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# Transmission of Araquio Music, Songs, and Movement Conventions: Learning, Experience, and Meaning in Devotional Theatre

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## Transmission of Araquio Music, Songs, and Movement Conventions: Learning, Experience, and Meaning in Devotional Theatre

### Abstract

Araquio, a verse play on the search of the holy cross, is an indigenous folk theatre in the town of Peñaranda, province of Nueva Ecija, Philippines that has survived for over a hundred years. This ethnographic-phenomenological study explores the holistic nature of the transmission and learning processes of araquio music and songs as a theatre-ritual. Its transmission as a social phenomenon is an avenue for music learning that may in fact overshadow its being a diminishing tradition. Using the framework of three modes of enculturation (Merriam, 1964) and interpretation of culture (Geertz, 1973), I investigate the music transmission and learning processes and sought to reveal how these processes were meaningful to the practitioners. Participants in this inquiry involve 21 adult practitioners, namely: 4 maestros (teachers of araquio), 3 female and 5 male personajes (characters of the verse play), and 9 musikeros (community musicians). An ethnographic method is employed using participant-observation and informal semi-structured interview script. Guiding questions have centered on how transmission and learning strategies, and meaning define these experiences. As a living oral tradition, intergenerational learning is found to be the product of transmission by enculturation occurring in the araquio and happens within genealogical generation. The practitioners, through the unspoken meaning of the tradition, have certain unspoken factors: unity of purpose, ancestral adhesion, unification of tribal strength, and shared experiences.

### Keywords

Musical Transmission, Teaching and Learning, Cultural Anthropology, Musical Experience, Intergenerational Learning, Theatre Ritual

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# Transmission of *Araquio* Music, Songs, and Movement Conventions: Learning, Experience, and Meaning in Devotional Theatre

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*Araquio, a verse play on the search of the holy cross, is an indigenous folk theatre in the town of Peñaranda, province of Nueva Ecija, Philippines that has survived for over a hundred years. This ethnographic-phenomenological study explores the holistic nature of the transmission and learning processes of araquio music and songs as a theatre-ritual. Its transmission as a social phenomenon is an avenue for music learning that may in fact overshadow its being a diminishing tradition. Using the framework of three modes of enculturation (Merriam, 1964) and interpretation of culture (Geertz, 1973), I investigate the music transmission and learning processes and sought to reveal how these processes were meaningful to the practitioners. Participants in this inquiry involve 21 adult practitioners, namely: 4 maestros (teachers of araquio), 3 female and 5 male personajes (characters of the verse play), and 9 musikeros (community musicians). An ethnographic method is employed using participant-observation and informal semi-structured interview script. Guiding questions have centered on how transmission and learning strategies, and meaning define these experiences. As a living oral tradition, intergenerational learning is found to be the product of transmission by enculturation occurring in the araquio and happens within genealogical generation. The practitioners, through the unspoken meaning of the tradition, have certain unspoken factors: unity of purpose, ancestral adhesion, unification of tribal strength, and shared experiences. Keywords: Musical Transmission, Teaching and Learning, Cultural Anthropology, Musical Experience, Intergenerational Learning, Theatre Ritual*

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In the village of Santo Tomas, in the town of Penaranda, province of Nueva Ecija, Philippines, the *araquio* is annually performed with a script Entitled *Santa Cruz de Mayo* (The Holy Cross of May). Authored by Leon Estanislao in 1880.<sup>1</sup> I would define that *araquio* is a verse play with mythologized story on Queen Helena's search of the cross on which Jesus Christ was crucified. The script includes sixteen major characters which include two religious groups: Christian and Muslim heroes. In the Philippines, Catholicism in folk theatre is significantly manifested in all forms of *komedya*,<sup>2</sup> a Filipino folk theatre originated from a

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<sup>1</sup>Based on the testimonies of *araquio* practitioners, Leon Estanislao authored the *araquio* script in 1880 and it is believed that the village of Santo Tomas in Penaranda Nueva Ecija Philippines is the cradle of *araquio* (Ibarra 2002, 24). Further, its practitioners also believe that *araquio* began during the time that Peñaranda Band was established in 1876 (Bañas, 1969, p.107). It is assumed that the original script was written around 1880.

<sup>2</sup>The term describes a Filipino folk theatre, originated from a Western form introduced by the Spanish colonization in the Philippines for more than three centuries. Its native playwrights flourished between the 17<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> centuries and their writings were developed through the auspices of the Roman Catholic parish priests with the support of the landholding native elites in Manila and the provinces (Lumbera, 1986).

Western form introduced by the Spanish colonization in the Philippines for more than three centuries (Beltran, 1987; Peterson, 2007).<sup>3</sup>

Classified as local genre of Filipino *komedya*, the *arakuio* is considered as one of the most popular religious-secular local dramas in Philippine tradition. In the most popular plot like that of the *arakuio*, royal characters of the medieval European kingdoms battle their Middle Eastern antagonists. Presented for two consecutive days during the first Saturday and Sunday of the month of May usually from morning to evening, its colorful costumes, various choreographed sword fights, marching formations, songs and additional improvised fairy-like effects, provide delightful experience for the audience.<sup>4</sup>

Today, the *arakuio* utilizes the local poetic stylized delivery of verses, conventionalized movements such as structured marching formations, choreographed sword fights, songs, and dances with distinct live musical accompaniment played by the community band. Its music, songs, and dances have been transmitted for over a hundred years.<sup>5</sup>

The transmission of music, songs and movement conventions has been very significant in the lives of its main practitioners fulfilling dual functions as a form of entertainment and devotional expression to their patron saint, an icon called *Mahal na Poong Santa Krus* (Beloved Holy Cross). Furthermore, an emblematic annual production includes participation by the entire Catholic community who consider themselves devotees to the *arakuio* tradition. It is believed that this inclusion of religious participation through ritual dance began in the village since it is considered to be the cradle of *arakuio* (Ibarra, 2002, p.24).<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>In my country, *arakuio* is classified as local genre of Filipino *komedya*. Considered as one of the most popular religious-secular local drama in the Philippines, the *moro-moro komedya* is a dramatic verse play revolving around the lives of Christian saints. Many forms of *komedya* continue to be performed among some of the Christianized regions who constitute the majority of the Philippine population especially in the following regions rich with cultural community activities such as *Dotoc* in Bicol (see Llana, 2009), *linambay* in Cebu (see Mojares, 1985), *kuraldal* in Pampanga (see Tiatco, 2009; Tiongson, 1986) and *Araquio* or *Arakyo* in Nueva Ecija (see Briones, 2010; Delos Santos, 2006; Ibarra, 2002; Tiongson, 1986).

