social media. Furthermore, just recently a woman who commutes everyday did not only lost her leg but also the capacity to work when she fell off the bus onto the pavement and was run over by it.⁷ Work for Filipino seems not offering service for one's dignity.

Our modern day hero, our dearest OFWs (Overseas Filipino Workers) and their long way journey back home to our motherland is also a reflection of a worker's struggle and survival. The recent death of Jakaita Pawa, a domestic helper in Kuwait from Zamboanga del Norte who was sentenced to death in April 2008 for allegedly killing the daughter of her employer is just but one of the many neglected cases of an OFW. Catuira, acting Secretary General of Migrante International stated that "Her death is a result of the government's policy of not providing immediate legal assistance to OFWs. We believe that she is not the culprit but the victim of a sorry condition that forced her to work in a foreign land in order to provide a better future for her children. We also believe that she will not have ended up on death row had the Philippine government attended to her case sooner. The government must be held accountable."⁸ Moreover, Migrante also challenged President Duterte to immediately call for a review of RA 8042 as amended by RA 10022 as it does not guarantee the welfare and security of overseas Filipino workers just like what happened to OFW Pawa. According to Migrante's monitoring, almost 100 OFWs are currently on death row and more than 9,000 are in detention, many of those are not provided legal assistance from our government.⁹

Work seems to be a slavery that forces an individual sacrifice his dignity, even to the point of losing one's life. Death, raped, being beaten up and being maltreated, daily struggles and survivals are realities experience by many of our Filipino workers both local and abroad. In spite of these, Filipino workers would still choose to keep going. Is this because they just got used to it? Or is there more than that? And if it is more than that, is it that Filipino by nature strong in character and resilient? Could spirituality in the workplace contribute for them to be strong in character and be resilient? Could it also be a way for them to find meaning in the workplace that would drive workers to keep going and continue to work and have their dignity? To attempt to answer all these, it is good to revisit the beginning of a Filipino worker thru history and literature down to the present.

2. GENERAL GENEALOGY OF FILIPINO EXPERIENCE OF WORK

2.1. Precolonial Experience of Work of Filipino

Contrary to the claims of the many foreign accounts, our ancestors were not just some backwards, jungle-living savages that would understand living as survival of the fittest. The pre-colonial experience of work of our ancestors already possessed a very advanced civilization way before the coming of the Spaniards.¹⁰ Our ancestors had a complex working society and a culture full with works of literature and arts. These are same

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ <http://www.gmanetwork.com/news/story/538293/news/metro/fire-hits-industrial-area-in-valenzuela-city> retrieved January 2017

⁷ <http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/859564/ltfrb-asked-suspend-bus-driver-operator-over-accident-that-maimed-woman> retrieved January 2017

⁸ <https://migranteinternational.org/2017/01/25/ofws-mourn-death-of-jakaita-pawa-justice-must-be-served-heads-must-roll/> Retrieved January 2017

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ <http://www.filipiknow.net/life-in-pre-colonial-philippines/> retrieved January 2017.

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claims of Halili (2004) in her book *Philippine History* that indeed Filipino, in the Pre-colonial era, are not only hunters, farmers and fishermen but also they are skilled craftsmen.¹¹ The copper object dates back 900 A.D. known also as LCI or Laguna Copperplate Inscription found near the mouth of Lumbang river in Laguna in 1990 is an evidence that our ancestors our also skilled craftsmen.¹²

Abinales and Amoroso (2005) regard the precolonial “Philippines” as part of maritime Asia and regarded as one of the sea traders in Southeast Asia¹³. Long before the famous galleon trade in the Spanish period, our ancestors had trading and had diplomatic relations with our neighboring Asian countries, like China and Japan, even Sri Lanka, India and up to the Middle East.¹⁴ This would manifest that our ancestors are patient, industrious, honest and hard workers. In fact in the works of Halili (2004) Filipino honesty is admire by our trading partners like the Chinese¹⁵. Furthermore, advance concept of agrarian equity, and women and men equity status are also realities that our ancestors manifests that they are indeed responsible, just and collaborative workers.¹⁶ Men and women equally worked in the fields and they really took good care of the environment. The Banaue Rice Terraces is one great proof of our ancestors’ ingenuity. Our ancestors believed to that concept of interconnectedness among people to people, people to earth and people to the spirit. “Power and spirituality in the archipelago are interwoven in animistic world permeated with religious belief.”¹⁷ Even in terms of work and spirituality are also interconnected. Offerings, sacrifices, ceremonies and feastings are done routinely specially at crucial times, in the agricultural cycle, before commencing a voyage or raid with the help of a *baylan* or *babaylan* or of a paid spirit ritualist i.e. someone with power to intercede in the spirit world.¹⁸ These rituals would also include healing for the sick, blessing of marriage and assurance of safe child birth¹⁹. It is good to note that the Cordillera people carved *anito* figures called *bulol*, that signifying ancestral spirits and granary gods and they are place in front of the door of a rice warehouse to serve as caretaker.²⁰ This is indeed a clear interconnectedness of work and spirituality among the early Filipinos. (Spirituality taken as faith, trust in God, religious practices etc.)

