

Telescoping and Moro-fications in the Four Arakyo Manuscripts of Peñaranda, Nueva Ecija: A Historical/Hagiographical Recontextualization towards a More Culturally-Sensitive Komedyá

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ABSTRACT

The Philippine *komedyá*, particularly those that follow the *Moro y Cristiano* template from Iberia and Meso-America, has been justly accused of marginalizing and denigrating Filipino Muslims. A particular manifestation of such *komedyá*, called Arakyo, persists up to the present day in the town of Peñaranda, in the province of Nueva Ecija, in the central part of Luzon. This paper examines four extant manuscripts of Arakyo. Like the Philippine *komedyas* about the lives of some saints, otherwise known as *komedyas de santo*, the Arakyo is based on identifiable hagiographies, namely those of Saint Helena and Emperor Constantine the Great. But unlike many *komedyas de santo*, the Arakyo also has identifiable historical references. Thus, the narrative of the Arakyo can lend itself towards both hagiographic and historical comparisons. This paper's hagiographical and historical recontextualizations of the Arakyo narrative reveal some glaring telescoping of events, persons, and places, as well as Moro-fications of the villains. This paper argues that if such telescoping and Moro-fications are rectified, the Arakyo can actually become a culturally-sensitive *komedyá*.

Keywords: Philippine *komedyá*, Moro y Cristiano, Arakyo, Peñaranda, Nueva Ecija, telescoping, Moro-fication, historical recontextualization, hagiographical recontextualization, culturally-sensitive *komedyá*

INTRODUCTION

According to Nicanor Tiongson, one of the foremost experts on Philippine theater, there are three types of Philippine *komedya*: 1) the historical that deals with notable leaders and personalities; 2) the evangelical, or the *komedya de santo*, that deals with biblical and saintly themes; and 3) the *komedya de espada y capa*, or the moro-moro, that deals with the conflict between Iberian Moors and Christians (Tiongson 2). This third type of Philippine *komedya*, that traces its descent from the Moro y Cristiano template of Iberia and Meso-America, has been justly accused of marginalizing and denigrating Filipino Muslims. It was Senator Mamintal Tamano, then serving as chairman of the Commission on National Integration, who first articulated—officially—this well-founded accusation in 1967 (Briones, *From War Dance* 226).

The Arakyo of Peñaranda, Nueva Ecija

The Arakyo is a Philippine *komedya* that persists up to the present day in the town of Peñaranda, in the province of Nueva Ecija, in the central part of Luzon. The more learned folks from Nueva Ecija explain that “Arakyo” is a corruption of the Hispanized name “Heraclio,” who was supposedly a bishop of Jerusalem but actually refers to the Byzantine Emperor, Flavius Heraclius (575- 641) (Souza 28; Goyena). It has to be remembered that the letter “h” in Spanish is usually un aspirated. Thus, the sounds “Eraclio” and “Arakyo” are really very close to each other. However, there is a slight problem with this account because Heraclio is actually not mentioned in the Arakyo. The authors of this paper offer another explanation. Hagiographically, the bishop of Jerusalem, who was mistakenly identified as Heraclio by the more learned folks of Nueva Ecija, is actually named Judas Cyriacus, or more simply Cyriacus. Such a name could have been Hispanized as “Ciriaco,” and through the years, the Tagalog-speaking folks of Nueva Ecija “Ciriaco” could have misheard or mispronounced it as “si Riaco.” This corruption of “Ciriaco” into “si Riaco” would have been the reverse of Pigafetta’s conflation of “si Lapulapu” into “Cilapulapu.” “Riaco” and “Arakyo” sound similar. For reasons that this paper will make clear, Heraclio is not referred to in the Arakyo, but the character of Ciriaco is indeed referred to in the said *komedya*.

The Arakyo is peculiar because it is a *komedya* that cuts across Tiongson’s three types. That is to say, the Arakyo is a historical and evangelical *komedya*, and a *komedya de capa y espada* all at the same time. As a *komedya de capa y espada*, the Arakyo continues to marginalize and denigrate Filipino Muslims. In an age where tolerance and integration are the politically correct demeanor, Filipinos have to accept that the Arakyo cannot rightfully persist without modifying itself. It cannot just hide in its isolated area in Central Luzon, as Muslim communities are already

physically emerging in various points of Luzon, and as social media will virtually bring the said cultural practice everywhere in the country and the world.

The authors of this paper retrieved four extant manuscripts of the Arakyo (which were from the maestros of Barangay Las Piñas and Sinasahan, the master's thesis of one of the authors of this paper, and from the second volume, *Komedya*, of Tiongson's *Philippine Theater: History and Anthology*). These are the ones used in *barangays* Las Piñas, San Josef, Santo Tomas, and Sinasahan. As the Arakyo is a historical komedya, it is possible to compare and contrast these texts with their historical references. As the Arakyo is also a komedya de santo, it is also possible to compare and contrast them with their corresponding hagiographic material. Hagiography is understood here as pious biographies where the boundaries between history and legend are blurred. This paper is premised on the idea that a thorough historical/hagiographical recontextualization of the Arakyo can yield valuable lessons and insights that can be used towards its more appropriate reformation into a culturally-sensitive practice.

Review of Related Literature

There are only a handful of academic texts on the Arakyo. Florante Ibarra's master's thesis, "The Araquio of Santo Tomas, Peñaranda, Province of Nueva Ecija: A Study on the Music in Devotional Theatre" (2002), as well as his doctoral dissertation, "Transmission of Araquio Music, Songs, and Movement Conventions: Learning, Experience, and Meaning in Devotional Theatre" (2012), focused on the musical accompaniment that is usually played by a small brass and percussion band, as well as on the stylized movements of the actors. The master's thesis of the main author of this paper, *Ang Arakyo sa Barangay Santo Tomas, Peñaranda, Nueva Ecija: Isang Pag-aaral ng Teksto ni Leon Estanislao* (*The Arakyo of Barangay Santo Tomas, Peñaranda, Nueva Ecija: A Textual Study of Leon Estanislao's Manuscript*) (Delos Santos 2009) is a textual analysis of a particular Arakyo manuscript. Tiongson's essay, "The Philippine Komedya: History, Indigenization, Revitalization" (2010), devoted some pages on the Arakyo's communal *panata* and *pandot* as traditional Filipino religious expressions deeply embedded in Philippine komedya in general and in the Arakyo in particular. The *panata* assures us that the Arakyo will continue to be performed in Peñaranda, while the *pandot* is an old ritual for the *anitos* and *diwatas* that is transformed and Christianized as a communal dance for the holy cross (Tiongson "The Philippine Komedya" 34-38). Nikki Serranilla Briones's doctoral dissertation, "From War Dance to Theater of War: Moro-Moro Performances in the Philippines," devoted a chapter to discussing the Arakyo of Barangay Sinasahan (102 -115, 136-158). The work noted the selective attention and presence of the audience, as