<sup>4</sup>By tradition, an *arakuio* performance takes place over two –days: the *bisperas* (first day of its annual presentation), and feast day of the Holy Cross. All *personajes* (characters of the play), the four *maestros*, the twelve pairs of *hermanos* and *hermanas* (male and female sponsors) and the devotees of the Holy Cross join the celebrated mass. According to the elders, the parish priest initiates this practice so that a mass is offered as part of their initial celebration. Prior to two-day performance, I wish to note that “exclusive” rehearsals of the *arakuio* tradition pertained solely to *personajes* and *maestros* while “simultaneous” rehearsals refer to combined practices between the *musikeros* and the *personajes* scheduled by the *hermanos* and *hermanas*. Customarily, there were 12 simultaneous rehearsals before the two-day presentation. Since there is an annual sponsor of 12 families, 12-session simultaneous rehearsals were held either on the backyards of sponsors’ residences, indoor rehearsal if the house could accommodate space requirement for movements and under a mango tree or in the middle of the street if the rehearsal requires more space.

<sup>5</sup>I use the term conventionalized movements or movement conventions to describe the different executions of choreographed sword fights accompanied by the community band. Because proper execution of the dances was critical to *arakuio* tradition, it also played a significant role in how these synchronized with the instrumental music. The following choreographed sword-fights of the *arakuio* are as follow: *Estrado*, a U-shaped formation for both Christian and Moorish troupes; *Ehersito*, a half-moon shaped formation for both *personajes*; *Rebista* or preparation for battle, a type of movement performed by separate groups of *personajes* either Christian or Moorish troupe in various shapes like straight line, diagonal line, and S-shaped formation in different angles; *Panagaan urong-sulong* or forward-backward fencing/spearing, a type of sword-fight formation between two troupes in two lines or in scattered formation termed as *Sabog*; *Carranza*, a conventional movement between two opposing *personajes*; and, *Paradang pa-krus* or Cross-shaped formation, a type of movement convention exclusively for Christian troupes, see Briones 2010, Llana 2009, Tiongson 1986. For the entire representative list and complete description, see Ibarra 2002.

<sup>6</sup>The *pantot* or communal ritual dance is the climax of *arakuio* festival in which all practitioners performed their vows on stage that lasted almost an hour of continuous music playing and dancing. Because the stage had been over-crowded with devotees desiring to participate in the *pantot* dance, I compressed myself on the left side of the stage and joined the ritual dances. Babies were danced by elders and female *personajes*. One thing that struck

Having been criticized over the years for a lack of educational merits (Ibarra, 2002; Tiongson, 1986), *araquio* could be an avenue for musical transmission and learning which may in fact overshadow its being a diminishing tradition. These can include but are not limited to learning experiences that may reveal the relationship of music and movement, as well as the meanings of these experiences that may challenge the current attitudes assuming a lack of educational merits. I feel it is important to examine the transmission and learning processes of the practitioners not only to document this Filipino cultural heritage but more importantly, to provide a basis for its continued perpetuity. I am neither an *araquio* practitioner nor a devotee to their patron saint, but my commitment to this topic was shaped both by my previous study on *araquio* music and its medium of performance (Ibarra, 2002) and my pilot study on teaching and learning as part of my qualitative coursework in qualitative research and evaluation in international education taken at the Graduate School of Education – TC, Columbia University in the City of New York, USA guided my understanding towards these processes. For a decade of documentation, I have found the *araquio* phenomenon an abundant ground for exploring issues imperative to teaching and learning. These issues include how practitioners learned their parts over time, the meanings of their teaching and learning experiences, and how this process in traditional context is relevant to present music education in the Philippines. Further, I consider the participants' qualitative learning accounts with an eye towards their significance to pedagogical culture in music education within a cultural context. In the light of the present day threats posed by the overpowering influence of electronic media entertainments on the lifestyle of Filipino contemporary society, I believe that the preservation and dissemination of this folk theatre is imperative for its viability.<sup>7</sup>

Musical transmission as community experience addresses social significance on its holistic unique practice. In a traditional context, practitioners' involvement in the process of music learning identify themselves as role models, recognize their musical ability to perpetuate their musical heritage in the *araquio* tradition and inspire their family members, peers, and the community. Most importantly, they serve as impetus to sustain the tradition in younger generations. Playing *araquio* music, singing its songs, executing the conventional dance movements, and performing the communal ritual dance are all forms of practitioners' folk expression. The system of musical transmission is customarily bounded on the belief that *araquio* is staged as an offering rite. I therefore assert that transmitting the music, songs, and movement conventions is a form of shared experience between "*maestro-musikero-personaje* relationship" (master-musician-characters of the play relationship) fulfilling one common goal. Its nature as a theatre-ritual that cannot only be categorized with other forms of indigenous folk theatre in the Philippines, but also its unique quality as folk expressions manifested in music, song, and movement performance. Mutual activity in transmitting musical elements denotes a shared meaningful learning experience in which practitioners reflect their admiration and support to one another in sustaining this Filipino heritage for humanity.

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my attention was a man with Parkinson's disease holding the relic of the holy cross as he pushed himself to dance hoping that he would be cured from his illness.

<sup>7</sup>My commitment to this topic was shaped both by my previous study of *araquio* music and my pilot study as part of my coursework in Qualitative Research and Evaluation in International Education taken at Teachers College, Columbia University in the United States. I have found the *araquio* phenomenon an abundant ground for exploring issues important to teaching and learning. These issues include how practitioners learned their parts over time, the meanings of their teaching and learning experiences, and how the process in a traditional context is relevant to present Music Education in the Philippines.