The society or community of the early Filipinos is a web of interdependence. Work is also experience in this realm of interconnectedness. The unit of social organization with broader political, economic and religious features than the family is called the barangay led by a *datu* or *rajah*.²¹ The word barangay came from the word *balangay* referring for the boatload of related people, their dependents and their slaves.²² The barangay settled together in a community ranging from thirty to hundred households, through subdivision of status – *datu*, *maharlika*, *timawa*, and *alipin*. *Datuship* is a hereditary class and a political office that included military, judicial, religious and entrepreneurial roles.²³ The datu’s large entourage and the many dependents in his household were partly self-supporting and partly supported by tribute paid by the people under his control and

¹¹ Halili, Maria Christine. *Philippine History*. Published by Rex Bookstore Philippines, Manila. 2008. p42-48.

¹² Ibid. p47.

¹³ Abinales, P. and Amoroso, D.. *State and Society in the Philippines*. Rowman and Littlefield Publisher Inc. USA. 2005.

¹⁴ Ibid. See also <http://www.filipiknow.net/life-in-pre-colonial-philippines/> retrieved January 2017.

¹⁵ Halili, Maria Christine. *Philippine History*. Published by Rex Bookstore Philippines, Manila. 2008. p42-48.

See also <http://www.filipiknow.net/life-in-pre-colonial-philippines/> retrieved January 2017.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Abinales, P. and Amoroso, D.. *State and Society in the Philippines*. Rowman and Littlefield Publisher Inc. USA. 2005.

¹⁸ Ibid. The spirit ritualist, *baylan* in Visayan and *catalonan* in Tagalog, was typically an elderly woman of high status or a male transvestite (therefore femal by gender preference), who learned her profession from her mother or other femal relatives.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Halili, Maria Christine. *Philippine History*. Published by Rex Bookstore Philippines, Manila. 2008. p58.

²¹ Ibid. p55-56.

²² Abinales, P. and Amoroso, D.. *State and Society in the Philippines*. Rowman and Littlefield Publisher Inc. USA. 2005. P27.

²³ Ibid. p28.



protection.²⁴ This entourage of the datu is divided into *timawa* who labor in the datu's fields and waters and *maharlika* who labor in military service but could also do agricultural labor.²⁵ The mass of society was the *tao* (common people) – farmers, fishers and the artisans—who owed tribute to the datu and service in general to the upper class.²⁶ Thus, many of these people spent some portion of their lives in servitude. It is worth noting that the Spanish called those many in servitude “slaves” (*esclavo*), though there was no such single word in any Philippine language for the many degrees labor obligation that existed.²⁷ There are many reasons of how people moved into and out of servitude. Some of these reasons are being convicted in a crime whose punishment normally would go with a heavy fine.²⁸ And if one is unable to pay, he owed labor to the wronged party until the debt was paid off. “Indebtedness was perhaps the common way people fell into servitude.”²⁹ There is also a voluntary bondage of servitude in exchange for food especially with the relatives. As Abinales and Amoroso (2005) said, “during famines, they tended to go to wealthy relatives and surrender themselves to them as slaves—in order to be fed.”³⁰ The precolonial Filipinos called these people in this rank not as slaves but *alipin* (*sagigilid* and *namamahay*)—the lowest status in the social order. The status is not static nor permanent, nor monolithic condition. A great proof for this is found in the written document of the Laguna Copper Inscription. The inscription talks about the centrality of debt and servitude in the early Philippine society, particularly of a man of status whose name is Namwran and the appeal of his relatives to be free of debt, and that the said document would be a proof from being slave into free status.³¹ The attachment for one's community is indeed strong even attachment of “alipin” to his chief as to that case of Namwran's loyalty. In fact even to the point that slaves or “alipin” are considered as part of the family and rarely sold.³²

The mobility of status is common in the social order. It is a web of interdependence. Thus, it is not an indelible status attached to a particular ethnic group, but a way of controlling and mobilizing labor in a society.³³ In other words, degrees of dependency and status are part of a system of interdependence marked by mutual obligations up and down the social ladder.

