

A METALINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF THE ITAWES CONCEPTS OF “MAHIMAMMAK” AND “MANNONOT” TOWARDS A FILIPINO ACT OF PHILOSOPHIZING

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Abstract— The death of a language begins when meaningful terms in the language lose their significance or maybe simply forgotten by the linguistic community. Itawes, one of the minority languages in the Philippines, is in this sad state, with less and less people using the same and more and terms losing their significance in the actual communication of Itawes linguistic communities. This paper is an attempt to revitalize the rich linguistic traditions of the Itawes. This research involves a metalinguistic analysis of the Itawes terms “Mahimammak” and “Mannonot”. Fr. Leonardo Mercado’s framework on Filipino Philosophy will be utilized to build on an Itawes act of philosophizing that is Filipino in character. The research seeks to provide valuable information in advancing a uniquely Filipino act of philosophizing.

Keywords— *Filipino Philosophy, Itawes, Mahimammak, Mannonot, Mappanonot, Nonot*

INTRODUCTION

Of the diverse ethnic groups in the Philippines, Itawes is one of the minorities found in the rich plains of the Cagayan Valley. Itawes is also among the languages in the Philippines that is at the brink of death with less and less people speaking the same. Itawes according to Vanoverbergh pertains to the language of people living west of the Chico river (*Negritos of Northern Luzon Again*, Conclusion, 417). Referred to as the people across the river, the Itawes used to inhabit the lands from the mountains of Rizal (where the Malauegs are inhabiting) to the plains of Tuao, Piat, Faire (now Sto. Niño), Solana and Enrile in Cagayan. Some Itawes also moved to the other side of the river where the Ibanags are settled, inhabiting some parts of Tuguegarao, Iguig and up to the mountains of Peñablanca. Lacking in written traditions, and relying much on oral traditions, many of the rich customs and beliefs of the Itawes are already lost or simply forgotten. This same sad truth is also observed in terms of the Itawes language and linguistic practices.

As this paper attempts to revitalize the rich linguistic traditions of the Itawes, the researcher applies metalinguistic analysis to some Itawes terms in order to provide valuable information on the Itawes way of thinking. With the same, the paper hopes to advance a uniquely Filipino act of philosophizing. Mercado in his essay says: “if Filipino philosophy is the making explicit of the Filipino world view and philosophy as reflected in their culture, then there are different methodologies for achieving that” (*The Status of Filipino Philosophy*, 2016, p. 26). Through the method of metalinguistic advanced in the mentioned work of Mercado, the researcher shall

investigate and analyze the ordinary language uses of some Itawes key terms that are vital in advancing an act of doing Philosophy in the Philippine context. This method involves a critical study of the language as it reflects a particular world view through inferring elements found in the linguistic structures and words of the linguistic community (Cf. Mercado, *Essays on Filipino Philosophy*, 2005, p. 30). This paper includes, but is not limited, to the study of the terms “mahimammak” and “mannonot”. The choice is based on: the rich linguistic implications of the terms “mahimammak” and “mannonot”; the revival of the lost meaningful use of the term “mahimammak”; and the unravelling of the Itawes understanding of what it means to be human in the term “mannonot”.

The terms “mahimammak” and “mannonot” are remarks that used to go one after the other. An Itawes parent, for example would give the remark: “mahimammak kayu nge nga anak” (be peaceful children). Then, after a while would say: “mannonot kayu nge” (get matured). Through time’s alchemy, however, the terms “mahimammak” (stop) or “mahittud” (sit down or be still) have taken the place of “mahimammak”. There is more to “mahimammak” than just stopping, sitting down or be still. Moreover, the complementary remark “mannonot” is simply lost in the process of communicating the essence of “mahimammak” with the same substitutes. It is also noteworthy to emphasize the fact that most of the younger Itawes speaking communities have to some extent forgotten the meaning of “mahimammak”. At this juncture the researcher deems it necessary to proceed with a metalinguistic analysis of the terms “mahimammak” and “mannonot” and hope to bring back and popularized once again the meaningful use of the said terms in linguistic communities of the Itawes.

“Mahimammak” and “Mannonot”

The Itawes are generally peaceful people. While there are war-like practices that can be deduced from the popular war-dances in their culture, the same war-like traditions faded away in the Christianization of Itawes natives in the 16th century. In Vanoverbergh’s chronicles (*Cf. Negritos from the North*, Conclusion), he describes how the Negritos from the North have learned to live alongside with the Ibanag, Itawes and Ilocanos of Cagayan. The Negritos from the North, he noted, lived peacefully with the Itawes. He farther points out that many Negritos from the North used Itawes among themselves in communicating. This proves to the accommodating culture of the Itawes for non-Itawes natives. It exemplifies the Itawes peaceful nature. It pictures the “mahimammak” culture of the Itawes.