## Summary of Theoretical Frame

Recognizing the need of an in-depth study on the practitioners' transmission and learning experiences, I utilized a qualitative ethnographic-phenomenological method. Phenomenological was used within the context of this inquiry to vividly describe practitioners' experiences in regard to *araquío* tradition and how they interpret those meaningful learning experiences. Though I intended to limit the scope to describing and analyzing what practitioners think of their transmission and learning experiences and how these experiences were meaningful and significant to them, I also attempted to comprehend their perceptions, perspectives, and understanding about the teaching and learning process which would offer unspoken meanings. Because my study focused primarily on the transmission and learning of *araquío* music, songs, and movement conventions, my theoretical framework was guided by the three modes of enculturation (Merriam, 1964) namely socialization, education and schooling which had been expounded through the interpretation of culture (Geertz, 1973). The interpretation of culture can be used to understand products of anthropological research that consists of thick descriptions. Geertz noted that the interpretation of a culture group forms an entity in which social relation is regulated by customs and asserts that culture can be understood by studying what people think about their experiences and ideas and the meanings that are important to them. More so, it encompassed the interpretation of human behavior in terms of cultural context.

In connection with these underlying principles, my investigative study proposed that the three modes of enculturation reconstructed into categories can tackle the transmission and learning processes which can be organized into descriptive knowledge-based concepts on socialization, education, and schooling that are bounded outside the typical Western perspective. The mode of socialization applied to the practitioners' early exposure to the *araquío* elements. The mode of education can be investigated *vis-à-vis* identification of the agents (teachers); classification of the technique (methods); and, the content of learning processes pertaining to physical, social, and verbal aspects. The mode of schooling can be examined through master-apprenticeship setting.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, the scheme also illustrated the connection between the tradition and the community through the transmission phenomenon which framed the learning experience. This ethnographic documentation aimed at discovering how these learning experiences were meaningful to them. Thus, it underscored their shared-experiences, what shaped their beliefs, awareness, and understanding of the *araquío*'s socio-cultural and religious contexts in the transmission of its elements. Finally, I looked at how transmission could be defined based on their teaching and learning experiences.

## Method

### Selection of Participants

This study used a purposeful sampling (Bernard, 2006) which included 21 adult practitioners, namely four *maestros*, nine musicians, three female and five male *personajes*. Using pseudonyms to protect participants' identity, their ages varied according to their respective roles. My purpose for utilizing purposeful sampling comprised the following: (a) to generate representative types of each of the *araquío* elements that were investigated (i.e., three female *personajes* in learning the songs, five male *personajes* in learning the movement conventions, nine *musikeros* in learning the music, and four *maestros* in teaching and learning

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<sup>8</sup>In my interviews with the four current maestros of *araquío*, it would take a decade or more serving as apprentice-maestro. An apprentice will have to wait for someone to die before taking the responsibility of a full-pledge maestro.

these elements); (b) to adequately capture the diverse backgrounds and characteristics of the participants; and (c) to determine similarities and differences that reveal the transmission and learning processes evident in the *araquío* tradition as music learning in the context of a social phenomenon.

I have purposely chosen adult practitioners as native culture bearers because their teaching and learning experiences had been whetted and nurtured through the passage of time. Thus, they were able to share their meaningful experiences on how the pedagogical processes of their tradition greatly impacted each of the practitioners' decision in choosing her or his path in the *araquío*. They have acquired different musical skills representing the distinct characteristics of music, songs, and movement conventions. The distinctive representation of each of the participants shed light in establishing a vivid comparison between the transmission and learning processes and how these processes were meaningful to the practitioners. Considering strict protocol by my Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the protection of human subjects, I have secured approval that adult respondents remained exempted from review as stipulated in the guidelines. Though the locale of the study does not require such oversight, I assured the practitioners that in any attempt to publish this study, their personal information would not be disclosed.

### **The Interview Script**

After the two-day production, I conducted semi-structured and open ended interviews with the participants ranged from 30 to 40 minutes each. Three different sets of questions, each for a specific group of participants were used. The first section, comprised of questions for all interviewees, focused on personal background in the *araquío* and source of influence that served as motivating factors for their involvement. The second part was categorized according to participants' roles and centered around transmission and learning experiences and the meanings that defined their experiences.

### **Data Gathering**

In gathering my data, I utilized an interactive method in the form of participant-observation. This method served as my investigative tool to gather data in that I was able to consider participants' responses in various teaching and learning situations. By means of participant-observation, I immersed myself in the investigative procedure using a balanced *emic and etic*, or outsider-insider perspective (Bernard, 2006; Bresler, 1995, 1996; Geertz, 1973). During the process of investigation, I stayed in the small village of Santo Tomas for three months and took part in the simultaneous rehearsals (community band and characters of the play) and two-day *Araquío* productions as participant-observer and in the exclusive rehearsals (characters of the play) as a plain observer.

In two-session simultaneous rehearsals, I received instructions in playing the *rakatak* (snare drum), learned the basic steps of the *pasodoble*-march, and the *pantot* dance (ritual dance). On the feast day celebration, I performed the *rebista* (sword brandishing) onstage together with the devotees of the *araquío* tradition, who at that time performed the communal ritual dance accompanied by the community band. These procedures equipped me to understand their cultural beliefs and reconstruct participant interactions and learning activities through descriptive and reflective field notes that I have immediately written as the learning process was observed and experienced. More so, video footages of the three-month rehearsals and two-day actual *araquío* production assisted me in defining the transmission and learning processes occurred among the participants.



## Analysis

Because my study was designed in ethnographic participant-observation, the method of my data analysis was guided by Bernard (2006) and Weirisma and Jurs (2005). Bernard notes that all data come to us raw and in qualitative form but these can be studied and coded, turned into variables, and studied to determine relationships among variables. These codes are used for categorizing the information, a necessary analysis task in an ethnographic study. Consequently, I utilized three approaches to data analysis in this study: classifications of data, inductive coding, and hermeneutic/interpretive analysis.

