

A Linguistic Exploration of the Bikol Concept of *Tood*: Towards a Philosophical Framework for Education

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Abstract

This paper¹ introduces the *Bikol* concept of *tood* as a philosophical framework for education. It fulfills the basic task of explaining its meaning and justifying this claim from a reflection of the three basic elements constituted in its core. The English term “learning” may be equally enunciated in *Bikol* language as “*pagkanood*” whereas “practice” may be spoken “*pagtood*” and “friend” or “fellow” as “*katood*.” *Pagkanood*, *pagtood* and *katood* together become intertwined cognates because of the employment of the same root word *tood*. Although this root may have diverse usages and contexts in various parts of the region, it becomes a unifying and central concept for the three cognates. Moreover the pre-Spanish meaning of *tood* which first came in contact with western mind in the person of Fr. Marcos de Lisboa also comes into play. *Tood*, Lisboa inscribes in his *Vocabulario de la Lengua Bicol* (1616), is “accustomed to, acquainted with, experienced, familiar with, handy, proficient in, used to,

¹ An earlier paper on this subject entitled “*Pagtood, Pagkanood* and *Pakikipagkatood*: Practice, Learning and Friendship in *Bikol* Thought” is included in *ACTA: Proceedings of the Quadricentennial International Philosophy Congress* (Manila: University of Santo Tomas Publishing House, 2012), 467-474. While I discussed in that paper the connectivity of practice, learning and friendship in *Bikol* thought, I pursue this time the project of building a framework of education on the central concept of *tood* that binds these concepts together.

ISSN: 2362-7581

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an old hand at.” All three cognates resonate these root meanings. Practice, learning and friendship are basic elements of education articulated in *Bikol* language to constitute unity and wholeness. Based on the context of *tood*, education is conceived to incorporate action and practice in *pagtood*, thought and learning in *pagkanood* and human relation and friendship in *katood*. Together they voice out a functional philosophy of education from the grass roots not only because the concepts are gleaned from the linguistic community itself but more importantly because the foundation and aims of the educational enterprise are geared towards the progressive widening of the linguistic community’s *kinatoodan* or lived-world.

Key words: Bikol philosophy, *tood*, friendship, education, learning

The Justification of a Central Concept

This paper evinces a claim that the root word *tood* in Bikol language can serve as a conceptual framework for education. This claim is ensconced within a linguistic analysis of the concepts of practice, learning and friend natively spoken and understood in Bikol lexicon as *pagtood*, *pagkanood* and *katood*. With *tood* as their root word and central idea accordingly they become three concepts inevitably connected, interlaced and united.

A root word may serve as a central concept for its cognates. As Fr. Albert Alejo explains, the root word or *sinaunang salita* has a three-fold implication. First, the root word is primitive because it has the connotation of being original, being with the unconsciousness of our ancestors. Second, the root word engenders because of its capacity to be the source of other words and the third is that the root word lays emphasis on the words that are derived from it. Thus for him the root word is more fully described and appropriately spoken in Filipino as *bukal* or well spring.² The root word is

² Albert E. Alejo, *Tao po! Tuloy! Isang Landas ng Pag-unawa sa Loob ng Tao* (Quezon City: Office of the Research and Publications Ateneo de Manila University, 1990), 53-54.

salitang bukal because of its capacity to bear other meanings.³ Out of these ramifications it can be justifiably asserted that *tood* is the well-spring of the meaning of practice, learning and friendship in the *Bikol* language (*An tood iyo an burabod kan kahulugan kan pagtood pagkanood asin pakikipagkatood.*).

These three concepts are traditionally accepted as basic elements in the enterprise of education. Where education is involved, practice, learning and friendship are of the essence. And in as much as these three are ensconced within one root it may be affirmed that the root itself serves as a central concept or conceptual framework for education at least in the manner understood by those who speak this language themselves.

