

# **“Humanizing the Indios” Early Spanish missionaries’ struggles for natives’ dignity: Influences and impact in 16th Century Philippines**

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## **Abstract**

Spanish conquest in the New World has two sides, evangelization, and colonization. The former was carried by the missionaries who were heavily influenced by Bartolome de Las Casa and Vitoria, while the latter by conquistadores, the defenders of the conquest. Early missionaries fought for the dignity of the Indios where they clashed with the motives of the conquistadores to exploit human resources. The problematic part was they have to work under the Spanish crown where their point of contact was also their area for friction. When they arrived in the Philippines, that social solidarity and dynamics of social relation continued where it became complex due to the involvement of various groups including the natives and their leaders, the religious orders, and most of all the Spanish Royal Court that had the history of having a heart for the Indians. King Philip II created a space for debates within his agenda of social conscience. Using Durkheim’s structuralist-functionalist approach, historical narratives about early missionaries’ struggles for natives’ dignity in the 16th century Philippines were examined. Durkheim’s social solidarity, dynamics of social relations, and his concepts of anomie as disruptions due to dramatic changes and conflicts were utilized as tools to analyze the quest for total well-being. The achievement of sustainable development goals (SDGs) is authenticated in amplifying the value of human dignity, equality, and respect for each individual. With this, the 500 years of Christianity in the Philippines is worth the celebration.

**Keywords:** Anomie, Conquistadores, Missionaries, Social Solidarity

## Background of the Study

The issues of dignity, justice, and human rights are important to core themes of the United Nation Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs) which started in 2015 to end poverty, protect Mother earth, and assure peace and prosperity. To achieve this, the universal call is to integrate the seventeen goals namely: no poverty, zero hunger, good health and well-being, quality education, gender equality, clean water and sanitation, affordable and clean energy, decent work and economic growth, industry, innovation and infrastructure, reduced inequalities, sustainable cities and communities, responsible consumption and production, climate action, life below water, life on land, justice, peace and strong institutions, partnerships for the goals (UNDP, 2015). Narratives about humanizing and dignifying the value of each person ensure the integration of the SDG in achieving total human development. Historical accounts that affect and impact such goals are key areas that sustain well-being and harmony for all.

Inspiring stories of early missionaries and friars who fought for justice and dignity are not well amplified in our annals since these were covered by the anti-friar sentiments that escalated during the Propaganda Movement (1880-1895). It was due to the many cases of abuse and scandals faced by the Church at that time that such ugly faces of the churchmen proliferated. Graciano Lopez Jaena, the first editor of *La Solidaridad* (1888) described them to be lustful, greedy, corrupt, gluttonous, and hypocrite. In his *Fray Botod* (1874), he claimed:

“but look, look at the shameless friar, he's slapping the girl terribly... She falls to her knees at his feet...she seems to be asking for pardon... she kisses his hands...Poor girl!... He takes her along... Cursed friar! What a brute...How wretched!... But do you allow and endure such abuses against the honor of that weak creature, a victim of the brute force of that cynical friar?" (Jaena, 1874).

Jaena termed this friar power as “monastic supremacy” which impeded the progress of the society at that time. Marcelo del Pilar corroborated by calling it *frailocracia* or the rule of the friars. In his “*Dasalan at Toksohan*” (1888), he put sarcasm and wit about their licentiousness using parodies of the Sign of the Cross, Act of Contrition, Lord’s Prayer, Hail Mary, and catechism. The Sign of the Cross parody captured the type of character they had at that time:

*“ang tanda ang kara’y kurus, and ipad-adya mo sa amin, panginoon naming prayle, sa mga bangkay naming, sa ngalan ng salapi, at ng maputing binti ang ispiritung bugaw, siya nawa”* (Over our dead bodies make the sign of the cross on the face and pray for us, our lord priest, our God, in the name of money, white flesh and holy pimp) (Del Pilar, 1888)

Jose P. Rizal heightened the consciousness about the power and abuses of the friars in his writings, *Noli Me Tangere* (1887) or *Touch Me Not*, and *El Filibusterismo* (1891) or *The Subversive* in which he narrated in novel form the social cancer going-on that implicitly attacked the abuses of the friars in particular and the Spaniards in general.

The images brought about by the propagandists left to us their obnoxious character even up to this day. Thus, one might be surprised to know that the early missionaries and friars who came to the Philippines in the 16<sup>th</sup> century were men of zealous faith and defenders of dignity against the abuses of the *conquistadores*. They were influenced by the radical ideas of Francisco de Vitoria, the teachings of Bartolome de las Casas, and the debates in the halls of the University of Salamanca about the rights of the Indians about their nature as human beings, slavery, tribute, labor and their capacity to be leaders of the land.

Colonial life during the 16<sup>th</sup> century Spanish Philippines was defined by the dynamics of social relations and participated by various groups who wanted to advance their discourses to influence the social system. It was never a monolithic process between the Spaniards and the natives. Rather, society was like an organism where it has to achieve social solidarity to maintain its balance and cohesion. It was in such context that the struggle for humanization became a force that could disrupt and create dramatic changes. The role of early friars to defend the dignity of the *Indios* (natives) gave an image of hope and revealed the dynamics of relationships circulating at that time.