2.2. Colonial Experience of Work of Filipino

God, gold and glory are the 3Gs main objective of the Spanish conquest of the Philippines. However, the paramount motive of Spanish colonization was to spread Christianity. Missionaries worked side by side with the conquistadors, and Christianity brought about changes in the economic, religious, and social life of the people. The missionaries are the agents of *conquista spiritual* (spiritual conquest).³⁴ Filipinos during that time easily accepted Christianity as Aguilar would argue that local animism and Hispanic Catholicism are fundamentally alike: where the *indios* (natives) and the Spaniards shared an intrinsically similar perspective founded upon solid belief in a nonmaterial yet palpable reality populated by spirit beings.³⁵ The rights of the kingdom of Spain to the Philippines had been granted by the pope with the condition of Christianizing its inhabitants, though the mission to convert was inseparable from the goal of political pacification³⁶. With the success of the mission to convert vis-à-vis with political pacification, two fundamental conditions arise – the need to mobilize labor and collect tributes or taxes and the lack of manpower.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid. p.30.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid. p37-38.

³² Ibid. p32.

³³ Ibid. p31.

³⁴ Ibid. p51.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.



The *encomienda system* had been brought forth to respond to the fundamental conditions above. However, friar and encomendero, quickly became rivals as friars began to report the abuse in the collection of tribute. “Encomenderos arbitrarily assigned low values to the tribute products and sold them at higher market prices in Manila; they used underweight scales to cheat tribute-payers; their soldiers, brutally exacted payment even when crops failed; and they accepted the substitution of labor for payment, a kind of debt slavery.”³⁷ Even to the point that the friars made abuses as they grabbed lands from people and turn the lands into haciendas³⁸. Macaranas (2009) further stipulated this event as the rise of feudalism in the Philippines as Spain, in 1821 established a bureaucracy with the governor-general as the main administrator.³⁹ It subdivided the country into different levels of administration, from the province headed by Spaniards as provincial governor and further divided into cabeceras (town or municipalities) up to the smallest unit known to be as the barrio.⁴⁰ Datus became *gobnadorcillo* (little governor) who voluntarily brought their people into cabeceras or were rewarded in a lower rank position known to be as *cabeza de barangay* (village head).⁴¹ Ex-datus and their descendants became *principalia* who became responsible for collecting and remitting tributes and other contributions to the encomendero and the church and in return they and their eldest sons were exempt from tribute and labor service.⁴² Furthermore, the *principalia* took advantage of land ownership concept of the Spaniards to expand their landholdings⁴³, rebuild economic power and engage in various tactics of enrichment – such as demanding excess payment and reviving debt slavery.⁴⁴ Aguilar (1998) claims the reemergence of the datu class as *principalia* has transformed datu status into subordinates to the friars and were stripped off of their spiritual prowess.⁴⁵ Hence, having forfeited his spiritual authority to the friar, he had no means of controlling followers who rejected the new order.

Macaranas described this feudal relation characterized the administrative management of the Spanish colonizers as he further states:

This system had similarities with the European feudal rules, for example the natives held the pueblo lands “by assignment from the king.” And this landholding arrangement, the *encomienda system*, where the extensive tracts of land were awarded by the king to the church, pious organizations and conquistadores evolved as hacienda agriculture, prevailing up to the end of the Spanish regime.⁴⁶

In the emergence of the Manila-Acapulco galleon trade in the mid-18th century and the expansion of commerce in at the turn of the 19th century, new agrarian relations emerged and paved way for the beginning of capitalist agriculture whose focus was on the export market.⁴⁷ This gave further way for Spanish abuse of power and excess accumulation of wealth vis-à-vis struggles and hardship of Filipino workers. Talampas (2015) pointed out that *indio* seafarers were pictured as indolent, slow and fun-loving individuals by church, while

³⁷ Ibid p55.

³⁸ Ibid p57.