well as the freedom of the maestro to resequence the parts of the Arakyo (*From War Dance* 144). She also reiterated the points made by Tiongson on the panata and pandot (*From War Dance* 152–158). These works show that no research has been undertaken yet on the narratives of the four extant Arakyo manuscripts of Peñaranda, Nueva Ecija, especially in relation to the problematic representation of Muslims.

When Francisco Baltazar wrote *Orosman at Zafira* in the second half of the 19th century, it was not clear why that work veered away from the traditional subject of Moro-Christian conflict. For Tiongson, it was either motivated by a desire to make the piece non-offensive to the Muslims or to delve into internal psychological conflicts (“The Philippine Komedya” 19). At any rate, the handful of publications that problematized the representation of Muslims in Philippine komedya would come a century after Baltazar. These publications appear to be part of a bigger agenda that emerged in the 1970s not only to revitalize the komedya, but also to push it as national theater (23). According to Sir Anril Tiatco, in his essay “The Philippine Komedya and the Recuperation of the Cosmopolitan: From Colonial Legacy to Cross-Cultural Encounter,” this bigger agenda was primarily conceptualized and advocated by Tiongson, Doreen Fernandez, and Virgilio Almario (98). Tiongson envisioned that the revitalized komedya should no longer be “anti-Muslim, colonial, elitist” and “antipeople in values and orientation” (“The Philippine Komedya” 39). Almario’s essay “Tungo sa Pagbuo ng Pambansang Dulaan” (“Towards the Creation of National Theater”) downplayed the problematic representation of Muslims by pointing out that not every komedya deals with the Moro-Christian conflict (8). Briones’s essay, “Contemporary Portrayals of the ‘Moro’ in Folk Dramatization in Spain, Central America, and the Philippines” also diluted the same problematic representation by proferring what she called the “aesthetic victory” of the Muslims, as manifested by the more elaborate Moro costume, the more complicated acting for Moro roles, the more performers taking on Moro roles, and the uncertainty as to which warring faction will be victorious (9-11). Tiatco demonstrated that another way of addressing the problematic representation of Muslims in the Philippine komedya is to dissolve its Tagalog and Catholic-centric discourse by actualizing its cosmopolitan potential that is founded on its ahistoricity and being a work of pastiche, as well as focusing on the more universal themes of humanity (Tiatco 94-121). These publications generally take a macro approach. Mostly, they either talk about the Philippine komedya as a genre, or discuss its ongoing and potential transformations. Although Briones included the Arakyo in her discourse about the aesthetic victory of the Muslims, she did not address the problematic portrayal of Moros in the Arakyo manuscripts. This present paper is an attempt to address this gap.

There are also a handful of documented comments on the narrative flaws of the komedya. Tiongson's "The Philippine Komedya" mentions two of the early ones: Lorenzo D'Ayot's 1887 statement on its mythical geography and anachronism involved in pulling in historical figures and Vicente Barrantes's 1889 remark on the unrealistic interactions of characters from different locations, wrong placements of historical characters, and confused references to the local fauna (20, 28). In as far as the Philippine komedya's convoluted geography and anachronistic references to history are concerned, Resil Mojares's essay "Notes for the Production of a Brechtian Komedya" surmised that such could not totally emanate from the failure of the Filipino folk writers to sharpen their knowledge of geography and world history, but could have been a "deliberate, uninhibited play, an irreverent pastiche of the foreign, the assertion of the freedom to invent the 'world'" (60). This paper takes a look at these instances of convoluted geography and anachronistic history and refers them to their historical and hagiographical origins.

Problematique

Apolonio Chua's essay "Paano Ipinagpapatuloy ang Tradisyon ng Komedya? Ilang Piling Tutok" ("How does the Philippine Komedya Persist? Selected Cases") argues that the director, the impresario/organizer, and the writer can reform and revitalize the Philippine komedya (139-142). In addition, Tiongson, Fernandez, Almario, Briones, and Tiatco all indirectly demonstrate that the critic could very well be a fourth important person. While this paper is not directly concerned with revitalizing the komedya, its desire to reform it into a more culturally-sensitive practice rests on a fifth viable person, the audience-critic. The main author of this paper is a native of the mentioned locality and has grown up experiencing the Arakyo every year. His critic's hat was earned as a graduate student researching on the cultural practice. For the present paper, he has collaborated with his mentor who now serves as co-author.

The reform of Philippine komedya into a more culturally-sensitive practice has some success stories, which have been mentioned by Tiongson, Almario, Briones, Tiatco, and Chua. These include Francisco Baltazar's *Orosman and Zafira* and the polished komedya manuscripts in San Dionisio, Parañaque. But should the Arakyo follow suit? Baltazar and the people of San Dionisio reformed the komedya by creating entirely new ones. Their strategy may not be appropriate for the people of Peñaranda, who perform the same Arakyo over and over again. Thus, it would be much better that the reformation of the Arakyo flow from the specificities of its own texts, contexts, and practices.

An initial historical/hagiographical reading of the four texts of the Arakyo reveals two glaring flaws: telescoping of events and Moro-fications of villains. “Telescoping” is a historiographic error where two or more events or persons are placed closer together in narrative account than they are historically. This can also happen in reverse, where two or more events or persons are placed farther from each other in narrative account than they are historically. Telescoping can also conflate two or more events or persons into a single event or person, or fragment a single event or person into two or more separate events or persons. The telescoping initially detected by this paper pertain to the compression of historically distant events and persons to the point, in some cases, of conflating them.