Evangelization is the other side of colonization. Spain advanced the three G’s, God, gold, and glory. In its 500-year celebration of the country’s contact with the Spaniards (1521-2021), it is worthy to note how progressive Churchmen working in the islands fought for justice and heightened their advocacy for the rights and welfare of the natives.

Executive Order No. 55 (2018) was issued by President Duterte to create the National Quincentennial Committee (NQC) that will be responsible for the commemoration of the arrival of Magellan (1521), the victory of Lapu-

Lapu and other related events. The NQC carried the theme “*Victory and Humanity*” in all its celebrations (National Quincentennial Committee, 2021).

It is a triumph to share the narratives of individuals or groups who fought for justice and the rights of the natives. It serves as inspiration for how to live a dignified life where one's humanity is valued. It is always part of the sustainable development goal to bring stories that ignited a deeper appreciation of heritage and tradition that defined one's identity as a people. The destiny of a nation is shaped by those who engage in protecting, preserving, and defending their unique cultures. “*Humanizing the Indios*” is a statement of assertion and confidence to respect differences, and a fundamental demand to honor people regardless of their status, skin color, gender, or race.

The Catholic Church for their part in the 500-year celebration of Christianity in the country highlighted the slogan on “*Gifted to Give*” which implies the mission of sharing to create a just and humane society (CBCP, 2020). This means that as gospel recipients, there is a need to respond to that call to serve and be agents of transformation where people enjoy the harmony and mutual recognition of each other's dignity. The research upholds its core meaning and its implication for faith and education. Faith calls for action. It is by raising the consciousness of young people to use their voices to fight for equality, and raise our flag to declare how unique Filipinos are that can make a difference in a fragmented and divided world. Amidst these challenges, it is always the target of SDGs to bring that wholeness through the integration of various aspects of life.

### ***Literature review***

There are related articles that tackle the defenders of the natives against dehumanization during the 16<sup>th</sup> century during the Spanish exploration of the New World. Diana Roberts’ *Church and Slavery in New Spain* (2021) made an extensive narrative about the abuses and dehumanization of the Indians in New Spain (Mexico) which include the conquest, slavery, forced labor, dignity, and rights. This extensive literature also covers the Church's responses to the inhuman forms of subjugation by enacting laws, bulls, and theological justifications on what to do when the villagers resisted. There are tensions created in the process of colonization and evangelization since they have conflicting motives.

The problematic area is the *conquistadores* and missionaries worked under the tutelage of the King of Spain. Their point of contact was also their venue for friction.

Roberts (2021) highlighted some key figures during the time including the Papal leaders who were closely collaborating with the Royal Crown, particularly Pope Innocent the IV (c. 1195 – 7 December 1254), who questioned whether Christians had the right to seize land other than the Holy Land, and the opposing approach of Pope Nicolas V (1447-1455) who approved slavery to justify actions to subjugate pagans and unbelievers to perpetual servitude (*Dum Diversas Papal Bull*, 1452). The Spanish Pope Alexander the VI played a significant role and settled the impending wars of the rival superpowers in navigation, Spain, and Portugal by a *Treaty of Tordesillas* (1494), dividing the world like an orange. The eastward belongs to Portugal while the westward to Spain. A thorough analysis of the Spanish colonial caste system, the structures that facilitate bondage, and different variants of slavery were also exposed in the document.

István Szaszdi's *The "Protector de Indios" in Early Modern Age America* (2019) articulated how King Philip II (1556-1598) ordered and institutionalized the office of the *Protector of the Indios* whom he has given powers for judicial and extrajudicial authority. It was part of his mission to defend the humanity and rights of the poor Indians. The king's order was heavily influenced by his father, Emperor Charles the I of Spain or Charles V (Period of reign from 1519-1558) who gave him the political guidance to guide his rule based on justice and the fair process of the royal courts. Charles V told him: "*Son, you must aim Justice and demand its officers to remain honest and that they may not move because of affection or passion, or corruption because of anything, and never permit that they take illicitly on any occasion, and punish all those that infringe such.*" (Instructions, 1543).

The article also reiterated how King Philipp II knew the deathbed wish of her grandmother Ysabel the Catholic Queen in Medina del Campo (1504) to respect the freedom of her vassals from the other side of the Ocean, the native Indians. This revealed how the Royal Crown had the heart to work for justice and respect the dignity of those under them. With such context, King Philip II appointed Fray Bartolome de Las Casas as the first *Protector de Los Indios* in the New World. He became a threat to the *encomenderos* and *conquistadores* since he designed ways and means to

protect the American Indians, and prevented them from spoiling their communities. Philip II died shortly (1598) after an interview with Las Casas on his way to the Monastery of Guadalupe which left an important impact on how the Royal Crown preferred human and just ways to deal with their subjects.