³⁹ Macaranas, B. (2009). http://www.ilera-directory.org/15thworldcongress/files/papers/Track_4/Poster/CS2T_2_MACARANAS.pdf
Retrieved January 2017

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Abinales, P. and Amoroso, D.. *State and Society in the Philippines*. Rowman and Littlefield Publisher Inc. USA. 2005. p57.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ In the Precolonial Philippines, it was only the product of the land, not the land itself that could be owned and sold.

⁴⁴ Abinales, P. and Amoroso, D.. *State and Society in the Philippines*. Rowman and Littlefield Publisher Inc. USA. 2005. p57.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Macaranas, B. (2009). http://www.ilera-directory.org/15thworldcongress/files/papers/Track_4/Poster/CS2T_2_MACARANAS.pdf
Retrieved January 2017

⁴⁷ Ibid.



bureaucrat and expatriate chronicles described the native seamen the otherwise as patient, hardworking, sacrificing or stoic.⁴⁸ This was the same accusation to the *indios* in the essay entitled *The Indolence of the Filipinos* written by Dr. Jose Rizal. Rizal where he pointed out that long before the coming of the Spaniards, Filipinos are industrious and hardworking. In his essay, Dr. Rizal pointed several reasons why there is alleged idleness of the Filipino people. Here are some of the reasons:

The establishment of the galleon trade made the small businesses and handicraft industries that flourish during the precolonial period gradually disappeared. Further, Spain also extinguished the native's love of work because of the implementation of the force labor. Because of the wars between Spain and other countries, Filipinos were compelled to work in shipyards, roads, and other public works, abandoning agriculture, industry and commerce. Spain did not protect the Filipino against foreign invaders and pirates. With no arms to defend themselves, the natives lost their lives and homes and were force to become nomads, had lost interest in cultivating their lands and rebuilding their industries and simply became submissive to the mercy of God. There was crooked system of education. What was being taught in schools were repetitive prayers and not courses in agriculture, industry etc., which are badly needed at that time. Spanish rulers are bad example to despise manual labor and are the one who established gambling like cockfights. Crooked system of religion—where the friars taught the natives, that it was easier for a poor man to enter heaven, and so they preferred not to work and remain poor so that they easily enter heaven when they died. And lastly abuse of labor and taxes or tributes are extremely high so much so that huge amount of what they earned went to the government or the friars.⁴⁹

This feudalistic relation created an inequitable, exploitative, and oppressive social relation of productions providing more wealth and more profits for the local landowners at the expense of the laborers who had to survive as tillers of the soil.⁵⁰ Further the opening of the Philippines to the world trade directed agricultural specialization for crops and agricultural capitalization for the colonizers and the local elite that led them acquire and grab more lands from the small native landowners. Corpuz (1977) noted this in claiming that “in the absence of a strong manufacturing and industry sector, agriculture and land dualized the society and economy into poverty sector of subsistence farmers and rich class of the landed gentry.”⁵¹ This social relation was intensified under the American period at the turn of the 20th century. Macaranas (2009) noted this that, their free trade policy under the Payne-Aldrich Act of 1909 assured the unrestricted entry of American goods in the country, and the exploitation of the country's natural and human resources.⁵² Despite of the recognition of the importance of land reform, Corpuz (1977) noted that;

The American administration implemented a modern land law but ensured, through the prerequisite of land titling, that it would be almost impossible for small farmers to title their lands. In other words, it was the rich and the educated classes who could take advantage of manipulated land registration system and managed to have certified titles of their landholdings.⁵³

⁴⁸ Talampas, R. (2015). "Life and Times of Filipino Seamen During the Period of Spanish Colonialism." Working Paper Series No, 164. Southeast Asia Research Centre: City University of Hong Kong.

⁴⁹ <http://thelifeandworksofrizal.blogspot.com/2011/08/indolence-of-filipinos-summary-and.html> retrieved January 2017.

⁵⁰ Macaranas, B. (2009). http://www.ilera-directory.org/15thworldcongress/files/papers/Track_4/Poster/CS2T_2_MACARANAS.pdf Retrieved January 2017

⁵¹ Corpuz, O.D. (1977). An economic history of the Philippines. Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press.

⁵² Macaranas, B. (2009). http://www.ilera-directory.org/15thworldcongress/files/papers/Track_4/Poster/CS2T_2_MACARANAS.pdf

⁵³ Corpuz, O.D. (1977). An economic history of the Philippines. Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press.