“Mahimammak” is so rich in meaning. “Mahimmang” and “mahitud” simply could not properly capture the essence of the term “mahimammak” and hence are poor substitutes for the latter. The Itawes “mahimammak” comes from the root term “himammak,” meaning peace. “Pahimammak kan ikayu” thus translates to “peace be with you”. But this application of the term is more influenced with Western categories. The greetings is not used in the ordinary language of the Itawes. The term “mahimammak” implies not only being peaceful but also to be in a state of serious thinking, i.e., “mappanonot”.

“Mappanonot” in relation to “mahimammak” may either imply “adallam nga pappanonot” (deep thought) or “napia nga appanonot” (good thought). These two uses would also bear western categories yet are found in the day to day conversations of Itawes linguistic communities. The first implication may to some extent be related to the closeness of the “wangag” (river) in the lives of the Itawes. When the part of the river is “makassag”, i.e. unpeaceful or noisy, then it is “ababbaw”, i.e. shallow. While where the part of the river is “mahimammak”, i.e. peaceful, then it is “adallam”, i.e. deep. The second implication still would imply peacefulness. The Itawes term “napia” literally good is related to some extent with the Ilocano term “kapyra”, meaning peace. Although “napia” literally translates to something that is good, when one greets somebody “napia nga algaw mu”, it does not simply mean “have a good day” but also a blessed one, i.e. a peaceful day. Thus, “mahimammak” as being in a state of peace gives the setting for one to “mappanonot”, i.e., to reflect, think, philosophize.

“Mappanonot” which necessitates “mahimammak” characterizes the act of philosophizing in the Itawes setting. “Mahimammak” is the pre-condition towards the act of “mappanonot”. Moreover, “mappanonot” is the necessary act implied in the imperative to “mahimammak”. They complement each other. However, both acts which exemplifies what doing Philosophy is in the Itawes context are but means to a particular end. The succeeding remark “mannonot” unravels the same. After one is “nahimammak” and “nappanonot” (in the states of “mahimammak” and “mappanonot”), he/she is expected to be “mannonot” (to be in the state of maturity).

“Mannonot” comes from the root term “nonot” which is equivalent to but not totally the same with the Ilocano term “nakem”. They both pertain to the essential self of an individual and more other implications related to one’s being. (Cf. Alejandro, 2016, p. 10). There are various uses and implications of the term “nonot” that are the same with its equivalent words in the different Filipino languages like the concept of “loob”. Mercado writes: “Loob can mean the intellect, the will, the emotions, and the ethical. Loob (or buot in Cebuano and nakem in Ilocano) shows that the Filipino as individual looks on himself as a whole” (Essays on Filipino Philosophy, 2005, p. 37). However, significant differences are also noteworthy especially in how “nonot” is utilized in the Itawes linguistic community.

“Nonot” may pertain to the mind, as when an Itawes remarks “hanna ya asan kanya nonot mu?” (What is in your mind?) It can also be used to the very act of thinking like “hanna ya pampanonotanmu?” (What are you thinking?) or an act of recalling like “panonottan mu nge...” (Please recall...). Just like its equivalent Filipino terms, it may also mean the self as reflected in the

affirmation “natakit nonot ku” (my self is hurt). “Nakasta nga nonot” translates to a “good deed” which is usually the basis also for the “gatut nga nakasta nga nonot” (a debt of good deed). This very concept reveals the Itawes way of relating with others. The Itawes being a Filipino is oriented towards others. Mercado puts this observation on Filipino as group-oriented and other-oriented in his discussions of “kapwa tao” and “pakikipagkapwa-tao”. (Cf. Explorations in Filipino Philosophy, 2009, pp. 80-84).

The centrality of “nonot” in expressing something negative is also observed in the remark “panototan ku tian” (what do I care for that). This expresses the breaking of the tie of the self to another which signifies the importance of “nonot” in the act of relating. “Marim patakitan ya nonot ya ididdukammu” (do not hurt the “nonot” of the one you love). Moreover, this could only be possible when one is “nannonot”, i.e., has matured as a person. While “nannonot” is the state of being mature, “mannonot” on the other hand is the process towards the same.

The term “nannonot” is usually given as a praise to a person who acts properly in the community. As such, elders usually would say “nannonot yaw nga abbing” (this child is matured) when a child conducts himself/herself properly in front of elders. Moreover, remarks like “nannonot yaw nga ayam” (this animal is intelligent/cultured) and “asan nonot na yaw nga ayam” (this animal has breeding) are sometimes made. This points out to the Itawes culture portraying harmony with the environment and with society in general, which is in common with other Filipino linguistic communities (Cf. Mercado, Essays on Filipino Philosophy, 2005, pp. 177-181). Animals are important creations to which every Itawes gives due respect. So, remarks as such are given when an animal acts more than what is expected of the same as wild, irrational creature. Acting properly in more than what is expected of someone, as a person or an animal for that matter, therefore characterizes what is implied in the remark “nannonot”.