Among the most comprehensive kinds of literature explicitly related to the research was the analysis of Lucio Gutierrez, O.P., who published, *Domingo Salazar, OP First Bishop of the Philippines: 1512-1594, A Study of His Life and Work* (2001) where he unpacked the bishop’s character that became an inspiration in the struggle for justice and human rights in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century Philippines. Salazar was a disciple of Las Casas, and obviously, the manners of how Indians were protected in the Americas were also applied in the islands to the discontent of the *conquistadores* who were looking for rewards for their hard work in joining the expedition to the Philippines. The most notable part of the book is its wide range of references on the issues of Spanish presence in the islands during the late 16<sup>th</sup> century where its primary sources could serve as a guide for researchers in the period (Piscos, 2007: 39-40).

The different parts of the book were published gradually in the *Philippiniana Sacra Journal*. His work, “*Domingo de Salazar’s Struggle for Justice and Humanization in the Conquest of the Philippines (1579-1594)*” (1979) highlighted Salazar’s struggle against slavery vis-a-vis the backdrop of Spain’s guiding philosophy on evangelization and the culture of the natives. It examined how secular and religious leaders exhibited social solidarity when faced with those struggles to achieve humanization.

Gutierrez’s writings, “*Domingo de Salazar, OP, First Bishop of the Philippines (1512-1594): Defender of the Rights of the Filipinos at the Spanish Contact*” (1985) reflected almost the same content in his 1979 article mentioned above. Gutierrez’s “*Domingo de Salazar’s Memorial of 1582 on the Status of the Philippine Islands: Manifesto for Freedom and Humanization*” (1986) commented on a primary source document that pointed out the struggles between the ecclesiastical and civil authorities. His article, “*Opinion of Fr. Domingo de Salazar, O.P., First Bishop of the Philippines and the Major Religious Superiors Regarding Slaves*” (1987) tackled the positions of the major religious superiors on slaves. His work, “*The Synod of Manila: 1581-1586*” (1990) showed how social solidarity and dynamics of social relations were manifested during the era. It also presented the concepts of anomie due to disruptions of the problems that

beset during the time made them work together for the common good (Piscos, 2007: 40-42).

Horacio de la Costa, S.J. asked the essential question, “*Did the Spanish colonial system achieve the dynamic balance between the ecclesiastical and civil authorities amid their overlapping functions?*” This was expressed in his dissertation for his Ph.D. in History at Harvard University entitled, “*Jurisdictional Conflicts in the Philippines During the XVI and XVII Centuries*” (1951). His study included three principal and permanent causes of tension that affected the struggles of humanization for the natives at that time. These are the key roles of the colonial bishops, the control of the crown and its administrators to the church's affairs, and the special privileges granted to the religious orders to implement the dynamics of colonization and evangelization (Piscos, 2007: 42-43).

Fidel Villaroel, O.P.'s work, “*The Church and the ‘Philippine Referendum’ of 1599*” (2000) affirmed how the early missionaries worked towards the humanization of the natives by allowing them to be part of the social dynamics and giving importance to their role and function in social development through a series of verbal consultation to most leaders in various provinces. The article presented how the Church provided opportunities for the natives through their leaders to speak up and channeled the growth of social conscience (Piscos, 2007: 43-44).

James Loreto Piscos (2017) published his *Human Rights and Justice Issues in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century* tackled the power dynamics between the Church and State authorities. This paper looks at the same experience but the main difference is it focuses more on how early missionaries served as protectors to the natives from the abuses of the colonizers be it on the larger scale as what happened in the Americas, or in a specific context that occurred in the Philippines. It tackles their influences and impact at that time. The major weakness of Piscos' *Human Rights and Justice Issues in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century* is it lacks a framework for analyzing the social dynamics occurring at that time. This is addressed in this research by analyzing the same issues using Durkheim's theory on social solidarity. The given historical data are re-examined given the said lenses, and address the said gap by scrutinizing its social dynamics and solidarity in how the early missionaries sustained their influence to defend the rights and humanity of the early Filipinos.

### Objectives of the Study/Statement of the Problem

The research aims to answer this question: how did early missionaries struggle in humanizing the Indios in the 16<sup>th</sup> century Spanish Philippines using Durkheim’s social solidarity theory? The paper focuses its study on the issues of humanizing in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and its influences, the context of humanizing, and how the fight for humanizing was waged and its impact.

### Significance of the Study

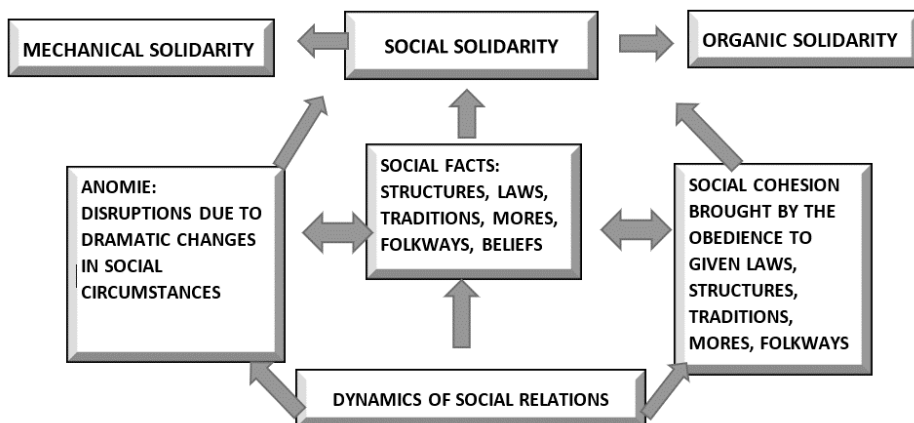
The research probes the contribution of early missionaries in humanizing the Indios in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century Philippines. It deconstructs the dominant views during the Propaganda movement of their bad image and hateful character since what transpired in the early period was a dedicated evangelizer of the Good News and defender of rights and natives’ dignity. The study advocates the different ways of looking at them in the context of social solidarity operating during the early Spanish occupation of the islands.