Such relations in the American-Philippine society were maintained in the long term by the elite over the majority of the working masses. Even up to the time of the commonwealth government of President Quezon recognized the reality of feudal relations because “the tenants of parcels in the haciendas purchased by the government were seldom able to acquire ownership of the parcels they had long worked and live upon.”⁵⁴ From the web of interdependence of society, work and employment became a dependency from the imperialists and elite capitalists. Feudal relations became much dominant in Philippine society. This further extends to migrant labor where Filipinos served and worked as fruit pickers in California, as laborer in sugar plantation in Hawaii and in fish canneries in Alaska.⁵⁵ In the articles of Nagtallon-Miller (1992)⁵⁶ and Hinnershitz (2013)⁵⁷, Filipino migrant workers asked justice to their basic rights and protections against racism, discrimination, abuses and maltreatment. Hence the practices of dependence and subservience between ‘lords’ and ‘servants’ remained up to the onset of the 21st century both local and abroad.

2.3. Postcolonial Experience of Work of Filipino

Feudalism as ‘institution of aristocracy’ continued to flourish even under the succeeding of the Filipino presidents. Furthermore, feudal practices of exploitative wages and oppressive working conditions in the shipyards, printing companies and banks were the main reasons for strikes and other workplace disturbances.⁵⁸ Similar unfavorable conditions of work in the farms and plantations spurred the agrarian unrests that have plagued the administrations of all the Filipino leaders up to the present. Though it is also a fact that the government made several attempts to legislate programs such as the Rice Share Tenancy Act, many other land reforms act including the CARP or known to be as the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program and other labor code amendments that would give land to the landless and empower the powerless known as the poor or the mass for them to be economically self-reliant and productive for themselves and their families and for the society as a whole.⁵⁹

The blatant reality after such frail attempts at resolving the land issue on a national scale is that feudal work relations have remained embedded in the hearts and minds of government officials, big landlords, big businessmen and industry leaders, and even the working masses in both the urban and rural areas.⁶⁰ The national psyche of a feudal mindset is the dominant authority or power-holder, reigns over his subordinates or employees economically, politically and socially.⁶¹ The latter in turn pay back in terms of service or labor, or some favor, in accordance with a certain informal or formal mutual arrangement.

Ofreneo (1980) describes this events and its effect in the rural areas where big plantations or corporate farms of landlords and big businessmen, a typical ‘paternalistic’ relations is prevalent.⁶² The hacenderos took paternalistic care of ‘their’ people from birth to death, serving as godparents, providing medical care, and even bailing them out of jail, on occasions – a form of complete subservience, indeed... These conditions in fact enabled these powerful regional landowners to play “a crucial role in the election of almost every Filipino

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ <https://centerformigrantadvocacy.com/history-of-philippine-migration/> retrieved January 2017.

For the experience of Filipino worker in Alaska, see HINNERSHITZ, S. (2013). *Journal of Social History* vol. 47 no. 1 (2013), pp. 132–152 doi:10.1093/jsh/sht055. Published by Oxford University Press. All rights reserved.

⁵⁶ Nagtallon-Miller, H (1992). *The Filipino Plantation Community in Hawaii: Experiences of a Second-Generation Filipina*. CENTER FOR PHILIPPINE STUDIES. School of Asian, Hawaiian and Pacific Studies University of Hawaii at Manoa Printed by: Hawaii Correctional Industries.

⁵⁷ HINNERSHITZ, S. (2013). *Journal of Social History* vol. 47 no. 1 (2013), pp. 132–152 doi:10.1093/jsh/sht055. Published by Oxford University Press. All rights reserved.

⁵⁸ Macaranas, B. (2009). http://www.ilera-directory.org/15thworldcongress/files/papers/Track_4/Poster/CS2T_2_MACARANAS.pdf

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ofreneo, R.E. (1980). *Capitalism in Philippine Agriculture*. Quezon City: Foundation for Nationalist Studies.



President,” from the mid-1940s, thus perpetuating themselves in power in their respective localities and provinces.⁶³ Thus, feudalism became a heritage that gives Filipino experience of work as a matter of struggle and survival.