### Classifications of Data

Analysis of data requires synthesizing information from field note observations, interviews, and other data sources. I used classification of data as an initial approach to coding. Weirisma and Jurs (2005) and Bogdan and Biklen (2003) suggest a number of ways that data can be classified, which I have reconstructed to fit this study. My primary codes include pedagogical practices that explored how practitioners choose their path in the *araquio*, their respective backgrounds, and sources of influence. Further, I used categories such as *meaning-makers* and “*meaning description*” to define the meanings these four groups of participants identified in this study. The *unarticulated meaning* was based on my own reflection as a product of typification.

### Inductive Coding

Data analyses are mostly based on inductive or open-ended coding (Bernard, 2006). “Inductive codes are used specifically for categorizing the information in the data” (Weirisma & Jurs, 2005, p. 259). Inductive codes under family legacy, sources of motivational factors, which involved familial influence, musical, emotional, and social factors have been used to vividly establish the flow of my inquiry. Thus, it provided me a clear path to identify factors related to what my first research question had investigated.

### Hermeneutic/Interpretive Analysis

Bernard (2006) defines hermeneutic interpretive analysis as the continual interpretation and reinterpretation of texts. This analysis approach highlights the underlying meaning contained in the texts given by the participants who experienced the phenomenon under study. In this view, the hermeneutic interpretive analytical tool offers a logical approach to the search for meanings and their interconnections in the *araquio* tradition. The idea that culture is an assemblage of texts is the basis for interpretive anthropology (Geertz, 1973). As Geertz notes, cultural interpretation in anthropology denotes the meaningful experiences of practitioners’ involvement in the socio-cultural life of a community and that culture can be fully understood by studying what practitioners think of their experiences and ideas as well as the meanings that are significant to them. Based on this premise, my interpretive analysis for each research question proceeded as follows: I analyzed the categories of data and assigned specific coding that reveals the interrelationships of themes that emerged in the transcripts. I looked at the common and unique meanings of their experiences and categorized these descriptions as articulated and unarticulated themes such as the following: (1) early induction into religious community as form of socialization; (2) imitation and interaction; (3) expectations in cyclical approach to teaching and learning *araquio* elements; (4) schooling through master-apprentice relationship; and, the unspoken meaning of teaching and learning.

## Findings and Discussion

### Socialization in *Araquío*

Socialization process in the context of enculturation is a process by which *araquío-ers*<sup>9</sup> learn their own cultural practices in the village where they live, and by which get a hold on its traditional values and behaviors that are deemed indispensable in the cultural practices. As the first mode of enculturation, socialization includes the experiences naturally occurring within a cultural group. It occurs within the early years of one's life and is influenced by the course of emulation. As part of the process, it entails a conscious way of watching others in order to imitate certain behaviors. Included in the process is the impact that restricts, confines, guides, or molds an individual's cultural beliefs and awareness that involves experience, observation, and instruction. The outcome of the process results in an individual understanding and competence in *araquío* elements such as music performance, rendition of songs, or execution of movement conventions.

### Early Induction into Religious Community

Infant experience is the beginning of enculturation. Mothers play a vital role in exposing and teaching their children their own tradition (Campbell, 1989, 2003; Custodero & Johnson-Green, 2003; Merriam, 1964; Nettl, 1996). Exposing infants and toddlers to the *araquío* tradition by their mothers or grandmothers is an historical and social phenomenon in the village which is transmitted via the ritual dance. It has been an annual custom over the years wherein its cultural identity has been established. It is also a social phenomenon that babies, toddlers, and pregnant mothers join in on stage for their offspring's initial *araquío* experience.

Current *maestros* indicated their mothers had performed the ritual dance when they were in their mothers' wombs. I asked *maestro* Tino to recall his infant experience in communal ritual dance as he explained:

My mother was a devotee to the holy cross. She told me that when I was in her womb, she danced onstage and prayed to our patron saint that, when I reached certain age, she wished me to join the *araquío* tradition which really happened.

Likewise, *musiceros* and *personajes* have similarities in their infant experiences indicating that according to their mothers they were carried and danced on stage when they were babies. Francis, a community musician stated, "My mother went up onstage and handed me over to a *personaje* for the ritual dance. One female *personaje* carried and danced me to the music."

Given these facts, it is clear that there is a significant indication of infant experience in *araquío* culture as the initial stage of socialization in the context of enculturation. Specifically, mothers can act as agent (Campbell, 1989, 2003; Herskovits, 1948; Merriam, 1964; Nettl, 1996) in deliberately shaping their children to their own musical practices (Custodero & Johnson-Green, 2003) that is evidently observed in the *araquío* tradition. The practitioners' accounts suggest that an individual has been exposed to the culture s/he lives in at an early age. This process also indicates that an individual can become an accepted follower, fulfilling her or his role in a group of practitioners. From their homes, mothers bring them on stage not only as a thanksgiving for their offspring's good health but in the hope that someday their infants

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<sup>9</sup>I use the term "*araquío-ers*" to describe the practitioners of the tradition including the devotees to their patron saint.

and toddlers would demonstrate initiative and realize their social obligation to the community as future members of the *araquio*. This trend of beliefs paves the way to an aspect of conscious socialization where children in this society begin their childhood aspiration and inspiration.

### **Imitation and Interaction**

Many of the practitioners had strong childhood experience as imitators of certain behaviors. This happens when children (practitioners) become conscious of their environment and learn to socialize and interact. It is related to enculturation wherein an individual is purposefully molded to the cultural norms of her or his own society for a considerable period of time. Socialization is viewed as one mode of enculturation that starts in the early years of one's life and depends on emulation or unreflective imitation (Ellis, 1985; Feay-Shaw, 2002), and involves a voluntary development system (Blacking, 1995). As a common denominator of socialization, imitation and interaction are perceived to be the fundamental principles of musical transmission and learning in various cultural practices of the world such as the *araquio* tradition. By looking through the lens of this tenet, the findings suggest that the process of socialization occurs in each individual account of childhood aspiration which is triggered by agents of socialization such as family and social environment (i.e., watching *araquio* rehearsals and performances). As an initial stage of socialization, each person's early exposure to music, songs, and movements provides a vivid description of what is expected of her or him in *araquio* society. The agents serve as an example of the social system, and in that way offer a child the means of exposing herself or himself to the social contact of that system. As an essential element of this social system, social contact starts between an aspiring child and a seasoned practitioner. Through imitation and interaction, the former desires to be a member of their cultural practices, whereas the latter bequeaths inspiration to the former. This trend of event appears to be the foremost behavioral pattern of their socialization made evident and as observed in their respective narratives.