### Theoretical Framework/Philosophical Underpinning

The research employs Emile Durkheim’s (1858-1917) structural-functional frame in understanding the early missionaries’ struggles for natives’ dignity in the 16<sup>th</sup> century with highlights on his concepts of organic solidarity, anomie, social cohesion, and social disruptions within the given set-up of the period. Such interpretative analysis is represented in this diagram:

**Figure 1.**

*Durkheim’s structural-functional frame*





conscience where he defined it as shared norms, beliefs, and values that exist before a particular society (Durkheim, 1893: 80).

In mechanical solidarity, Durkheim compared it to a machine where there is sameness or homogeneity among the people within them. Due to sameness, there is a low division of labor or specialization. They feel connected by these similarities. Mechanical solidarity comes when people share similar values, beliefs, customs, and work. They are glued together by their identical experiences like the case of a small medieval town composed of serfs or farmers. Mechanical solidarity is solidarity of similarities where religion plays a major role as a source of identification and social cohesion (Durkheim, 2013:31).

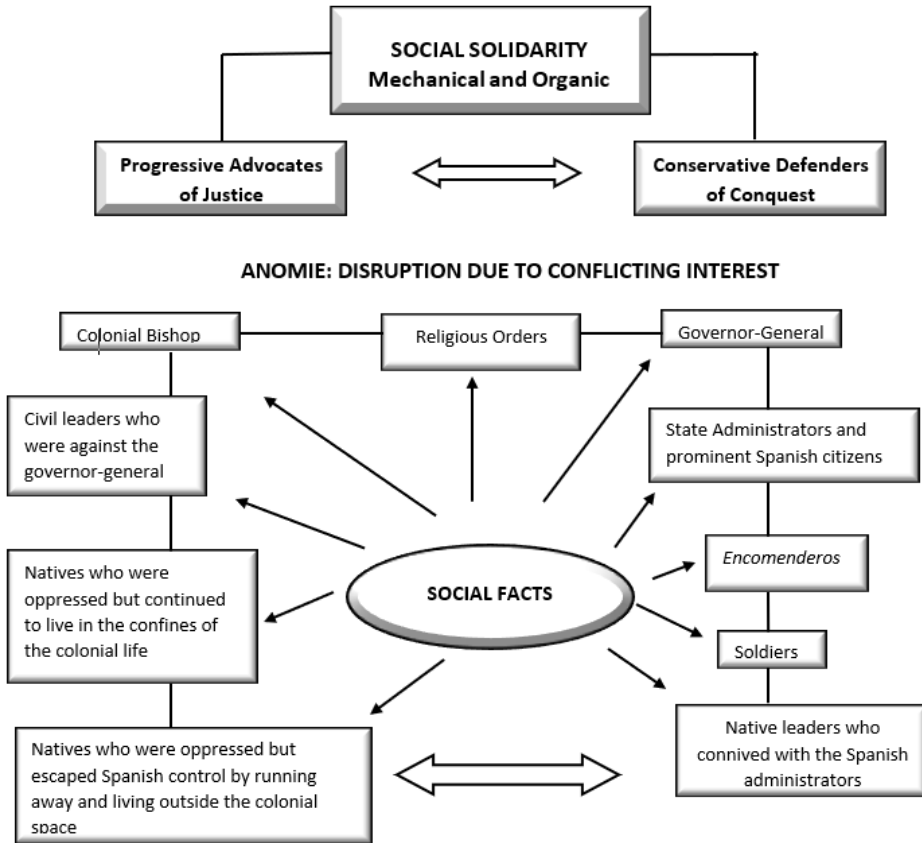
Organic solidarity is situated within the context of the modern period where what holds society together is interdependence. He further elaborated that organic solidarity arose due to the division of labor where there are mutual needs of every person in modern society. Durkheim compared society to an organism with various parts or systems that keep it alive. Each organ makes up an organism, and every component will have its role and function properly. This is the reason why the theory is also called structural functionalism. Society is like an organism where it has social institutions and individuals with specific specialized tasks to perform. Thus, organic society in his language has a high division of labor due to the specialization of people where there is a mutual interdependence of various parts (Durkheim, 2013: 68-85). In both mechanical and organic solidarity, the interactions of individuals and social facts are following obligations and the common good of society as a whole.