The Arakyo manuscripts discussed here compress and conflate distant and distinct historical events and persons. “Moro-fication,” for lack of better term, is the identification or labeling of a group of people as Moro even if in reality such group is not. Since this paper refers to the Moro y Cristiano dichotomy invented in Iberia and “Moro” and “Mora” appear a number of times in the four Arakyo manuscripts, the awkward “Moro-fication” has to be used (Donoso 89-92). If these telescoping and Moro-fications are rectified, this paper argues, the Arakyo can actually become a more culturally-sensitive komedya.

Methodology

This paper contains four substantive sections: 1) a more detailed look at the performances and texts of the Arakyo, 2) a synoptic analysis of the four texts of the Arakyo, 3) a thorough analysis of the telescoping in the Arakyo, and 4) a discussion of the Moro-fications contained in the Arakyo.

This analysis comes as part of the main author’s recollections of his numerous experiences and viewings of the Arakyo. A native of Peñaranda, he conducted field work in the town. In the synoptic analysis of the four Arakyo manuscripts, the authors compared and tabulated their narrative elements to identify their similarities and differences. The discussion echoes the biblical method of systematically comparing and contrasting the so-called synoptic gospels, namely the Gospels according to Matthew, Mark, and Luke, which resemble the four Arakyo manuscripts.

This paper compares the narratives of the four Arakyo manuscripts with their historical and hagiographical points of reference. Three clusters of telescoping were identified: telescoping of persons, events, and places, which are related to the komedya’s general historical anachronisms noted by D’Ayot in 1887. The telescoping of places were already identified by D’Ayot and Barrantes in 1889. Lastly, in its analysis of the Moro-fications contained in the Arakyo, the paper points

out the Muslim characters and labels that recur in the four manuscripts, but should not have been there because the historical and the hagiographic references in the Arakyo antedated the establishment of Islam.

The systematic exposure of such telescopings and Moro-fications seeks to help the organizers, performers, and other stakeholders of the Arakyo rectify the cultural practice. In conclusion, the paper presents two rectified plots as an alternative Arakyo.

Operational Definition of Terms

Hagiography refer to pious biographies which blur the boundaries between history and legend.

Hermano/Hermana are wealthier community members who vow to provide logistical support for the performance of the Arakyo for a given year. This includes food during rehearsals and actual performances.

Komedya is “a play in verse in three or more parts, with a convention of marches, stylized movements and delivery of verses, and choreographed battles. The usual subject of the komedya are the lives of saints (usually the patron saint of the town in whose honor the komedya is being staged) or, more commonly, the strife between Christians and Moors, set in European and Middle Eastern kingdoms in the middle ages” (Tiongson, “The Philippine Komedya” 16).

Maestro keeps the Arakyo manuscripts and directs the rehearsals and actual performances.

Moro-fication refers to the identification, or labeling, of a group of people as Moro even if the group is not.

Moro-moro is a prevalent type of komedya that dwells on the Moro-Christian conflict.

Panata is a sacred vow/promise made by the members of a given community concerning their future participation in the performance of an evangelical komedya in their various capacities.

Pandot is an old Tagalog and pre-Christian religious ritual that found its way into the Arakyo as a ritual dance for the holy cross (Tiongson, “The Philippine Komedya” 34-38).

Orihinal refers to four the Arakyo manuscripts of Peñaranda.

Synoptic Analysis This is the analytic process of comparing and contrasting the narrative elements of analogous texts. This method is used in biblical studies to handle the synoptic gospels, namely the Gospels according to Matthew, Mark, and Luke. It is deployed in this paper to analyze the four Arakyo manuscripts of Peñaranda based on the fact that the manuscripts are also analogous texts.

Telescoping This is a historiographic error where two or more events or persons are either placed closer together or farther from each other in narrative account than they are historically. Telescoping can also either conflate two or more events or persons into a single event or person, or fragment a single event or person into two or more separate events or persons.

A CLOSER LOOK AT THE ARAKYO

The province of Nueva Ecija, located in Central Luzon, is surrounded by the provinces of Pangasinan and Nueva Vizcaya in the north, Aurora in the east, Pampanga and Bulacan in the south, and Tarlac in the west. The town of Peñaranda is a small, fourth class municipality, with a population of about 30,000, located near the southern provincial border. It is about 30 kilometers from the provincial capital city of Palayan, and about 100 kilometers from the national capital, Metro Manila. Figure 1 shows the barangays of Peñaranda and the adjacent towns of Santa Rosa, General Tinio, San Leonardo, and the city of Gapan.

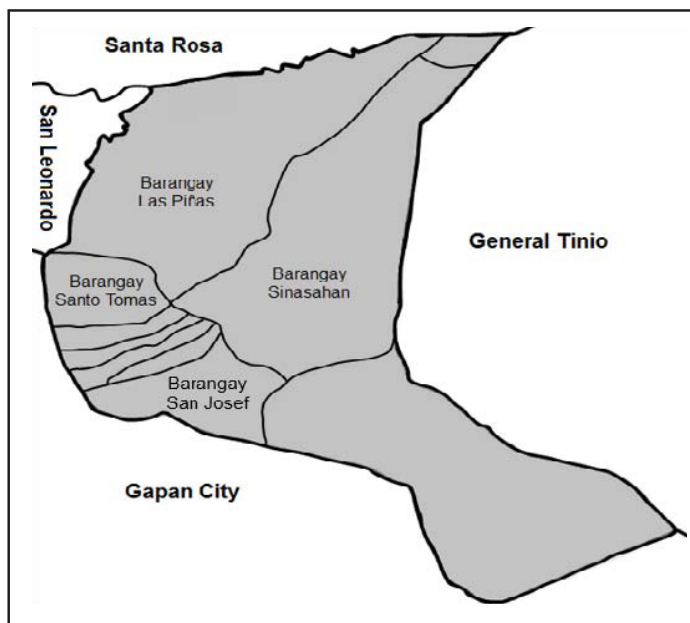


Figure 1: Map of the Town of Peñaranda

Figure 1 also shows how the town of Peñaranda is subdivided into ten barangays. The four barangays of Las Piñas, San Josef, Santo Tomas, and Sinasahan, where the four Arakyo manuscripts were retrieved, are located near the town center that in turn is constituted by the barangays Poblacion I, Poblacion II, Poblacion III and Poblacion IV. In Figure 1, these four central barangays appear as four thin horizontal strips just below barangay Santo Tomas, to the left of barangay Sinasahan, and above barangay San Josef.