Feliciano, one of the current *maestros*, described his first socialized with their grandparent and family members about the nature of *araquio*. He was given a chance to emulate specific lines of songs and parts of movement by interacting with his family members.

Both my parents joined the production for several years when I was a child, remember I watched every rehearsal [and] tried to imitate the dance movements at home and hum the songs then hum the music while brandishing [imaginary] my sword.

Bernie, a community musician, shared his experience:

After watching my father played in rehearsals and performances, and every time I see my father's trumpet at home, I try to manipulate and explore the sound of it [the music of *araquio*]. When my father noticed that I could make sounds of his trumpet, he let me study the instrument.

During their childhood years, the overall observation among participants' experiences on imitation and interaction with former practitioners confirm that socialization in *araquio* tradition is a social system of enculturation that depends on emulation (Campbell, 1996; Ellis, 1985; Feay-Shaw, 2002; Merriam, 1964) and the type of experience practitioners have with music influences the way they parent musically (Custodero & Johnson-Green, 2003). The symbolic representation of the two poles, child's ability to imitate and seasoned practitioner's capacity to inspire, depicts a conscious socialization through social interaction. By watching

what others around them do, the practitioners' imitative behavior occurs within the boundary of *araquio* elements and also serves the desire to replicate the family and community practices as a whole. Therefore, socialization as a form of enculturation evidently impacts one's ability to adopt and emulate a cultural system in which s/he lives. This innate ability to imitate a particular skill and practice serves as one's road to cultural learning and education.

## Education in *Araquio*

### Expectations: The Cyclical Approach of Transmission and Learning *Araquio* Elements

Contents and learning behaviors is a significant type of education or training by enculturation as the product of a specific culture group. In the *araquio*, the transmission and learning processes of its elements are bounded in cyclical approach which involves instructions and demonstrations that is associated with guidance technique.

Every practitioner has a teaching role to play. Congruent to the cyclical idea of transmission and learning *araquio* elements, old *maestros* teach apprentice *maestros*. When apprentices become officially appointed as masters, these new community teachers teach songs and dances to female *personajes* while movement conventions to male *personajes* respectively inclusive of the singsong stylized delivery of verses<sup>10</sup> to both genders (Briones, 2010; Tiongson, 1986). In the process, *personajes* teach among themselves the skills they have acquired from the masters. Senior female singers teach songs to junior singers,<sup>11</sup> whereas senior male *personajes* teach incoming *personajes* about movement conventions. While *personajes* receive instructions directly from the masters, *musikeros* are autonomous and self-governed individuals who teach the music among each group of instrumentalists.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>10</sup>Verse forms in the *araquio* script comprise dialogues written mostly in quatrains of either *dodecasyllabic*, *decasyllabic*, *nonasyllabic*, *octosyllabic*, and *heptasyllabic* lines referred to as *plosa* or *prosa* and all lines in each particular verse form end in assonance (see Lumbea, 1986; Ibarra, 2002; Tiongson, 1986). In my observation during rehearsals and performances, *decho* or verse recitation in *Araquio* performance necessitated declamatory style combined with the conventions of body and hand gestures. *Decho* or *dicho* (verse recitation) as described by the *maestros* required a stylized delivery of verses in the script. In the process, each line is dictated by the *otor* (prompter) in a soft voice to each *personajes* then the *personaje* emulates the sound exactly how it is delivered by the *maestro* in a loud voice combined with body movements and hand gestures as required. The stylized delivery of verses was popularly described as "singsong" in manner by the prominent Philippine folk theatre scholars (see Briones, 2010; Fernandez, 1988; 1991; Llana, 2009; Mojares, 1985; Tiongson, 1986).

<sup>11</sup>In my documentations of the vocal repertoire, I have categorized the songs as to constant and variable pieces. Constant songs utilize texts from *araquio* script while variable songs are borrowed pieces classified as Filipino classic songs (Tiongson, 1986) from the early 1950s to 1960s and Filipino folk songs (see Ibarra, 2002). *Araquio* songs were quite challenging to teach to four female *personajes*. The style required a belting style, a high-throaty singing voice, denoting an authentic *araquio* rendition coupled with conventional hand gestures and dance steps. For complete listing of constant and variable repertoire, see Ibarra 2002. Both constant and variable songs can either be sung in solo, duet, or quartet depending on how each of the four female *personajes* had known the piece by heart and memory.

<sup>12</sup>I am very much grateful to notate the constant instrumental repertoire of the *araquio*. Complete musical notations of the constant instrumental pieces which I've transcribed can be seen in Ibarra 2002 for *batalla*, *paso doble*, *pantot*, and slow *marcha*. Furthermore, some Filipino folksongs and popular music were also used as *paso doble* such as variants of *Bahay Kubo* (a *Tagalog* Folk Song) *Kataka-taka* by Suarez, *It's Now or Never* by Schroeder, *Obladi*, *Oblada* popularized by Beatles, and *Tragedy* by Bee Gees were among the variable popular pieces *musikeros* utilized as *paso doble* music in accompanying the conventional movements of *araquio*. Due to the growing body of popular contemporary music, the current and second team of *maestros* introduced over theyears the inclusion of popular ballads and folksongs into the variable repertoire of *araquio* music which was performed as instrumental accompaniment to movement conventions. The inclusion of variable pieces in their pedagogical practices has continued because of its relevance to contemporary times and its acceptance by the practitioners. The existence of an accepted practice in the observance of constant and variable repertoire reflects the

A number of prior researchers have stated that oral tradition and expression are passed on by word of mouth (Chaney, 1997; Nettl, 1982, 1996; Robertson, 2011; Sheridan et al., 2011) from individual person to another (Cope & Smith, 1997; Mbanugo, 1986; Merriam, 1964; Slobin & Titon, 1996; Waldron, 2006) incessantly that are communicated over time within a particular setting and style (Feay-Shaw, 2006; Shelemay, 1996) from one generation to the next generation (Kerlin, 2004; Klinger, 1996; Veblen, 1994). The manner of transmitting *arakuio* music, songs, and movement conventions over time from one person to another within a specific setting is in line with these underlying principles, however, it is through the use of cyclical approach. This method transcends the learning processes from the agent to the learner in a clockwise revolving cycle of continuous revolving method. Each practitioner has a significant role to share on its continued perpetuity. Agents could be any of the practitioners of the tradition like senior *maestros*, *musikeros*, or *personajes* who have years of substantial knowledge and skills dealing with the music, songs, and movement conventions.