In his theoretical framework, Durkheim used the word anomie to refer to the condition of a social tie or solidarity ties between the individual and the society that are disrupted by dramatic changes in social circumstances. There is not enough social regulation given, and dominated by an atmosphere of disconnectedness from each other. Anomie is an abnormal consequence of the division of labor (Durkheim, 2013:291-309). This term is analogous to Marx's alienation where the worker cannot identify his creation (Yale Courses, 2011).

During the 16<sup>th</sup> century Philippines, anomie occurred between the early missionaries and the conquistadores. Both worked under the King of Spain but due to distance, each group carried out its mission differently. It created a disruption and abnormal consequences that affected their social ties and solidarity. This is illustrated in this diagram:

**Figure 2.**

*The Dynamics of Social Solidarity Among the Interest Groups in the Colonial Life Based on Durkheim’s Structural Functionalist Approach*



An analysis of its social facts showed that various groups interacted and were involved in the division of labor of Spain’s agenda in the Philippines in the 16th century. On one side are the progressive advocates for justice who were tasked with evangelization led by the Bishop of Manila, Domingo de Salazar who had strong inclinations in the defense of the natives using the standards of Vitoria and Las Casas’ inspiration. He was supported by the religious orders namely Augustinians (OSA), Franciscans (OFM), Dominicans (OP), and the Jesuits (SJ), civil leaders who were against the governor-general, and the natives who were silenced and oppressed in the colonial life. On the other side are the conservative defenders of conquest (*conquistadores*) who were there to

execute the colonization process on the islands. This was led by the governor-general who can be replaced anytime upon the whims of the Spanish king. He had strong connivance with the *encomenderos*, state administrators and prominent Spanish citizens, soldiers, and the city leaders who connived with the administrators. In a structural-functionalist lens, their disagreements and tensions may result in disruption in their operations and lead to anomie where their disconnections due to differences brought an unstable and imbalance in various aspects of society be it economic, social, or cultural. If this cannot be reconciled, then there will be a dysfunctional relationship that ruined their agenda in bringing the 3Gs to reality.

## **Methodology**

The research employs the historical method. It examines primary sources, namely Spanish legislations, papal bulls, letters of the *conquistadores*, memoranda of the religious orders, pastoral letters and conclusions of the bishop, reports of the governors-general, and written testimonies of other officials to the king and vice-versa, the correspondence of the Viceroy of Mexico to Spain or the Philippines, the royal decrees from the Spanish Royal Court, and related contemporary source documents written by people who were actors on those historical events.

From the primary source documents, the early missionaries' struggles for natives' dignity, their influence, and impact were deciphered starting from the experiences in Latin America to their translation into the Philippine setting. Using Durkheim's concept of social solidarity, the gathered data are analyzed how their point of contact was also their area of friction. In what way do such dynamics in social relations affect social ties, and contributed to well-being as defined by SDG's goals of total human development.

## **Data Analysis/Analytical Tools**

This is qualitative research that is based on primary sources written by the key players of the period from the instructions of the King of Spain, papal bulls, Spanish legislation, and documents written by the progressive advocates for natives' dignity and the conquistadores who made the rebuttal in the royal court to justify their actions being the conservative defenders of the conquest. The data are arranged based on the objectives of the study which are to explore what early missionaries did in humanizing the Indios, the context of humanizing, and the fight for

humanization at that time. From here it engages in a structuralist-functional analysis of the social relations of various stakeholders, and how they maintained social solidarity amid anomie or disruption due to conflicts.

## **Results and Discussion**

### ***Influences of the Early 16<sup>th</sup> Century Missionaries in Humanizing the Indios***

The implementers of colonization and evangelization in the islands were continuing the debates on the nature of the natives and the abuses of the colonizers which happened in Spain during the time of Vitoria (1486-1546) and Bartolome de las Casas (1474-1576). The missionaries were defenders of human rights, justice, and dignity because of the influence of the teachings of Vitoria and Las Casas. The advocacy for the defense of natives' rights and dignity was strongly influenced by the metanarratives of renaissance and humanism which emphasized the value of individual freedom, putting a premium on the glory of one's dignity and the use of reason outside the confines of the Church. Francisco de Vitoria, (b.1486; d.12 August 1546) a professor and theologian based at the University of Salamanca embodied those spirits by questioning the universal temporal authority of the pope and denied the universal dominion of the papacy. This move deconstructed the medieval powers of the Supreme Pontiff which were all-encompassing. Vitoria earned the title, of the father of international law since he fueled the concept of international relations within ethical boundaries and urged political leaders to act by what is morally right. For him, mutual dealings among states should be based on the code of laws and in the light of ethics (Munoz, 1939: 39). Vitoria viewed civil power as complete and perfect in itself, self-sufficient, independent, and directed to its immediate purpose. It should be distinct from the spiritual authority of the Church, an idea that was contrary to the authors of the Middle Ages who thought of political society and public power as mere property or under the ministry of the Holy See. (Piscos, 2017: 12-16 citing Cabezon, 1964: 23)

Vitoria challenged the juridical cornerstone of Spain's evangelical enterprise. His move to shake the social system was supported by the progressive theologians who were influencers in the king's decision to employ the humane technique in spreading Christianity. In March 1541, Charles the V personally sent him consultations on how to address some problems in the New World, a move being done following the dictates of his conscience (Piscos, 2017: 14-15 citing Munoz, 1939:63). The power of

Vitoria's ideas was widespread. It served as "*beacons of light for many missionaries and evangelizers to guide their troubled conscience.*" Most of his dedicated disciples sailed to the New World to plant the said liberating ideas. (Charles V, 1539:12).