The Arakyo Performance

The Arakyo has long been performed in these four barangays: in Las Piñas on 10 and 11 May, in San Josef on 18 and 19 May, in Santo Tomas on the first Saturday and Sunday of May, and in Sinasahan on 21 and 22 May. The performances of the Arakyo in barangay San Josef and barangay Las Piñas do not coincide with the Feast of the Holy Cross, which falls on 3 May. The performance dates of the Arakyo in barangay Santo Tomas, which vary each year, may or may not fall on the said feast day. The performance dates of the Arakyo in barangay Sinasahan are already too far away from the said feast day, but they coincide with the Eastern Orthodox Church's joint feast day of Empress Helena and Emperor Constantine the Great. It should be noted that in the Philippines, the whole month of May is usually dedicated to the Holy Cross (the *santacruzán*). None of the four barangays have the Holy Cross as their official patron: barangay Las Piñas has the Virgin of Mount Carmel, barangay San Josef, Saint Joseph, the husband of Mary, barangay Santo Tomas, Thomas the Apostle, and barangay Sinasahan, Rita of Cascia. Even the town of Peñaranda has Francis of Assisi.

In the said barangays, the preparations for the Arakyo take four months, under the leadership of maestros, and with the logistical support of the hermanos and hermanas. The actual performances are accompanied by live brass and percussion bands. The stage is a wooden platform with a single fixed backdrop. Sometimes, the backdrop is a plain wall with a billboard about the event. At other times, it is painted over with a medieval castle. But the left and right entrances are always included as part of the backdrop. Costumes are colorful and glittery, usually made of cheap fabrics. They do not usually reflect the period costumes of the characters portrayed. Props are made of wood and cardboard, gilded with foil or paint. Dances follow the traditional Filipino template. One of these dances is the *pandot*, a small segment of the *komedya*, which is not very different from the devotional dances of Sinulog of Cebu, *subli* of Batangas, and *pandango* of Bulacan. The Arakyo's choreographed battle scenes echo the movements of *arnis*, a Filipino martial art deploying sticks. The verses are declaimed with the help of an *apuntador*, or prompter.

Aside from being an evangelical komedya, the Arakyo is also a devotional komedya; its performance is bound to a sacred promise, or panata, done by the maestros, performers, hermanos and hermanas, as well as the dancing audience of the pandot segment (Briones, *From War Dance* 138–141). If in the many areas of the Philippines, the komedya is said to have been killed by the emergence of *sarsuwela* at around the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th, the Arakyo appears to have been insulated by this shift by the panata and pandot because of the devotees' superior belief that blessings will come around such as a bountiful harvest and good health (Tiongson, "The Philippine Komedya" 21,35)

The Four Arakyo Manuscripts

Among the four Arakyo manuscripts retrieved by this research, only the one from barangay Santo Tomas bears an authorial name, Leon Estanislao, and a date of composition, 1880. This manuscript also has multiple electronic/digital copies. In 2002, Ibarra retyped the handwritten manuscript with consent from the maestros as a product of his master's thesis. The Arakyo from barangay Las Piñas was typed on short sheets of paper kept by Paulino Dayson, and the one from barangay Sinasahan is extant on logbooks kept by Dante Jardiel. Both are farmers and former *personajes*. These two manuscript keepers formally allowed the authors of this paper to make photocopies of the two documents, study the same documents, and publish the findings from the said study. The manuscript from barangay San Josef has been edited, translated into English, and published by Tiongson in the second volume of his *Philippine Theater: A History and Anthology, Komedya* (1999).

The verses of the four manuscripts follow a six- to twelve-syllable meter. The language is archaic Tagalog with generous helpings of Spanish and Spanish-derived words. The Las Piñas and Santo Tomas manuscripts have about 4,300 lines grouped into about 1,400 stanzas, while the San Josef and Sinasahan manuscripts have about 3,000 lines grouped into about 1,100 stanzas. Among the three unedited, unannotated, and unpublished manuscripts, only the Santo Tomas manuscript contains an introductory note. Both the Las Piñas and Santo Tomas manuscripts contain prologues consisting of *loa* delivered directly by the main characters of the komedya. These *loa* provide motivation to the audience as they watch the performance. It also contains praises to the historical narratives of the theatrical performance or the celebration being held (Tiongson, *Kasaysayan ng Komedya* 6). Both manuscripts also contain rituals for passing the responsibility of supporting the production of the komedya to the next hermano and hermana. All of the three unedited, unannotated, and unpublished manuscripts contain very little theatrical instructions, written in Spanish and English, for the maestros. The manuscripts contain no references to musical scoring. But the Santo Tomas manuscript at

least specifies the songs and dances to be performed by specific characters. These limitations make the Arakyo totally dependent on the tradition handed by one set of maestros to the next. But these limitations also make the Arakyo open to improvisation and manipulations by maestros.

Las Piñas Manuscript: The Las Piñas manuscript appears to be distorted and incomplete. What follows is its summary. The Roman prince Constantine demands the Jewish Emperor Saladin to surrender his crown, as well as the holy cross that is hidden somewhere in Jerusalem. Emperor Saladin refuses, and Prince Constantine kills him. The Jews are baptized as Christians. Empress Helena crowns Constantine as Roman Emperor. The New Jewish Emperor Maxentius wants to avenge the death of Emperor Saladin and attacks Rome. An angel appears to Emperor Constantine and advises him to replace the eagle on the Roman banners with a cross. The Romans defeat the Jews again. Turkish Emperor Khosrow II also wants to avenge the death of his brother, the Jewish Emperor Saladin. Emperor Khosrow II takes the holy cross from Empress Helena, and Emperor Constantine attacks the Turkish Empire to retrieve it. The narrative abruptly ends at this point. It is followed by the ritual for passing on the responsibility to the next hermano and hermana. This ritual is followed by an obviously misplaced fragment of the narrative detailing Empress Helena's search for the holy cross in Jerusalem.