Agents, not only the masters, are those who have acquired substantial skills over the years of involvement. Their roles are critical in transmitting the skills they have developed to the incoming members. In the transmission stage, the agent's teaching strategies may involve the following modes: demonstration, sequential (step by step) process, use of repetition, assessment, and use of technology (when necessary).

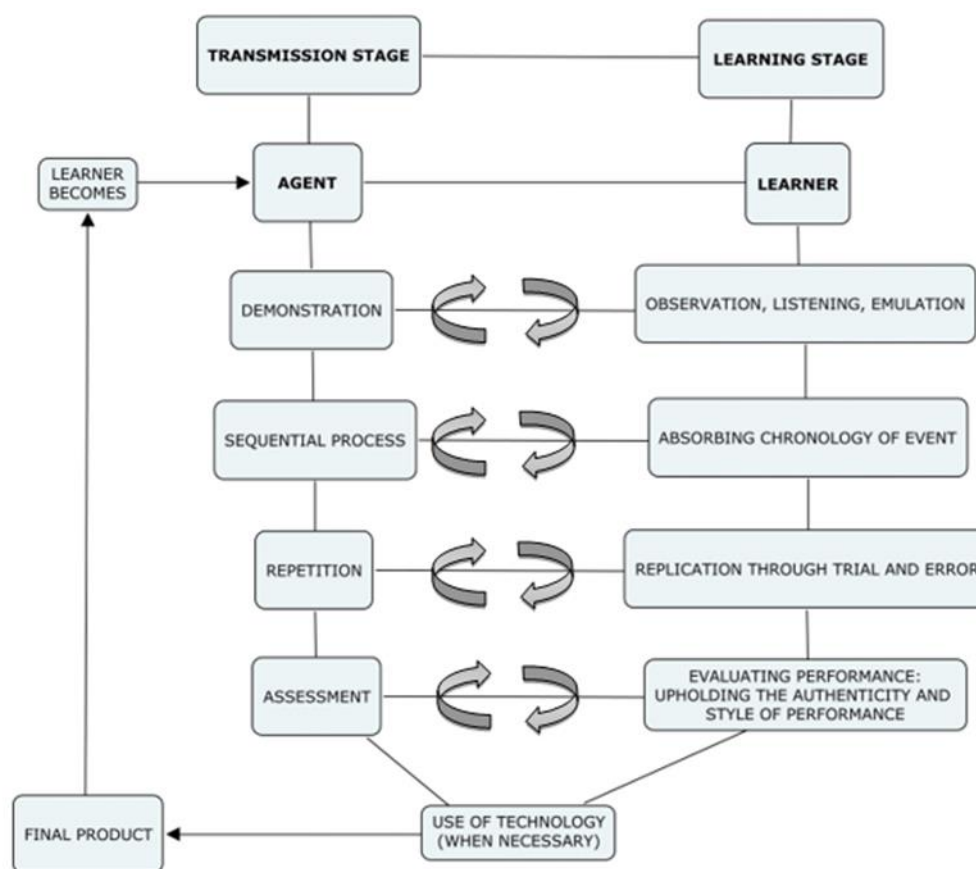
The term learner denotes beginning learners such as apprentice *maestro*, beginning *musikeros*, or *personajes* who wish to receive instructions from the *arakuio* agents. In the initial learning stage, the learner learns by aural and visual process: it is by means of observation, listening, and emulation (i.e., observing verbal and non-verbal cues from others and each other); focuses on absorbing chronology of context being learned; replication though trial and error (i.e., emulating expert's novel performance), or restructuring and re-modification (i.e., improvisation); evaluating performance (i.e., upholding the authenticity and style of performance); and, use of technology as needed (i.e., secure visualization to recalling synchronicity of music and movement and/or singing and dancing).

Once a learner becomes an agent, s/he will then take on the role of an expert agent to repeat the cycle of transmission until the process is perfected. Both agents and learners devote an incredible number of years to perfectly master their crafts. The *arakuio* embraced this mode of transmission and learning as their cyclical method of learning processes and medium of transmission from agents to learners, and also from older generation to younger and next generations. Figure 1 below depicts the cyclical approach in the transmission and learning of *arakuio* elements.

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practitioners' approach to combining the elements of tradition and modernity in *arakuio* music that plays a significant role in the transmission of music and movement conventions.

Figure 1: Transmission and Learning Strategies in Cyclical Approach



### The Cyclical Approach on Araquio Music, Songs, and Movement Conventions

In instrumental music, the role of instrumentalist is almost exclusively dominated by men (Kitley, 1995; Phuthego, 2005; Rice, 1996; Trimillos, 1989; Veblen, 1994) and the findings about transmission strategies coincide with prior documentation on aural/oral learning (Cope & Smith, 1997; Feay-Shaw, 2002; Rice, 1996; Rodriguez, 2006; Veblen, 1994; Waldron, 2006). Looking at the transmission and learning the music, musicians share common goals in giving and receiving instructions among those playing similar instruments and with common gender. Just as they consider themselves a self-governing group of practitioners, their transmission and learning strategies are practiced by other sections of instrumentalists in cyclical approach. Seasoned musicians play the role of agents while, the beginners take the position of learners.

The *musikeros* evidently utilize transmission strategies such as demonstration, sequential process, use of repetition, and assessment. When I asked Jerry, a trumpet player, about how he learned the music, he explained:

When I hear my co-trumpet player a bit off key, I demonstrate the right intonation with my instrument by [playing and] showing the right finger positions on trumpet keys. I let him hear the distinction between notes affected by accidentals and melodic phrase without the effect of accidentals.