Bartolome de Las Casas (b. ca. August 1474; d.ca.17 July 1566) was considered the protector of the natives of America, and the "Father" of the Missions. He became the voice in influencing the Royal Court in the need for justice in the New World. His fighting spirit was greatly shown in his written works: *Historia de las Indias* (3 vols.), *Brevisima relacion de la destruccion de las Indias*, *Del Unico modo de atraer a los pueblos a la verdadera religion* and *Apologetica Historia* (Gutiérrez, 2001:16-19). Las Casas refutes that by nature natives are slaves and incapable of governing themselves. He rejected natural inferiority since it will justify social inequality. Las Casas shouted dignity as the basis of evangelization, and treat each person as equal. These ideas were revolutionary at that time since even the bishop of Puerto Rico, Don Juan de Quevedo at the start of colonization looked at the people of America as more similar to beasts than rational creatures. The licentiate Gregorio who took part in the Meeting of Burgos in 1512 mentioned that natives in America were like animals who spoke (Piscos, 2017: 15-16 citing Gutierrez, 2001:15).

The *conquistadores* for their part were influenced by the defenders of conquest: Don Juan de Quevedo and Juan Gines de Sepulveda who claimed that by nature inhabitants are inferior since they were made as slaves. Natives are half-animals and not fully rational, hence they can only become full human beings by baptism in Christ. Given this, just war is acceptable This did not earn much clout in the king's royal court since later their ideas were simply ignored in favor of the "conscience" concepts of Las Casas (Burkholder, 1996:92).

### ***The context in Humanizing the Indios in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century Philippines***

The implementers of colonization and evangelization in the islands were continuing the debates that happened in Spain during the time of Vitoria (1486-1546) and Bartolome de las Casas (1474-1576). It was the issue of the nature of the natives and the abuses of the conquistadores that took center stage in the early part of the 16<sup>th</sup> century Spanish Philippines. It was also in such a milieu that the struggles for humanization took place. It can be recalled that the systematic colonization and evangelization of the Philippines was during the time of Miguel Lopez de Legazpi (1565) who established encomienda to ensure the building of structures under Spain.

Social facts in the islands dramatically changed based on Spanish design (San Agustín, 1998:345ff). These include churches, Christian beliefs and doctrines, food, and various social and economic modes of relations. Legazpi brought with him together the missionaries and *conquistadores* who were entirely different worldviews in exercising their tasks. This is the source of the debates and frictions.

The missionaries came as evangelizers. The first ones to arrive were the Augustinians (Order of St. Augustine) in 1565 who joined the Legazpi expedition. This was followed by the Franciscans (Order of Friars Minor) in 1571, Dominicans (Order of Preachers) and the Jesuits (Society of Jesus) in 1581, and the Recoletos (Order of Augustinian Recoletos) in 1606. There was spiritual geography in the islands which came as a result of assigning them to certain locations. But more than anything else their point of contact was in working together in the *encomienda*. *Encomienda* is a right given to loyal Spanish officials and soldiers to enjoy collecting tributes from the natives, and in return gave them the proper formation, protection, and evangelization processes. This was also the context where abuses and dehumanization happened (Zaide, 1990: 261)

Conflicting interests are due to functions and goals. *Conquistadores* were looking for rewards for their hard work by extracting more tributes from the struggling natives. Early missionaries’ role is in evangelization, faithful to the spirit of their advocacy for justice, human rights, and dignity. In the *encomienda* abuses were in the form of extracting too much tribute, slavery, and dehumanizing treatment of the natives. The *conquistadores*’ adherence to wealth and booties were at the expense of the dignity and rights of the *Indios*.

In the language of Durkheim, there was anomie or disruptions due to dramatic changes in social circumstances that occurred during the time. Their former lives were shifting under colonial rule. But being under the umbrella of Spain they need to cooperate to achieve a functional structure to achieve the will of the king in its 3G program. This is the context of the debate and discourses since the Royal Court listened to their testimonies and accounts, and decide which of them should continue to stay. The missionaries heightened their discourses in the defense and protection of the natives against all forms of abuse because they knew all along that King Philip II had that social conscience to listen to their pleas and enact solutions in favor of humanizing the *Indios*. If their abusive actions bring

them to a dysfunctional state, the Royal Court usually removed them and replaced them with someone that can truly represent Spain's desire for God, gold, and glory.

### ***The Fight for Humanizing the Indios by Early Missionaries and Its Impact***

The diverse worldview of conquistadores and missionaries created an impact on the social solidarity in the islands. Their debates created anomie or disruption in their operations since the friction has affected various groups and institutions. To bring back social solidarity, missionaries wrote correspondence to the King about the abuses committed in the islands which led to the replacement of leaders and officials and the formulation of new laws in the Royal Court.