Tood is a primitive word and concept. Its first contact with the western mind occurred in the person of Fr. Marcos de Lisboa who sought to learn the language of the natives of *Bikol* and then encoded it in his Spanish-*Bikol* dictionary. In Malcolm Mintz's translation of that dictionary, *tood* in English is "accustomed to, acquainted with, experienced, familiar with, handy, proficient in, used to, an old hand at; *magtood*, *toodan*: to guess, to predict or prophesy; *patoodon*: to ask a riddle."⁴ We may wonder how and what Lisboa understood from the natives when they spoke "*tood na*" and we could only speculate based on these linguistically petrified meanings and from the contemporary usage of the word that still resembles the original, that when he roamed around the provinces of *Bikol*, got immersed with the natives and learned their language, he perceived a society already having sets of habits, practices, customs, traditions, technical knowledge, language, and a community that is deeply rooted and familiar or "at home" with the land. And all the aforementioned was learned and uttered by him in the word *tood*.⁵

³ Ibid.

⁴ M. W. Mintz, *Bikol Dictionary* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii, 1971)

⁵ "The place of Lisboa's assignment in the region exerted immense importance in the linguistic development of *Bicol*. Lisboa came to the Philippines as a Franciscan missionary in 1586 but was only assigned to the *Bicol* region in the later part of the sixteenth century. He was first assigned in Polangui and Oas and was in Naga from 1602 until 1605 when he was again assigned to Oas. Shortly he was back again to Naga as the *definidar* until 1616 when he became the minister of Dilao. It was obvious that much of his works were confined to the *Bicol* river district during a stay spanning some 14 years, enough to gain familiarity with the

In Bikol when you say for example “*tood na sa sarong lugar*” a sense of familiarity with the place after inhabiting it for some time is evoked. It suggests a certain measure of oneness and at-homeness in it hence, he can move with freedom and ease. No matter how vast the place maybe he will not be lost in it and even if he goes to another place he would know or figure out various routes back home (*natotood niya an lugar*). On the contrary one who is not yet “*tood*” is unfamiliar with the place which is usually accompanied with a feeling of restraint, immobility and estrangement.

This indigenous notion of *tood* can be made manifest as being emphasized in the three cognates which are here claimed to weave the fabric of education.

Pagtood and Pagkanood, the Unity of Practice and Learning

Whenever we express our accomplishment of having learned something, we say in Bikol “*Nanodan ko na.*” The root “*tood*” crystallizes the meaning of our word for learning. “*Nanodan*” expresses completion and acquisition of something learned. But if we should ask how one was able to learn something, the word *pagtood* or the Bikol term for practice, becomes inseparably linked. Learning is accomplished through practice. *Pagtood* means repetition of the same act. Immediately the notion of activity comes into mind. But unlike the other words in Bikol for activity like *paggibo*, *paghiro*, *paghaman* or even the assimilated English *aksyon*, *pagtood* as emphasized by “*tood*” points out that the action is being done in time towards the finality of habituation. Thus one can say only “*tood na ako,*” I’m used to it, because one has learned (*nanodan*) it through practice (*pagtood*).

In teaching, the student’s learn better and faster through the efficient use of examples or exercises (*pampatood*). For example, by repeatedly writing solutions to mathematical problems the students do not only memorize but also understand better a theory or formula. The more you practice Spanish the more you learn to speak and understand the Spanish language. By actually driving a car every day the faster and better

native language. Lisboa’s work entitled *Vocabulario de la Lengua Bicol* came to be the standard vocabulary text for the succeeding batch of Spanish missionaries assigned to the region since its appearance in manuscript form in 1616 and its first printed version in 1755.” Danilo Madrid Gerona, *The Hermeneutics of Power: Colonial Discourses in the Christian Conversion of Kabikolan (1600-1850)* (Quezon City: Asian Center, University of the Philippines Diliman [March 2005]), 396.

ISSN: 2362-7581

http://www.filocracia.org/issue1/Loquias_Feb2014.pdf

you learn how to drive with less supervision. If we clarify the cliché “practice makes perfect” in this context it would mean that practice leads to mastery, greater efficiency and habituation. Learning is essential to education for it is precisely its goal whenever a student enters the walls of the school.