San Josef Manuscript: The San Josef manuscript appears very different from the Las Piñas and Santo Tomas manuscripts. In the San Josef manuscript, a full-blown romantic story between a Moorish princess and Christian Soldier is inserted into the narrative of Empress Helena and Emperor Constantine. It is therefore the most secular and imaginative rendition of the story of the holy cross. It is also the quintessential Arakyo manuscript; when scholars attempt to recount the narrative of the Arakyo, they usually refer to the San Josef manuscript (Tiongson, *Philippine Theater* 267-675). In this manuscript, Emperor Constantius is mortally wounded by the Turks in Jerusalem. Roman Generals, Arnulfo, Nicetas, and Vitalino attempt to grab the Imperial crown, but are prevented by the loyal Generals Fernando and Lucero. The young Emperor Constantine sends General Lucero to the Turkish court in Jerusalem to demand their surrender. Emperor Constantine attacks the Turks in Jerusalem. A voice assures Empress Helena of her son's victory, but requires her to search for the holy cross in Jerusalem. Emperor Constantine kills the Turkish Emperor Saladin. Princess Ordrelisa is sent by the new Turkish Emperor Khosrow II to the court of Emperor Constantine to demand his surrender and the punishment of General Lucero for a past offense. Empress Helena goes to Jerusalem and finds the holy cross, but she is captured by the Turkish General Marmolin and her relic is intercepted by Emperor Khosrow II. Turkish Prince Godimar falls in love with Empress Helena, but she does not reciprocate his feelings. Empress Helena

encounters Princess Ordalisa in a sword fight, but Prince Godimar prevents them from killing each other. Emperor Constantine sends General Lucero to the court of Emperor Khosrow II in Jerusalem to demand the return of the relic. The negotiation fails, and the Turks capture General Lucero for his past offense. Princess Ordalisa frees General Lucero. A battle between the Romans and Turks erupts. In a one-on-one fight, Empress Helena is about to kill Princess Ordalisa, but General Lucero pleads for the life of the Turkish Princess. The Turks are defeated in battle and are baptized as Christians by the Romans.

Santo Tomas Manuscript: The Santo Tomas manuscript appears to be the more complete variant of the Las Piñas manuscript. What follows is its summary. Empress Helena crowns her son, Constantine, as the new Roman Emperor. The Persian Emperor Maxentius demands that Emperor Constantine surrender the Roman crown and scepter. Emperor Constantine decides to fight the Persians. An Angel appears to Emperor Constantine and advises him to replace the eagle on the Roman banners with a cross. The Romans defeat the Persians. Emperor Constantine prepares to invade Jerusalem, under the Jewish Emperor Saladin, to search for the holy cross. Emperor Constantine kills Emperor Saladin. Empress Helena goes to Jerusalem to search for the holy cross. She finds three. To determine which one belongs to Jesus Christ, she orders a dying woman to touch each of the three crosses to pinpoint which among them will miraculously heal her. Turkish Emperor Khosrow II learns of the death of his brother Emperor Saladin, as well as of the Roman possession of the holy cross. Emperor Khosrow II intercepts the holy cross from Empress Helena. Emperor Constantine and Empress Helena invade the Turkish Empire. Emperor Khosrow II surrenders and returns the holy cross. The Turkish people are baptized as Christians. The holy cross is brought to Rome by Emperor Constantine and Empress Helena. The narrative in the Santo Tomas manuscript is also followed by the ritual of passing on the responsibility of supporting the Arakyo to the next hermano and hermana.

Sinasahan Manuscript: The Sinasahan manuscript appears to be an incomplete variant of the San Josef manuscript, based on the synoptic analysis done by the authors. Its storyline parallels that of the San Josef manuscript, with one exception. Towards the end, when the battle between the Romans and Turks erupts, the latter manuscript does not specify which of the warring factions would emerge victorious. Briones surmises that the excision of the narrative's ending is an effort of the Arakyo performers of barangay Sinasahan to make their komedya more culturally sensitive (Briones, "Contemporary Portrayals" 71).

SYNOPTIC ANALYSIS OF THE NARRATIVES FROM THE FOUR ARAKYO MANUSCRIPTS

With four different manuscripts in four different stages of integrity, a synoptic comparison of their narratives is in order. This paper culls 14 fundamental narrative elements from the four manuscripts, which are presented in the first column of Table 1. The same table notes whether each specific narrative element is present in the main narratives of the Las Piñas, San Josef, Santo Tomas, and Sinasahan manuscripts.

Narrative Elements	Las Piñas Manuscript	San Josef Manuscript	Santo Tomas Manuscript	Sinasahan Manuscript
Death of Roman Emperor Constancius	x	✓	x	✓
Attempt to Disrupt the Roman Imperial Succession	x	✓	x	✓
Crowning of Roman Emperor Constantine by Roman Empress Helena	✓	✓	✓	✓
Battle against Jewish/Persian Emperor Maxentius	✓	x	✓	x
Angel's Advice to Emperor Constantine to Put the Sign of the Cross on the Roman Banners	✓	x	✓	x
Battle against Jewish/Turkish Emperor Saladin	✓	✓	✓	✓
Empress Helena's Finding of the Holy Cross	x	✓	✓	✓
Verifying which of the Three Recovered Crosses is the Holy Cross of Christ	x	x	✓	x
Interception of the Holy Cross by Turkish Emperor Khosrow II	✓	✓	✓	✓
Love Story of Turkish Princess Ordalisa and Roman General Lucero	x	✓	x	✓
Battle against Emperor Khosrow II	✓	✓	✓	✓
Surrender of Emperor Khosrow II	x	✓	✓	x
Baptism of Emperor Khosrow II and his Followers	x	✓	✓	x
Retrieval of the Holy Cross	x	✓	✓	x

Table 1: The Narrative Elements in the Four Arakyo Manuscripts of Peñaranda, Nueva Ecija

Among the fourteen narrative elements mentioned in Table 1, the four Arakyo manuscripts agree only on four elements, namely: 1) the crowning of Roman Emperor Constantine by the Roman Empress Helena; 2) the battle of Emperor Constantine against Emperor Saladin; 3) the interception of the holy cross by Turkish Emperor Khosrow II; and 4) the battle of Emperor Constantine against Emperor Khosrow II. But even in the element of the battle of Emperor Constantine against Emperor Saladin, the four manuscripts vary slightly. In the Las Piñas manuscript, Emperor Saladin is Jewish, while in the San Josef, Santo Tomas, and Sinasahan manuscripts, he is Turkish.

The narratives from the Las Piñas and Santo Tomas manuscripts, as variants, can be reconciled, as can the narratives from the San Josef and the Sinasahan manuscripts, as another pair of variants. This means that the Las Piñas manuscript can be restored using the Santo Tomas manuscript, and the Sinasahan manuscript restored using the Santo Tomas manuscript. There appears to be no point in trying to reconcile all of the four narratives because different maestros take charge of each performance per barangay, and diverse stakeholders lead the preparation of Arakyo.