With feudalism embedded at the highest level of governance, corruption lurks in key areas throughout the government bureaucracy and in industry.⁶⁴ An award-winning journalist could not but comment that “the reality is that ...politics has deep, feudal roots and Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo is as immersed in the sleazy world of traditional Philippine politics as her predecessor was. Despite the talk of reform and the ability to appeal to the urban middle class and the globalizing sectors of the business community, she has done little to yank the political system out of its feudal roots.”⁶⁵ Heritage Foundation, finds the Philippine economy “not so free because of pervasive corruption, a weak judiciary, restricted foreign investment, and a limited regulatory environment.”⁶⁶ With the adversity of poverty and corruption, where work seems to give no service to people that would give them dignity, Filipino opted to work in a foreign land.

Constable stated that the Philippines had approximately 5-7 million overseas workers, making the Philippines the largest labor-exporting Asian country in 1997.⁶⁷ These millions of OFWs are scattered in more than 160 countries around the globe, with more than 2000 emigrating daily.⁶⁸ The majority of these are women, outnumbering the men by an annual average of 32 percent, put into domestic work, a sector which accounts for 94.4 percent of all service work and where more than 70 percent of Filipino overseas contract workers are concentrated.⁶⁹ I believe that labor migration is an economic strategy often adopted by households in poor countries to fight poverty and to increase standard of living of family members left behind. According to the household theory of migration, family units send members of the household to work in the global labor market in order to increase flow of income and to decrease economic risks of the family.⁷⁰ Indeed, research on the topic has repeatedly demonstrated that earnings of labor migrants are considerably higher than the earnings they had prior to migration and that migrants remit considerable portions of their earnings back home.⁷¹ Therefore, earnings gains and the ability to remit back home are often viewed as the major motivations driving global migration.⁷²

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Macaranas, B. (2009). http://www.ilera-directory.org/15thworldcongress/files/papers/Track_4/Poster/CS2T_2_MACARANAS.pdf

⁶⁵ Coronel, S.S. (2005) Anak ng Jueteng. In iReport Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism September 2005, pp.2-5.

⁶⁶ Habito, C.F. (2009, April 6). RP growth-poverty link: An Asian anomaly. Philippine Daily Inquirer, p. B2.

⁶⁷ Constable, N. (1997) *Made to Order in Hong Kong: Stories of Filipino Workers*. Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell University Press.

⁶⁸ Dizon, A. (2001) ‘The Philippine Overseas Employment Program’, paper presented at the International Migrants Conference on Labor Export and Forced Migration Amidst Globalization, 4–8 November, Las Palmas Hotel, Manila, Philippines.

⁶⁹ NCRW (National Commission on the Role of Women) (n.d.) *Filipino Women Migrants: A Statistical Factbook*. Quezon City, Philippines: NCRW.

⁷⁰ Massey, D. S. (1990). Social structure, household strategies, and cumulative causation of migration. *Population Index*, 56, 3–26.

See also Massey, D. S., Arango, J., Hugo, G., Kouaouci, A., Pellegrino, A., & Taylor, J.E. (1993). Theories of international migration: A review and appraisal. *Population and Development Review*, 19, 417–446.

See also Stark, O. (1984). Migration decision making: A review essay. *Journal of Development Economics*, 14, 251–259.

⁷¹ Go, S. P. (1998). Towards the 21st century: Whither Philippine labor migration. In B. V. Carino (Ed.), *Filipino workers on the move: Trends, dilemmas and policy options* (pp. 9–44). PMRN.

See also Semyonov, M., & Gorodzeisky, A. (2004). Occupational destinations and economic mobility of Filipino overseas workers. *International Migration Review*, 38, 5–25.

⁷² Alipio, C. (2013). Young men in the Philippines mapping the costs and debts of work, marriage, and family life. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 646, 214–232.



Working abroad for the better life of the family back home is indeed an agenda. It is not only about the money or the remittance but moreover it is about giving a quality of life to the family despite of the struggles abroad. However, this does not guarantee the quality of life of an OFW in his workplace abroad. As noted above, life is indeed a struggle for Filipino workers. Is there a way to break free from this struggle? First we need to identify the cause of the said struggle. It would seem that the cause of the struggle of Filipino workers is not much created by them, but created by the system of an organization. If the cause of the struggle of workers is coming from the management or organization itself that emerged from the paradigm of feudalism and capitalism, how could we break free from this, especially in the context of poverty and globalization? Or better question is how could we have a balance for this? Could spirituality be an essential factor to cut off the root of the struggle of Filipino workers?