However learning is not encapsulated in the limited scope of school education. Learning pervades human experience. In the early days of childhood we learned how to act, think, speak and even feel in certain ways. The whole body of knowledge which manifest in man’s words and deeds is the whole body of solidified habits. Even the issue of ethics or morality cannot be excluded from the idea of learning.⁶ In Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*, the first formal study of ethics in the ancient world, it was already recognized that both virtues and vices are acquired through habit. That’s why an ounce of virtue practiced and learned in early years makes a big difference if not all the difference in the formation of man’s character.⁷

Another aspect of learning that is emphasized in the light of *tood* is the idea of appropriation into the society. Learning is *in-habit-ing* the society’s *kinatoodan* (customs, traditions, habits, bodies of knowledge, worldview etc.). If we make an astonishing amount of learning every day, the continuity of the society’s *kinatudan* also depends upon the staggering amount of teaching we make to preserve the continuity of the historical past of our society up to the present and to keep it going in the generation to come. Whenever one learns something he becomes deeply rooted in his society because he inhabits the society itself, and then makes it his own. The society in a sense becomes his home that is why he says “*tood na ako*

⁶The Greek word for education is *paideia* which is cognate with *pais*, ‘child.’ For Aristotle “moral education assumes that someone has the right sort of nature, and it trains him by habituation, *ethismos* until he acquires the right habits. These habits are patterns of action, acquired by training that uses pleasure and pain as incentives. But, equally important, they include tendencies to feel pleasure and pain, and to have other feelings, in the right way, which is a precondition for genuine virtue” (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, translated by Terence Irwin [Cambridge, Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1985], 395).

⁷“Virtue and vice are formed by good and bad actions. . . It is not unimportant, then, to acquire one sort of habit or another, right from our youth; rather, it is very important, indeed all-important” (ibid., 34-35).

digdi.” The world inhabited by the individual is a world shared with the community. This is more fully emphasized by the Bikol word for riddle and guessing game. A riddle is *patood*, to guess the riddle is *toodan* and the guessing game is *patoroodan*. How can riddles be related to the central concept? “The subjects of Bikol riddles are the familiar and concrete things in life,”⁸ but the answer is so concealed, in fact sometimes even confusing because the riddle with the simplest answer yet the most puzzling marks the perfect *patood*. For example *Sira sa Mariveles, sa irarom an kiskis – sili. Can piripit pa garo dagom; can magbukad garo payong – natong. Pag-aqui can Virgen nagwarac an lampin – puso.*⁹ Obviously one cannot guess them without knowing the language and without familiarity of the referential objects of the riddles in actual experience. “The understanding of these riddles depends entirely on participation in a culture system (i.e. shared language, world view, etc.) or habits.”¹⁰ In a study of Bikol riddles by Uranza in Masbate she found out that strangers can easily be detected because they don’t know the answers to their riddles. Riddles therefore are called *patood* because it tests the intellectual familiarity of the individual with his society, of his home-world. *Patood* brings together the intellectual and the practical.

The meaning of learning based on this connotative analysis of *pagkanood* reminds us of the person of *Kadungung* in the Bikol epic *Ibalong*.¹¹ Our term for intelligence and wisdom is *dunong*. *Kadungung* is the prototype of a man who has acquired *kanoodan* (learning).

To be a learned man (*madunong*) means two things. First, that one has achieved intelligence (*kadunungan*). However, *kadunungan* does not simply mean having a high I.Q or to be highly educated in a University. A *madunong* is one who has achieved mastery of a certain body of knowledge (*kanoodan*) within or outside the walls of the school. Manny Pacquiao is

⁸ Maria Lilia F. Realubit, *Bikols of the Philippines* (Naga City, Philippines: A.M.S. Press, 1983), 92.

⁹ *Patotodon* (Naga City: Cecilio Press, 1982), 202 – 204.

¹⁰ Realubit, *Bikols of the Philippines*, 94.