There were major factors why moves in humanizing the natives advanced in the Royal Court. These were: proponents of justice issues in Latin America occupied significant seats in the Spanish Royal Court, Vitoria and Bartolome de las Casas liberating ideas penetrated the Spanish crown, King Philip II developed a social conscience, and Disciples of Vitoria and Bartolome de las Casas pioneered the missionary endeavors in the Philippines in the 16<sup>th</sup> century (Gutierrez, 2001).

The salient anomie debates that sparked the fight for natives' dignity were on issues of tributes, slavery, and forced labor. There were three episodes on the issue of tributes along with it was the fight for dignity and humanizing the *Indios*: Gov. Gen. Lavezaris vs. the Augustinians, Gov. Gen. Ronquillo vs. Bishop Domingo de Salazar and the Synod of Manila, and Gov. Gen. Dasmarinas vs. Bishop Domingo de Salazar (Piscos, 2017: 20-37 citing Rada, 1574 in Blair and Robertson Vol. 3, 1903: 136-137).

Gov. Gen. Lavezaris (1572-1575) led the conquistadores to get back their investment by giving burdens to the natives in the payment of tributes. For the Augustinian missionaries putting a heavy strain on the already marginal economy was dehumanizing. They described how an *encomendero* went to a village and said to the *Indios*: “*Take heed that I am your master, and that the governor has given you to me to protect you from other Spaniards who annoy you.*” There was no mention of God and king (Blair and Robertson, 1903:179-180). To humanize the abused natives, the Augustinians boldly issued a *Memoranda* about the unjust manners in

how these tributes were collected. Fray Martin de Rada, the Augustinian superior made his stand and sent these matters to the King. However, Lavezaris responded, and the disruption in their social solidarity continues. The Royal Court intervened by replacing Lavezaris with Gov. Gen. Francisco de Sande (1575-1580). (Piscos, 2017: 20-22 citing Rada, 1574 in Blair and Roberson Vol.3, 1903:253-259). Lavezaris responded by saying that he was developing the islands and the Augustinians were corrupt religious. He urged the king in his letter to send the Jesuits and Franciscans since they are groups that minister to people well and are not concerned with money. (Lavezaris, 1569: 29-32 in Blair and Roberstson, 1903, Vol.3)

Gov. Gen. Gonzalo Ronquillo (1580-1584) faced the economic crisis of the 1580s, where maladies set the colony from bad to worst. What heightened the dehumanization was the governor-general aggravated the situation by his demand to recover his investments in the *asiento* (contract agreement) and fulfill the promise of wealth to the 600 colonists he brought to the islands. But to become rich overnight was not a case for the governor-general and his men were paralyzed by the royal ordinances that did not allow wars of booty and conquest. They were under the surveillance of the newly arrived first bishop of Manila Domingo Salazar who was imbued with the teachings of Las Casas. Although Gov. Gen. Ronquillo managed to get his fortune by allowing his men to rob and exploit anything they get from poor natives, he was punished by being removed by the King through the correspondence of the early missionaries about these scandals (De la Costa, 1951). Natives were humanized through formulations of laws that protect their rights in the royal court. The missionaries' vigilance and communication with the king supported the ways to alleviate their condition (Piscos, 2017: 24-25).

The Synod of Manila in 1586 which was gathered by Bishop Domingo de Salazar came as a voice in an attempt to stop the abuses. This was also known as the Trisectoral Assembly since this is composed of the Church, State authorities led by Gov. Gen. Santiago de Vera, and prominent citizenry. In Durkheim's term, this can be considered as social solidarity where various parts of society were working together for the common good. The 1586 Synod of Manila has the agenda of well-being for everyone and defined the roles and characteristics of various interest groups. The salient parts of its declaration were: an end to the injustice of the natives and alleviate poverty, soldiers to be paid to boost their morale,



*encomenderos* should follow the procedures in the collection of tributes, Royal court should take charge of the increase in the payment of tributes, prominent local leaders are encouraged to do farming and stock raising, and Manila businessmen benefiting the 3% cancellation of tariff imposed by Ronquillo. It appeared that humanizing the natives was through a consensus of stakeholders finding solutions to the problems that beset them (Porras, 1990).

The Synod concludes that condemnation of *encomenderos* who behaved like thieves, submitted the recorded abuses to the Royal Court, and most of all restitution or returning the damages inflicted to the natives was necessary for the absolution of sin in the sacrament of confession (Pisos, 2017: 36). The Synod solidified the social ties among groups and institutions, and preventing impending disruptions and social dysfunctions. The Synod developed a social conscience by engaging in discourses that allowed different groups to speak and stand against all forms of dehumanization (Porras, 1990: 28-29).

The much celebrated debate was between Bishop Domingo de Salazar and Gov. Gen. Gomez Perez Dasmarinas. Salazar arrived in the islands in 1581 while Dasmarinas became governor-general in 1589. On one hand, Bishop Salazar saw tribute as a help than a right or obligation. He classified *encomienda* as those that received evangelization and those who have not received it. Thus the bishop issued 25 conclusions that addressed *encomienda* without a minister, but if the *encomendero* prepared the coming of the Christian faith through justice 1/3 can be collected for large *encomienda* and 1/2 for the small ones (Dasmarinas, 1591: 96-141 in Blair and Robertson, 1903).