3. RE-AFFIRMING THE NEED OF INTERWEAVING WORK AND SPIRITUALITY

It is clearly seen above that the heritage of the Filipino experience of work started from the management of a *datu* in a community that promotes interdependence to feudal management of the *encomenderos* and *principalia* where practice of dependence and subservience between 'lords' and 'servants' created an inequitable, exploitative, and oppressive social relation down to the management of the elite capitalists where work for most individuals became a struggle and a survival. The world of work for most Filipinos from the colonial period up to the present has been overshadowed by management whose main agenda is not to provide service to people and have their dignity rather the paradigm is of productivity and profitability.

Pope Francis' claim that "work should offer service to people so they may have dignity"⁷³ is a reality that is far from incarnation in Philippine context that afflicts many workers. The affliction would further result to detachment of one's dignity and in effect living a divided struggling life. Atienza and Santiago (2013) pointed out that "in a world where the benefit to the common good has been overshadowed by the need to spur demand to increase profitability, one begins to wonder if business has turned a blind eye and if the workforce has grown so detached that who they are at work is different from who they are outside the workplace."⁷⁴ In the work of Hudtohan (2014) entitled *Spirituality in the Workplace: Quo vadis?*, he mentioned the acknowledgement of Cardinal Peter Turkson at the 14th International Christian Union of Business Executives World Congress in Lyon, France year 2012 that the common malady that afflicts many, particularly businesspeople, is the "tendency to separate one's faith from one's work," resulting to a modern affliction of a divided life.⁷⁵ Work and spirituality are interwoven in the Precolonial context where workers experience a balance lifestyle, where slaves are treated as family members, and where people are equal in a web of interdependence in the society. Workers find meaning in their role in the society and understand the reason why they do the things that they do. It gives them a quality of life as they are partakers to the welfare and development of the community who treats them as human with dignity. Their faith or spirituality is not separated from one's work. And their life at work is integrated in their life outside work, living life undivided.

Management today has emerged from an industrial revolution and capitalist paradigm of productivity and profitability to an admission of spirituality as a relational dimension in the workplace.⁷⁶ How could spirituality be a relational dimension in the workplace? What does the coined word workplace spirituality mean? There is indeed a wide range of understanding explaining the concept of workplace spirituality. We could begin from the definition of the two coined words -- workplace and spirituality. Workplace is a place where people do they work. For many Filipinos workplace is a place that is full of struggles vis-à-vis conflicts, politics,

⁷³ Glatz, Carol. Catholic News Service, Pope Francis addresses the dignity of work.

<http://dioceseofraleigh.org/news/pope-francis-addresses-the-dignity-of-work> retrieved January 2017.

⁷⁴ Atienza, C. & Santiago, M.A.. *Role of Business Leaders in the Integrity of the Working Individual*. DLSU Business Notes and Briefings. Vol.1. Number 3. December 2013.

⁷⁵ Hudtohan, E. <http://emilianohudtohan.com/649/> retrieved January 2017

⁷⁶ Ibid.



competitions, selfish interest, power, greediness, maltreatments, abuses etc. It is a place of survival from pressures, tensions, stress etc. Workplace could also be otherwise that is a second home, sanctuary, place of growth and development etc. It could also be place to build relationships. The etymology of the word spirituality came from the Latin word “*spiritualitas*” which means the breath of life. Thus, bringing spirituality in the workplace would mean bringing breath of life in the workplace. Pethe affirms that permeating spirituality in the workplace transforms workplace from merely being a place to get enough money to survive that is from just earning our daily bread to being a place of “livelihood.”⁷⁷ By livelihood, Pethe would mean a place where we both survive and are fully alive for the reason that our spirit fully expresses itself.⁷⁸