¹¹ Zacarias Lla. Lorino (trans.), “Ibalong” in Jason Lobel and Wilmer Tria, *An Satuyang Tatataramon A Study of the Bikol Language* (Naga City: Lobel and Tria Partnership, Co., 2000), 226.

called a *madunong na paraboksing* (intelligent boxer) because of his mastery of his craft. A *madunong na paratanom* (intelligent farmer) knows the right season to plant a crop and the proper way of taking care of it to enhance its growth and reap a good harvest. And an academician is labeled likewise not only because of his wide array of knowledge but also of his mastery of them. One is learned in the respective fields because he has mastered and habituated (*natudan*) it through practice (*pagtood*).

The second meaning of *madunong* refers to the acquisition of *pagkasabot* or understanding and wisdom. *Kadungung* in the epic is praised by *Iling* as the only one capable and most able to narrate *Handiong's* adventures because he himself is immersed in the life of his narrative.¹² What *Kadungung* recounts is itself the story of which his life is included because *pagkanood* or learning is always at the same time habituation of the society's *kinatudan* (body of knowledge, norms, customs, traditions, culture and etc.). As Realubit writes "*Ibalon* is the only Philippine epic which recounts a people's story in carving for themselves a place to live in the midst of wilderness and in beginning a civilized life."¹³ *Iling* which is the metaphor of the people in the epic extols *Kadungung* as a narrator because aside from his learning he also understands the way of living he tells in his narrative. Understanding is a way of seeing with the mind¹⁴—*An Pagkasabot sarong paghiling kan sadiring isip*.¹⁵ It is looking through an owl's sharp eyesight.¹⁶ Because of a wide and deep way of seeing, a man of understanding sees more than just what the naked eye sees. Understanding gives man an insight that sheds light to his being and allows man to act according to the light of understanding achieved.¹⁷ The understanding exemplified by

¹² "For a bird *Iling* to begin the epic chant by asking *Cadungung* to tell the story is itself indicative of the myth behind words and the way of life of the people. In Bikol folksong the bird is treated with much care and respect lest it feel sad and cause harm or abandon the people" (*Bikols of the Philippines*, 148).

¹³ *Ibid.*, 143.

¹⁴ Roque Ferriols, "Insight" in Manuel Dy, *Philosophy of Man: Selected Readings* (Makati: Goodwill Trading, 2003), 3-6.

¹⁵ Wilmer Joseph S. Tria, *Ako Asin an Kapwa Ko: Pilosopiya nin Tawo* (Naga City: Ateneo de Naga University Press, 2009), 10

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 9.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

Kadungung in the epic is no other than the life of his narrative, which means the understanding of his learning itself (*kinatudan*). Understanding of *kinatudan* is deemed as the most important learning one could have because the willful acceptance in freedom and/or dynamism of the stream of *kinatudan* itself becomes possible. The term for freedom in Bikol is *katalingkasan* which is derived from the root *talingkas* or “break” or “unchain.” Freedom means to achieve a certain understanding of habits so that one could willingly embrace it, change it or create new sets of habits to replace the old ones. With this freedom and understanding the *madunong* is on his way towards becoming a person with *ginurangan* a word in Bikol that characterizes the quality of a *gurang* or older person whose actions and thought or character as a whole corresponds to a certain ideal of life, on how man ought to live.

***Pakikipagkatood* (Fellowship and Friendship) as Co-habitation**

Back to the pre-Spanish Bikol world, *katood* refers to one’s companion in the home-world. It is the old Bikol term for friend that is produced by joining the two root words *kapwa* and *tood*. *Kapwa* is a universal term in Filipino languages that pertain to another person conceived as a companion.¹⁸ The prefix “ka” in *tood* emphasizes that habit or “getting used to” is social in character (*kapwa-tood*). Fr. Tria’s deepening of this concept is particularly meaningful: to be *magkatood* (friends) means “to inhabit the same world of values.”¹⁹

However the usages of *katood* in Bikol texts appear to show two meanings which may not necessarily be taken apart from each other but can be identified to become two ways of co-habitation. The first refers to the meaning of fellowship and the other is the meaning of friendship that is already developed by Fr. Tria.