Table 1 also shows that the Las Piñas manuscript has the most number of missing elements, while the San Josef and Santo Tomas manuscript have the least. As the pandot dance is supposed to happen when the narrative verifies which of the three recovered crosses is the holy cross of Jesus Christ, only the Santo Tomas manuscript can properly cue this dance in its proper place in the narrative. The fact that this narrative is appended in the Las Piñas manuscript could mean that the maestros could have it performed anywhere near the middle of the komedya. The San Josef and Sinasahan manuscripts curiously do not contain this narrative element, which is supposed to be the central story of the feast of the holy cross. Nevertheless, the pandot is also performed in barangays San Josef and Sinasahan.

The settings of the narrative move from Jerusalem to Rome and to Turkey in the Las Piñas manuscript, from Rome to Jerusalem to Rome and to Turkey in the Santo Tomas manuscript, and from Jerusalem to Constantinople to Jerusalem and to Turkey in the San Josef and Sinasahan manuscripts. These settings hark to a time when Rome was still the overlord of the Mediterranean basin.

TELESCOPINGS IN THE ARAKYO

The four manuscripts of the Arakyo refer to four important events of Christianity: 1) the vision of the cross experienced by Emperor Constantine prior to his victory against Emperor Maxentius at the Milvian Bridge in the year 312 CE 2) Empress Helena's finding of the holy cross in Jerusalem in the year 326 CE 3) the capture

of the holy cross by Emperor Khosrow II in the 614 CE and 4) the repossession of the holy cross by Emperor Heraclius in the year 628 (Souza 31). The telescoping between the vision of the cross and the finding of the holy cross—a distance of 14 years—can be tolerated as a narrative device, as can the capture of the holy cross and its repossession. But the telescoping between the finding of the holy cross and its capture—separated by 288 years—is out of the ordinary. The Arakyo conjoins into a single narrative the feast of the finding of the cross, which on the Roman Catholic calendar falls on May 3, and the feast of the repossession of the cross, or the exaltation of the cross, which on the said calendar falls on September 14.

Telescoping of Persons

In the four manuscripts of the Arakyo, Emperor Heraclius was subsumed under the character of Emperor Constantine. They are historical figures born about 300 years apart. This is the reason why Emperor Heraclius does not appear in the Arakyo, and why this paper doubts that he could be the origin of the name “Arakyo.” Similarly, Emperor Sheroe was subsumed under the character of Emperor Khosrow II. Emperor Sheroe is one of the sons of Emperor Khosrow II (Mashayekh 2). After Emperor Khosrow II was overthrown in the year 628, Emperor Sheroe came to power and had his father executed (6). It was Emperor Sheroe who actually returned the holy cross to Emperor Heraclius in 628 CE (7–8).

Telescoping also happened in the character of Empress Helena. In the Arakyo, she is a young to middle-aged woman. Historically, since she is estimated to have been born around 250 CE, she would have been around 62 years old when the Emperor Constantine had the vision of the cross near the Milvian Bridge. When he made her an Empress in 325 CE, she was already around 75 years old. Prior to that coronation, she had been a consort of Emperor Constancius who divorced her even before he became an Emperor (Firth 44). When she found the holy cross, she was already around 78 years old. In the Arakyo, Empress Helena is young enough to engage in sword fights and have some sort of a romantic relationship with Prince Godimar. One viable reason why Empress Helena was represented thus could be that the folk writers of the Arakyo would have found it very difficult to write an interesting *komedya de capa y espada* if the heroine were an old woman. By telescoping Empress Helena this way, the Arakyo was also compelled to telescope the dying Emperor Constantius as a young expectant father, even if historically he died in his middle to late fifties (Firth 49).

In the Arakyo, Emperor Saladin is represented either as a Jewish or Turkish ruler who opposed Emperor Constantine prior to the finding of the holy cross. Historically, Sultan Saladin of Egypt and Syria lived from the 1137 CE to the year 1193 (‘Ulwan 20, 101). If the internal chronology of the Arakyo is followed, Emperor Saladin

should have died around 326 CE, creating a difference of about 867 years from his historical death. One viable reason why Emperor Saladin was telescoped into early 4th-century Jerusalem could be that the folk writers of the Arakyo needed to have a villain to complicate the search for the holy cross and engage Emperor Constantine in one more battle scene.

Telescoping of Places

This paper identified three telescopings of places in the Arakyo. The first concerns the capital of Emperor Constantine's realm, which changed several times: Trier from 305 CE to 312 CE, Rome from 312 CE to 330 CE, and Constantinople from 330 CE to long after his death in 337 CE (Firth 252). In the Arakyo, these changing capital cities are telescoped in a rather confusing way. In the Las Piñas and Santo Tomas manuscripts, Emperor Constantine was already based in Rome prior to his 312 victory over Emperor Maxentius at the Milvian Bridge. As Constantine subsumed the persona of Emperor Heraclius, the former remained based in Rome, instead of moving to Constantinople. In the San Josef and Sinasahan manuscripts, Emperor Constancius and Empress Helena are already based in Constantinople even before Constantine, the man who will establish that city, was born. Then, Emperor Constantine and Empress Helena launched their search for the holy cross from Constantinople, two years before the city was historically founded.

The second telescoping of place concerns the city of Jerusalem, and complements the telescoping of Emperor Saladin. Figure 2 presents the complex changes in political control over Jerusalem from the Hellenistic period to the reign of the Ottomans.