Amidst the experience of work as survival and as struggle, it is a reality that there is a growing desire among workers to have a sense of meaning and a sense of purpose at work that is to have a spiritual dimension to organizational life.⁷⁹ We have to remember that the true wealth of organizations and institutions is not the profit, nor the prestige, nor the power but rather the true wealth is the worker, the human individual with dignity— not simply the physical property, not only human intellect and skills, but human spirit as well. To nurture and value the human spirit is an integral part of management that could be experience in the workplace spirituality. It is following the desire of God for man to be fully alive i.e. to have a quality of life in a Christian context. Anand & Sen (2000) noted this by saying that while business institutions recognize the robustness of human capital in the pursuit of sustainable wealth expansion, authentic human development requires a clear distinction between ends and means, whereby the progress of people and their right to live “worthwhile lives” is to be defended as “a goal in itself”.⁸⁰ In other words, work has to be a venue for each worker to gain “self-worth and dignity” and where one is able to achieve “fulfillment as a human being”.⁸¹ This is the same connotation of Pope Francis’ statement on work and dignity. PCP II translate this in the conception of spirituality of work as part of a Spirituality of Social Transformation (PCP II 317) for the reason that “First, through work we share in the activity of the Creator, and within the limits of own human capabilities, continue to develop and perfect that activity and Second, by enduring the toil of work in union with Christ, we collaborate with the Son of God for the redemption of humanity.” The Spirituality of Social Transformation springs from a vision that all may have life (Mabigyan ng Buhay). It envisions to:

... create a free nation: where human dignity and solidarity are respected and promoted; where moral principles prevail in socio-economic life and structures; where justice, love, and solidarity are the inner driving force of development.

... build a sovereign nation: where every tribe and faith are respected; where diverse tongues and traditions work together for the good of all; where membership is a call to participation and involvement and leadership a summon to generous service.

... be a people: in harmony with one another through unity in diversity; in harmony with creation and in harmony with God.

... be a civilization of life and love. (PCP II, 253-55).

4. CONCLUSION

I would like to go back to the statement of Pope Francis that work should offer service to people so they may have dignity. Service is a heritage concept as further mentioned from the genealogy of Filipino experience of work. Service would mean the action of helping or doing work for others. More than that service that gives

⁷⁷ Pethe, A. “*Workplace Spirituality*”. Retrieved September 2015.

<http://dmietrjournal.yolasite.com/resources/Workplace%20Spirituality%20by%20Prof.Ajay%20Pethe.pdf>

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Duchon, D & Plowman, D.. Nurturing Spirit at Work: Impact on Work unit Performance. *The Leadership Quarterly* 16, 807-833. doi 10.1016/j.leaqua.2005.07.008 (2005).

⁸⁰ Anand, S., & Sen, A. (2000). Human development and economic sustainability. *World Development*, 28(12), 2029-2049.

⁸¹ Zigarelli, M.A. (1993). Catholic social teaching and the employment relationship: A model for managing human resources in accordance with Vatican doctrine. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 12(1), 75-82.



dignity would mean an initiative of doing good for others without expecting in return. This could indeed give dignity to human worker as they labor. Throughout the history of the experience of work of Filipinos, this kind of work that renders service towards one's dignity is a struggle and a survival for many, beginning in the colonial period up to the present. Work is a struggle would mean not only hardships at work but also working just for the sake of working. Work is a survival indeed for it would mean doing things just for the sake of doing it. There is no "whyness" only doing! Thus there is no sense of meaning of what workers do at work. But to no avail, the interweaving of spirituality and work would give a hope to workers to have sense of purpose, sense of meaning, sense of fulfillment and sense of transcendence. Spirituality at workplace is taken here as faith at work that would mean why we do the things that we do at the workplace. This interweaving of spirituality and work known to be now as workplace spirituality or spirituality at the workplace would help workers to go beyond their struggles and not only to pacify them. This also going beyond survival, it is going to the sense of purpose and sense of meaning of why we work. It is an invitation to always remember that work is more than just making a living, work is good for man for work could be a way to make lives reach its fullness (*Laborem Exercens*, #9). This would imply that we could transform work as survival and as struggle into work as *hanap-buhay* i.e. finding a life of fullness at work. The challenge is conscientization not only on the part of the workers themselves but also the organizations or institutions together with society thru a radical-contextual spirituality in the workplace.

The words of Atienza & Santiago (2013) are true that while there are many challenges that a worker encounters inside and outside the workplace, it is possible to remain integral and not to disintegrate amidst so much pressures, provided organization is there to support such integrality.⁸² This is indeed a social transformation, but does not only present challenges but as well opportunities to partake the works of the Creator, that amidst the struggle as Lasallians we say "Lord the work is yours!"

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⁸² Atienza, C. & Santiago, M.A.. *Role of Business Leaders in the Integrality of the Working Individual*. DLSU Business Notes and Briefings. Vol.1. Number 3. December 2013.



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