In the case of the person, acting properly in more than what is expected of oneself would mean being in the state of maturity. “Mannonot” in this regard would be the process/action of the person towards the same. An Itawes would not normally give the remark “mannonot” to an animal for it is something proper only to a person who has the rationality to think what is good or bad for oneself and decide for is the best course of action. It is only the person who has the intellection to see value in “mahimammak” and take the opportunity for the same to “mappanonot” so one can become “nannonot”.

When one is given the remark “mahimammak kayu” followed by “mannonot kayu”, one is expected to be at peace, to reflect and to move towards maturity. This characterizes what the Itawes way of thinking is all about. It is a kind of doing philosophy that does not simply end up in the abstract realm of thinking or reflecting but also and more importantly, that moves one towards becoming more than what is expected of one’s person, i.e. to attain maturity. As such therefore, the act of philosophizing in the Itawes culture is not separate from one’s life. It may to some extent be classified into what Mercado speaks about in his clarification of what the nature of Philosophy is in general and Filipino Philosophy in particular. For the latter, he would classify it under that of Ethnophilosophy. (Cf. Explorations in Filipino Philosophy, 2009, pp. 25-26).

Towards a Filipino Act of Doing Philosophy

The act of philosophizing is certainly not something that ends in the mastery of clever rhetoric or subtle persuasion. It is not something simply limited to “*pappampanonottan*” (something to think about). As an act of reflection, it is a way of life anchored on the “nonot” as self towards “*nannonot*” as mature individual. “*Mahimammak*” is essential in this journey towards maturity. The act of reflection could best happen only when one is in the state of peaceful self-reflection. The setting for “*mappanonot*” thus flows smoothly in this state. But the same would be a futile exercise if one fails to “*mannonot*” and attain the state of “*nannonot*”. To do philosophy then is to travel the path from the incompleteness of “*nonot*” towards the attainment of fullness in “*nannonot*”.

To be “*nannonot*”, however, is not something of an end all - be all of everything. A child is “*nannonot*” perhaps because he/she acts more than what is expected of his/her age. But he/she could not remain at said state because more is expected as he/she grows older. One could possibly be qualified to have advanced to some maturity and hence be classified as “*nannonot*” but there would always be more to pursue. Hence, to attain maturity is characterized with a movement from less to more, and that there would always be more in the journey. The same applies in the act of philosophizing. The truth one possibly arrives at, however arduous one is in his/her inquiry, in the act doing philosophy is not and cannot account to everything about truth. There will always be more to unravel of truth. Doing philosophy then is an endless pursuit. For this Mercado writes: “philosophers distinguish objective truth from subjective truth. There is also truth as inter-subjective” (Essays on Filipino Philosophy, 2005, p. 84).

Philosophy as an endless quest for meaning is evident in the Itawes act of “*mappanonot*”. It spells out elements of the world view of the Itawes. As Mercado would write “Filipinos for centuries were always aware of their world view. So, they always had their philosophy even if not a book on it was written” (Essays on Filipino Philosophy, 2005, p. 29) This act is Filipino in character in that it contains elements found in Filipino culture. The essential self is central to the act of philosophizing in the Filipino context. This holds true in the act of “*mappanonot*”.

CONCLUSION

“Mappanonot” is an Itawes act of philosophizing. This same act finds itself best practiced in the state of personal peace, “*mahimammak*”. Mercado in his essays on Filipino Philosophy would note of the importance of peace in Philippine Traditional Religion as basis for harmony. (Cf. 2005, p. 176). Peace is central in the life world of the Itawes. “*Mahimammak*” is important in bringing about harmony with others and with oneself. Moreover, the end purpose for

the whole exercise is for one to develop as a person, to “*mannonot*”. As an act of philosophizing, “*mappanonot*” involves self-reflection, i.e., to move towards one’s “*nonot*” which is “*nahimammak*”. It is some sort of an inward self-understanding. It is through the cultivation of inner peace, i.e. the act of “*mahimammak*” that one finds the sense to wander. Moreover, this same Itawes act of philosophizing involves looking forward to the self as “*nannonot*”. A form of transcendence happens in the individual from the state of “*mahimammak*” and “*mappanonot*” as one aspires to be in the state of “*nannonot*”. In all these, self-reflection and self-projection are observed in the Itawes act of philosophizing.

As an Itawes act of philosophizing, “*mappanonot*”, having its roots on “*nonot*”, is Filipino in character. For one, the term shares many similar themes and implications with other Filipino equivalent terms like the Tagalog “*loob*”, Visayan “*buot*”, Bikolano “*boot*”, Ibanag “*nono*, and Ilokano “*nakem*”. Moreover, “*mappanonot*” with “*mahimammak*” as a revelation of a rich Itawes culture, highlights Filipino values that gives importance to the development of the person. Lastly, the Itawes act of philosophizing is done by an Itawes, i.e., a Filipino, in the Philippine context, hence must be truly Filipino.

To sum up: “*mappanonot*” understood in the context of “*mahimammak*” and “*mannonot*” is truly Itawes, truly Filipino, and truly an act of philosophizing.

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