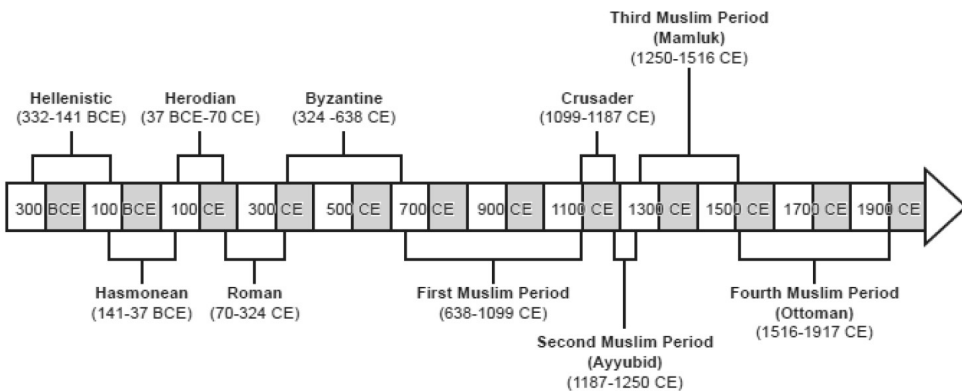


Figure 2: Changes in Political Control over Jerusalem

The Las Piñas and Santo Tomas manuscripts' reference to a Jewish ruler over Jerusalem that is hypothetically capable of resisting the Romans could only happen in the Hasmonean period—second century BCE—which ended 363 years before

Empress Helena found the holy cross. Herodian Jerusalem in the first century CE was ruled by Jewish kings who were vassals of Rome and would not dare to resist the Romans (Pears 1–2). All of the four manuscripts' reference to an Islamic ruler over Jerusalem could hypothetically take place, at the earliest, during the Islamic conquest of the city in the seventh century CE 312 years after Empress Helena supposedly found the holy cross. Likewise, the San Josef and Sinasahan manuscripts' reference to a Turkish ruler over Jerusalem could have happened only during the rule of the Ottomans, which came 1,190 years after Empress Helena located the holy cross (Drijvers 272).

So far, the telescoping of events, persons, and places meant conflating different events, persons, and places into single entities. The third telescoping of a place is somewhat distinct in that the process expands time, to the point that the place referred to is fragmented into two. In the San Josef and Sinasahan manuscripts, Emperor Constantine and Empress Helena are based in Constantinople. After the holy cross is captured by Emperor Khosrow II, the Romans invaded Turkey. But historically speaking, Constantinople was the capital of the Eastern Roman Empire that eventually became known as the Byzantine Empire. The central area of the Byzantine Empire only started to become Turkey when the Ottoman Turks occupied portions of it in 1299 (Pears xiii, 16, 31). The Ottoman Turks had their capital in Sogut, about 225 kilometers southeast of Constantinople, up to 1333 CE, then in Bursa, about 150 kilometers south of Constantinople, up to 1363 CE, then in Edirne, about 250 kilometers west of Constantinople, up to 1453 CE (Pears 223–224). In that fateful year, the Ottoman Sultan Mehmed II finally captured Constantinople and made it his imperial capital (Pears 411). Around 1,123 years separated the founding of Constantinople in 330 CE and its capture in the mid-15th century CE. In the San Josef and Sinasahan manuscripts, telescoping of time was needed to show the difference between Constantinople and Turkey, which are both used as settings in the two Arakyo narratives.

The reason for these telescopings of places could be the sheer complexity of the historical setting of the narratives: that of finding of the holy cross, its capture, and its recapture. Without recourse to reliable libraries, it is likely for the authors to have made errors on the settings which changed through time.

MORO-FICATIONS IN THE ARAKYO

Isaac Donoso, in his paper “The Hispanic Moros y Cristianos and the Philippine Komedya,” explained that the word “Moro” was used by the Iberian Christians during the Age of Reconquista as an othering device to mark the Iberian Muslims, particularly the ones in Andalusia, as foreigners of their own lands (91–92). The

word “Moro” or “Mauru” comes from “Mauretania,” an ancient region in northwestern Africa that is now more or less occupied by parts of Morocco and Algeria (91–92). Mauretania should not be confused with modern-day Mauritania, which is located south of both Morocco and Algeria. When the same word “Moro” was brought to the Philippines and used to refer to the Muslim inhabitants of the archipelago, it may still have had that othering power, but it certainly did not intend to connect the Southeast Asian Muslims with the ancient region of Mauretania.

In the Philippines, the word “Moro” used to carry derogatory connotations, such as being cunning, hypocritical, treacherous, dishonest, suspicious, cowardly, unaccommodating, hard-headed, and lazy (Montero y Vidal 383–384). However, beginning in the late 1960s and early 1970s, Nur Misuari and his followers appropriated the word “Moro” to collectivize the various Filipino ethnolinguistic groups that adhered to the Islamic faith (Luga 38; Hernandez 47–48). The problem with the term “moro-moro” these days is not its association of Filipino Muslims with the Iberian “Moro” (many of the Filipino Muslims now would no longer be offended if they are called “Moro”) but its frequent portrayal of the Moro as the negative opposite of the positively regarded Christian.

In the Las Piñas manuscript, Emperor Maxentius and his warriors were identified as Jews. In the Santo Tomas manuscript, they were identified as Persians. But whether they are Jews or Persians, they were sometimes referred to as “Moros.” Historically, Emperor Maxentius and his warriors were Romans. He was a co-emperor to Constantine in a tetrarchical system that was devised by Emperor Diocletian (Firth 58–65). Obviously, Emperor Maxentius could not be a Muslim since Muhammad was born 258 years after that Roman Emperor died at the battle at the Milvian Bridge (87).

In the Las Piñas and the Santo Tomas manuscripts, Emperor Saladin and his warriors were also identified as Jews. In the San Josef and Sinasahan manuscripts, they were identified as Turks. Either way, they were also sometimes referred to as “Moros.” Historically, Emperor Saladin and his warriors were indeed Muslim, and they indeed ventured into the area of Jerusalem (‘Ulwan 25). But Emperor Saladin, born 811 years after his supposed death in the stories, was telescoped into Jerusalem in the Arakyo narratives (98–107). The Moro-fication of Emperor Maxentius and his warriors also happened with Emperor Saladin and his warriors, though the latter case is different. They were indeed Muslims, but were carted from an entirely different period and brought face to face with Emperor Constantine and his warriors.

In the four manuscripts, Emperor Khosrow II and his warriors were identified as Turks and were referred to as “Moros.” Historically, Khosrow II and his warriors were Persians (Mashayekh 1). Although Emperor Khosrow II was a contemporary of

Muhammad, as they were born in more or less the same year, the former was not a Muslim, but a Zoroastrian (4). After Emperor Khosrow II died in 628, the Persians would remain Zoroastrians for about twenty more years before they eventually became Muslims (5).