I also asked Bernie, a 69-year-old tuba and percussion player, and the oldest among *musikeros* as he described:

I learned all these [by observing and listening] from former old percussionists who also taught me the idea. By experiencing being taught by elders, I also did the same thing, if there is a new percussionist who would like to join the *araquio*, we rehearse together and I teach him what I've learned from senior percussionists.

The learner instrumentalist has to absorb the chronology or sequence of events in melodic context being learned. When the entire piece is completely aurally grasped, the expert musician requires the learner to render the whole piece by himself. Repetitions are applied, firstly, using a slow tempo and gradually increasing in speed. The learner musician then replicates the music through trial and error until every detail of the piece is mastered. As a form of assessment, an agent musician then and there gives critiques and technical advice with interpretative responses of feedback (i.e., on the musical expressions, keeping up with the tempo, observing dynamics and phrasings, and awareness to notes bearing accidentals). Consistently complying with the cultural norms, the learner musician upholds the authenticity of sound, in line with the principles introduced by the agent musician and the output of musicianship is context dependent.<sup>13</sup>

The cyclical approach to teaching and learning the songs is also evident in female *personajes*' learning experiences. In line with prior researches, singing is a female-determined role commonly practiced in various traditions (Feay-Shaw, 2002; Iletto, 1979; Llana, 2009; Rice, 1996). Customarily, masters teach the songs using the underlying principles of transmission strategies. In the same way, female singers like Liza and Blanca have adapted these approaches to teaching songs to new female *personajes*. In the context of transmission style, the strategies of the *musikeros* previously discussed, are correspondingly evident and learned in the singing process.

Using a demonstration method, an agent female singer demonstrates each melodic phrase while the learner female singer observes, listens, and aurally emulates the seasoned singer's novelty and style. Once the whole song is vocally transmitted, sequential processes follow. It is then put in to certain dance steps (i.e., footwork), followed by hand movements (i.e., traditional hand gestures), and then in combination of both hands and feet. Singing and dancing are then combined with live accompaniment. By absorbing (i.e., memorizing) the chronology of each context being learned, a learner has to remember every single detail of footwork (either in a beat of two's or three's as written in the song, conventional hand swaying, and the simultaneous coordination of body movements to the tune of songs being played and synchronized to the singing voices). Repetition is always implemented to master the entire song and dance structure. Repetitive practice seeks to perfect it. Through trial and error, mistakes are detected and minimized. The process of replication is incorporated as a critical process to learning. Most often, skilled singers utilize previous video recordings to recall intricate melodies and convoluted movement progression. This helps the neophyte to visualize and remember the schema of song and dance patterns. Before its final outcome is accepted, an assessment is made if it meets a certain cultural standard of song and dance performance.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>Playing with the *musikeros* in my documentation of the *Araquio* tradition was one of the most remarkable experiences I've ever had. Music making as pedagogical practice is the most significant instructional tool to learn the music in the form of observation and emulation.

<sup>14</sup>While the vocal and instrumental repertoire are played by the community band, I would like to make an emphasis that songs and movements performed by female *personajes* as well as conventional movements performed by male *personajes* are major essentials of this theatre ritual since music and movement are inseparable.

Consistently, the new singer maintains the authenticity of high-throaty singing style to complement the verve and execution of hand- and foot-work required by the masters. Through a systematic receptive transmission and learning processes, cyclical approach is successfully achieved. Blanca described:

When *maestros* teach us a particular song, they surround us. One of them holds *atambol* [drum] and plays the rhythm on it. Others sing the melody using *la, la, la*. Even the male *personajes* who surround us join in singing the neutrals syllables, for me it is a kind of improvised vocal accompaniment. As I listen to them, I could recall the melody I am singing.

In learning the unity of music and movement, the cyclical process is noticeable between an agent and learner male *personaje*. By tradition, it is in exclusive rehearsals that various movements are taught by masters employing fundamental methods of transmission. The experiences shared by the five male senior *personajes* have adopted these strategies in teaching to their junior peers.

Using a demonstration method, a senior *personaje* demonstrates a particular movement convention to a junior *personaje*. By observation, the inexperienced learner first listens to verbal instructions, then imitates the skilled person's archetype presentation on sword-brandishing. Once a learner becomes dexterous with sword-twirling, an agent *personaje* then imparts the techniques and the order of the following sequences on footwork, separately with hand movements, then combining both hands and feet with gradual increase of speed. Commonly, assessment is applied if the learner observes the norms of performing the movement conventions, and upholds the genuine execution of movement conventions accompanied by rhythmic patterns played on improvised instruments or music vocalized by their *co-personajes*. When I asked Constantine, one of the leading *personajes*, how he learned the dances, he described:

There are different kinds of formation and combination of step patterns, *maestros* teach us footwork first, they count one-two, one-two then we follow them exactly the way they demonstrate. Once we grasp the idea, we are asked to perform individually then by two's, and lastly by group. This is followed by the demonstration of hand movements, then combination of footwork and sword-brandishing.

Fernando, another *personaje*, shared his learning experience:

Since we usually get exhausted in vocalizing the music while moving, we also use audio-tape recordings of the *paso doble* music to execute our movements. We make ourselves familiar with the rhythm so that we would have a clear idea on music flow when we rehearse movements with *musikeros*.

Thus, improvisation is an established practice of *musikeros* as a response to movements of *personajes* during the *pasodoble*. Conversely, practitioners' practices rely only on pre-determined movements and songs. As a unique practice, music and movement are always together.



## Schooling in the *Araquío* Institution

Schooling involves conscious learning wherein an individual strives to learn a particular skill under an expert culture bearer in a form of apprenticeship. Viewed outside of the Western perspective, this mode appeared to be more prominent in various cultural practices of the world such as the *araquío*.