We stated earlier that learning pervades the whole gamut of human experience and it is an appropriation of the individual to the society. Likewise learning cannot be conceived apart from teaching

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 102.

¹⁹ Wilmer Joseph S. Tria, “Friendship: *Bikol* Philosophy Perspective” in *Pagpukaw: An Invitation to Philosophize*, Vol. 3, edited by Wilmer Joseph S. Tria (2007), 46.

(*pagpatood*). This inherently means that *katood* is the human relationship in between learning and teaching. But *katood* is here taken to signify the general condition of every man toward each other – that of fellowship. In the case of a teacher and student the idea of apprenticeship comes to mind. Learning as habituation is fellowship or co-habituation. Like learning that is not confined to school education fellowship also pervades human experience universally. The habituation of the whole stream of solidified habits (*kinatudan*) is carried out through fellowship. Fellowship happens everywhere man finds another human being and learns together something at home, at school, at work, in the street or even in the field. *Pagkanood* happens with *katood*. Wherever we find in man a certain habit there is surely to be another whom he shares the habit with that reflects their society. It means that they find themselves being together, appropriated, in a world of habits that they both have acquired in time.

The second meaning of *katood* is friendship. *Pakikipagkatood* is “*pakikipamuhay*” (living and being with) with one’s *kapwa*. It is also something that is learned through practice. It is not gained overnight rather, “it is a product of a long acquaintance.”²⁰ *Tood* implies that friendship is built in time so they could be familiar with each other. *Katood* is not someone whom you have just met last night in a party, though that could be the start of your friendly relation in due time. A friend is someone whom you allow to roam around your house, eat the sliced bread and drink the juice in your refrigerator. He is someone you can entrust your house with because friendship is a matter of integrity. Friendship is not divorced from fellowship because one shares the *kinatudan* with his *kapwa*. But friendship more importantly expresses the willingness to enter and live with the *kapwa’s kinatudan* and world of values. Differences are found in the context of fellowship in as much as there could be various *kinatudan* that different groups of individuals share respectively. While there are individual differences there are societal differences as well. But friendship unlocks the doors of these differences and allows for solidarity to take place amidst variety.

Solidarity is achieved in friendship because two or more persons freely choose to live together as companions sharing and opening up to each other’s *kinatudan*. They come to know each other more fully. They become

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 44.

more acquainted and familiarized with each other's ways of acting and thinking. They are in a sense united to each other or *nagkakasaro*. The union achieved however does not mean losing each other's individualities. They remain who they are even if they come from different worlds of habits. In fact, their willingness to share each other's *kinatudan* entails the possibility of its transformation and progressive development because the friendship between them signals the blending of different habits. Friendship is sharing and living with the other's *kinatudan* where they learn, take care of each other and accept their differences.

Towards a Progressive Philosophy of Education

As has been shown, the Bikol language encapsulates a meaning of education that is holistic and pragmatic. Holistic because the root *tood* serves as a central concept that bears the fundamental elements of practice, learning and friendship in education. Pragmatic because learning is a concrete and practical activity of man's appropriation and habituation of all his society's *kinatoodan*. Education includes the acquisition of the bodies of learning passed on to him through practice which equips him with the means to function more efficiently as an individual and member of the society. Thus, education more fully aims at being *tood na* or habituated, used to and familiar with the world where he lives in. Habituation nonetheless is not a static or a onetime endeavor but a continual yet progressive process. This is made apparent by the element of *pakikipagkatood* in education. The bodies of learning improve, develop and widen as people meet and choose to live together as friends. This implies that education conceived within the context of *tood* moves towards a wider familiarity of the world that is achieved only through friendship with his fellowman across the boundaries of his own culture (*kinatudan*). In so doing, man does not only have a wider familiarity, mobility and oneness with the world but shares this world more fully with his friends.

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