Gov. Gen. Dasmarinas on the other hand took a stand and replied to the bishop by stating that if the Indians ceased to pay tributes, the whole process of Christianization and Spanish presence will be jeopardized. *Encomenderos* were accessories to the gospel and should be supported by the tributes of the natives like what ministers received. He stressed that the collection should be done with gentleness and compassion. Officials should settle grievances and disputes to properly give justice to the inhabitants. The positions of Salazar and Dasmarinas were humane ways to improve the system. It represents how the topic of abuses related to tributes substantially changed for the better under colonial rule. (Licuanan, V. and LLaver, M.J., 1996:29-31).

Slavery was another issue that threatens the humanization of natives. In the context of the subsistence economy, it was difficult to uproot slavery since laborers were needed in the cultivation of rice. Church leaders pushed for its implementation since they saw the gap where in theory, slavery was abolished by the order of the Royal Decree. This law was promulgated thrice, in 1526, 1574, and 1589. However, *encomenderos* sustained the exercise of slavery to keep the needed labor in their enterprises and personal errands. Civil authorities petitioned the king for its suspension in the islands since its implementation dislocates the economic life of the country. Amidst these realities the Synod of Manila declared its abolition stating that “*the freedom of the Indians could not be deferred, as it was a matter of natural and divine right and clear justice.*” (Blair and Robertson Vol. 3, 1903:330). But despite all these principles laid at hand, slavery was difficult to stamp out because Spaniards need them, and changing the system will disrupt everything (Piscos, 2017: 30-34).

The issue of forced labor was significant since labor is a source of wealth and a way to keep the Spaniard’s business. Abuses related to forced labor ranged from heavy work beyond the natives’ capacities, non-payment of salaries, and asking them to work during planting or harvest season. Bishop took to a different level how to humanize the victims of forced labor. He used the sacrament of confession and instructed ministers not to absolve their sins if they continue violence and harm to the workers. Humane treatment was demanded, Salazar pointed out that the harassment and inhuman ways caused them to not join the Christian faith (Piscos, 2017: 36-37). Moreover, after the Salazar era, the issue was becoming numb since like slavery many benefited and enjoyed it (Arcilla, 1998:76-80).

## **Conclusion**

Humanizing the natives means the fight for freedom, dignity, and justice. In the context of colonial life in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century, it was not easy given the worldviews of the implementing groups. Early missionaries were evangelizers of the Good News. On one hand, they were influenced by the teachings of Vitoria and Las Casas, whose spirit of fighting for freedom and dignity inspired the to create social relationships in the islands based on equality and respect. On the other hand, the *conquistadores* and *encomenderos* wanted wealth to reward their hard work in coming to the

islands. They joined the expedition with the hope to amass wealth only to be met by a subsistence economy and maladies of poor people. They cannot implement what they want since there are laws of the Royal court that protected the rights of the Indios. King Philip II developed a social conscience that came as a result of the missionaries' influence in his Royal Court. Hence conquistadores acted like thieves but persisted to do it to survive or to get their booties. They have to work with the missionaries who were there as guardians. Their point of contact became their area of friction. Humanizing the natives was a way to keep social solidarity on the verge of collapse due to disruption brought about by violations of human rights and dignity in the issues of tributes, slavery, and forced labor. The natives may have lost in the mainstream social system the usual traditional practices and beliefs, and it has been relegated to the periphery due to the coming of Christian ways. The abuses given to them might be an added injury to their lost identity. While grappling themselves with the new forms, the missionaries were lifting their dignity and acknowledging their worth. Early missionaries' various ways to defend themselves from the King's Royal Court to everyday encounters were a testament to how they embodied social conscience during the ambivalent presence of Spanish colonization and evangelization.

Reconstructing historical narratives that speak about well-being enriched our understanding of sustainable development goals (SDGs) where without the element of humanization and promotion of dignity, all forms of progress become just baloney.

## **Recommendation**

Historical narratives may contribute well to the attainment of UN-SDGs, especially in the accounts that speak about humanizing and dignifying the value of human dignity, the basic pillar to talk about total development. It is within this trajectory that there is a need to reconstruct more stories about how the dignity was preserved by the natives themselves based on available primary sources. It is recommended to find their truths, and identify their remarkable deeds in preserving traditions and heritage that truly defined their identity as a people. The examples of Filipino saints and the unsung heroes of popular uprisings religious motivated or not during the Spanish period may serve as inspiration in the

compilation of how advocates of humanization exhibited that tenacity to keep things right.

In-depth research on slavery and forced labor in the 16<sup>th</sup>-century Philippines is well-recommended to enrich further one's critical examination of their connections to social solidarity and struggles for humanization. Furthermore, there are still areas to explore on how the favorable atmosphere provided by the Royal Crown impacted the move towards the humanization of the *Indios*, and how it can flourish given the plethora of conflicting views on evangelization and colonization during that time.

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