*The master-apprentice relationship.* In line with the previous researches on musical transmission in various cultures (Green, 2002; Herkovits, 1978; Kliner, 1996; Mbanugo, 1986; Rice, 1996; Sheridan et al., 2011; Trimillos, 1989; Veblen, 1991), the discourse on the vital role of master-apprentice relationship which could be dependent on formal instruction (Slobin and Titon, 1996) or to no formal but informal learning (Green, 2002; Mbanugo, 1986), training in a form of apprenticeship setting while master teacher supervises student learning for payment (Kerlin, 2004), and traditional apprenticeship training from inexperienced to experienced (Rodriguez, 2006) had been richly addressed. Schooling is articulated in the context of non-Western culture as another mode of enculturation in the form of master-apprentice training.<sup>15</sup> Similar to the previously-mentioned studies, the master-apprentice relationship is evident between the *maestro* of the *araquío* and the apprentice who aspires to becoming one of the future masters. Ciano, one *maestros*, shared his experience as apprentice-maestro:

I told my Uncle Lucio [former maestro], I didn't have his blessing yet to assist him in rehearsals with the community musicians, it was not proper to just assist in rehearsal without his approval. After a year, my uncle granted me his permission. He asked me to undergo apprenticeship which I complied. I served for 11 years assisting them in rehearsals from 1996 to 2007. Then just a couple of years later, he died.

### The Unspoken Meanings of Teaching and Learning

The idea of unarticulated meaning had been coined by previous researchers (Loftland & Loftland, 1996; Marsh, 2009) through the process of typification wherein various data were organized into a single code to generalize the over-all meaning. By using this process and through my own analysis in looking at how transmission is defined by practitioners' learning experiences, the findings of this study suggest that unspoken meanings in the *araquío* have emerged. As an outcome of unarticulated meaning, this study generally revealed intergenerational learning as the end product of genealogical transmission has evidently occurred in the *araquío* tradition.

The intergenerational learning defines the roles of its main practitioners of all ages. Each individual has his or her own part to portray and every person can learn from one another. In reference to the family legacy of its main practitioners, the transmission of music, songs, and conventional movements to its members happen within genealogical generation; that is, from grandparents to parents and from parents to their children. This is a significant lifelong attribute of the learning process. It definitely promotes reciprocal learning connections between various generations of the *maestros*, *musiceros*, and *personajes* who are working together to acquire knowledge and skills of their own tradition and sustaining it to perpetuity. The process of intergenerational learning assists each individual to develop social identity, as

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<sup>15</sup>The "master-apprentice" training in *araquío* tradition might last for more than a decade of continuous participation before one can be appointed as full pledge *maestro*.

well as communal solidarity in their constantly changing populace. In the context of their approach to preserving their nearly diminishing tradition, I am fortunate to have witnessed and interviewed the current set of participants and members. The *araquío* spans more than a hundred years and compasses about five generations of *maestros* including the current apprentice *maestro*. The uniqueness of intergenerational method revitalizes their culture, as well as recalling their religious beliefs and putting into practice the celebration of their offering rites.

### Conclusion

*Familial influence is a strong educational source.* Current practitioners were inspired by their family members who had built legacies in their specific roles of *maestros*, *musikeros*, and *personajes*. The practice of playing an instrument, singing, dancing, or performing specific movements happen in home with parents and grandparents serving as primary agents or educators to their children and grandchildren. These agents greatly impact one's ability to adopt and emulate a cultural system in which s/he lives.

*The process of imitation employed in aural/oral tradition is at the core of learning the araquío.* The *araquío* elements are taught and learned through modeling. These elements include the instrumental music, songs, and movement conventions. Each element is transmitted and learned by specific group of practitioners, vis-à-vis; female *personajes* with the songs, male *personajes* with the movement conventions, *musikeros* with the music, and *maestros* with songs and movements. The method of cyclical approach transcends the learning process from each group of seasoned native culture bearers to the beginning learners such as apprentice-*maestros*, *musikeros*, and *personajes*.

*Improvisation is an established practice of musikeros as a response to movements of personajes during the pasodoble.* Conversely, practitioners' practices rely only on pre-determined movements and songs. In the *araquío* culture, learning to improvise was a means of folk expression and style of restructuring a musical piece being transmitted and learned by the *musikeros*. This is evident in musicians' use of techniques such as melodic embellishments, spontaneous creation of medleys, and alterations of tempo. Their communal effort to improvising melodic or rhythmic patterns illustrated *musikeros*' ways of reshaping a melodic or rhythmic material being learned within the context of the *araquío* tradition. However, female and male *personajes* are bounded by the *maestros*' rules. Their skills are "controlled" within their traditional practices of singing and performing movements. Hence, these young practitioners are encouraged to maintain the authenticity of songs and movement conventions.

*The intergenerational learning is a continuous process of passing down the araquío skills.* The intergenerational learning is the end product of genealogical transmission evidently occurred in the *araquío* tradition. The transmission of music, songs, and movements happen within old and young generations of practitioners. These are passed down aurally and orally from their great ancestors to their descendants of the modern era. This is a lifelong attribute of the *araquío*'s transmission and learning process. The process of intergenerational learning also assisted each individual in developing self-identity and communal solidarity. Through this unique intergenerational process, their culture is revitalized, and their religious beliefs are put into practice in celebrating their offering rites.

## Implications to Music Education

### Understanding Musical Style in Relation to Culture

Campbell notes that “music styles cannot be easily separated from culture, and are better understood as an integral part of a comprehensive unit” (Campbell, 1989, p. 29). This premise is significantly applicable for the *arakuio* music, songs, and movement conventions. The same is true with the study of the different musical traditions of the various tribes and regions in the Philippines. As specified in 2002 Revised Basic Education Curriculum, general music classes provide opportunities for students to understand and become aware of the musical styles of the different regions of the country to better appreciate and comprehend the uniqueness of their cultural practices. Their customs are embedded in their respective musical traditions. Congruent to the musical tradition of the *arakuio* culture, its musical style can be best understood if sociological aspects and folk expressions of its main practitioners could be integrated into the discussion. These pedagogical implications and applications are vividly stated. When the musical style and the tradition of a specific culture, like that of the *arakuio*, are combined, students in general music classes would have a very meaningful musical experience. Most importantly, one of the significant implications for future research is the integration of sociological, political, and psychological aspects of the *arakuio* tradition that might offer new knowledge to enhance students’ understanding of the interrelatedness of various disciplines wherein *arakuio* music and songs are utilized as the central discourse and point of reference.

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