One viable reason for these Moro-fications is that the folk writer/s of the Santo Tomas Arakyo simply culled the plots of the finding of the cross, its capture, and its repossession from an earlier *awit* or komedya or from the stories of a parish priest or missionary, all of which were then pigeonholed into the templates and conventions of a moro-moro to produce a full-blown komedya script.

CONCLUSION

This study has revealed that there are at least four different manuscripts of the Arakyo in Peñaranda, Nueva Ecija. All four, however, contain telescopings and Moro-fications that compromise the value of the Arakyo as historical and evangelical komedya. The Moro-fications in the Arakyo can be rectified by just sticking with the historical antagonists involved in the narratives, namely: the Romans under Emperor Maxentius and the Zoroastrian Persians under Emperor Khosrow II. The telescopings in the Arakyo can be addressed mainly by splitting the Arakyo into two narratives. The first one could deal with the feast of the finding of the holy cross, while the second one could deal with the repossession, or the exaltation, of the holy cross. The synoptic analysis undertaken by this paper reveals that the Las Piñas and Santo Tomas manuscripts are related as variants and can be reconciled, as can the San Josef and the Sinasahan manuscripts.

This paper should not end without comparing and contrasting the Arakyo with its well-documented analogue in the Bicol region, the Dotoc. Both are folk performances in honor of the holy cross. The crucial difference is that the Dotoc, at least the one performed in the town of Bigaa, in the province of Albay, is partly komedya, partly a procession, and partly a song (Llana 125-135). The narrative of Empress Helena's finding of the holy cross is the one that is performed as komedya in Dotoc, where Judas Ciriacus—the suspected origin of the name "Arakyo" as this paper argues—appears as a nameless old man, or "gurang" in the Bicolano language, who kept the secret location of the cross (Llana 130). The narrative of Emperor Heraclius's struggle against Emperor Khosrow II is performed as a song (Llana 124). As mentioned earlier, Heraclius is the suspected origin of the name "Arakyo," according to the learned folks of Nueva Ecija. He appears in Dotoc as a Byzantine Emperor, not as a bishop. The authors of this paper were not able to examine the manuscripts of Bigaa's Dotoc, but it appears from the summaries in Jazmin Llana's "The Komedya in the Bicol Dotoc: Prelude or Main Event?" that the telescopings and Moro-fications in the Arakyo are absent in the Dotoc (136-138).

Proposed Framework for Rectification of the Arakyo Narrative

This paper proffers a proposed framework to rectify the Arakyo narrative. The first part of the revised Arakyo, which may be entitled “Empress Helena and Emperor Constantine,” or “Elena at Constantino” in Tagalog, could be performed on the first day. The second part of the revised Arakyo, which may be entitled “Emperor Heraclius and Emperor Khosrow II” or “Heracleo at Costruas” in Tagalog, could be performed on the second. The next two paragraphs offer suggestions for two segments in the revised Arakyo.

“Elena at Constantino”: The first part of the revised Arakyo may contain the following narrative elements in sequence: 1) Emperor Constantine’s vision of the cross and the battle at the Milvian Bridge against Emperor Maxentius; 2) Emperor Constantine’s issuance of the edict of Milan that banned the persecution of Christians; 3) Emperor Constantine’s organization of the Council of Nicea that harmonized the various Christian churches and produced the Nicene Creed; 4) the intrigue sowed by Empress Fausta, Emperor Constantine’s second wife, which led to the execution of Prince Crispus, Emperor Constantine’s son from his first wife; 5) the Execution of Empress Fausta; 6) Empress Helena’s search for the holy cross as part of the atonement for the mistakes of Emperor Constantine; 7) the finding of the holy the cross and the dancing of pandot; 8) the Death of Empress Helena; and 9) the Baptism of Constantine as a Christian.

“Heracleo at Costruas”: The second part of the revised Arakyo may contain the following narrative elements: 1) Heraclius’s defeat of the tyrant Phocas and his coronation as Roman Byzantine Emperor; 2) Emperor Heraclius’s war against Persian Emperor Khosrow II because the latter wanted to crown a different Roman Byzantine Emperor; 3) the Persian Empress Shirin’s secret practice of Christianity and Emperor Khosrow II’s great love for her; 4) Emperor Khosrow II’s invasion of Jerusalem and the capture of the holy cross as a trophy for Empress Shirin; 5) Emperor Heraclius’s forbidden marriage with his niece Empress Martina and the birth of frail and defective children; 6) Emperor Heraclius’s rebuilding of the Roman Byzantine army; 7) Emperor Heraclius’s final battle against Emperor Khosrow II; 8) Emperor Khosrow II’s deposition and the coronation of his son Emperor Sheroe; 9) Emperor Sheroe’s surrender of the holy cross to Emperor Heraclius, the restoration of the holy relic in Jerusalem, and the dancing of the pandot.

Table 2 juxtaposes the narrative elements of the proposed two-part revision of the Arakyo with the narrative elements of the four Arakyo manuscripts retrieved from Peñaranda, Nueva Ecija.

Narrative Elements	Las Piñas Manuscript	San Josef Manuscript	Santo Tomas Manuscript	Sinasahan Manuscript	Proposed Revision	Explanation
Death of Roman Emperor Constancius	x	✓	x	✓	x	This part will be omitted.
Attempt to Disrupt the Roman Imperial Succession	x	✓	x	✓	x	This part is not historical.
Crowning of Roman Emperor Constantine by Roman Empress Helena	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	This will be reversed. Emperor Constantine will be the one to crown Empress Helena.
Battle against Jewish/Persian Emperor Maxentius	✓	x	✓	x	✓	This will be rectified. Emperor Maxentius will be portrayed as a tyrant based in Rome.
Angel's Advice to Emperor Constantine to Put the Sign of the Cross on the Roman Banners	✓	x	✓	x	✓	
Battle against Jewish/Turkish Emperor Saladin	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	This part is not historical.
Empress Helena's Finding of the Holy Cross	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Verifying which of the Three Recovered Crosses is the Holy Cross of Christ	x	x	✓	x	✓	
Interception of the Holy Cross by Turkish Emperor Khosrow II	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	This part will be rectified. This will be placed in the second part of the Arakyo. Emperor Khosrow II will be portrayed as a Persian ruler.
Love Story of Turkish Princess Ordalisa and Roman General Lucero	x	✓	x	✓	✓	This part will be replaced by the historical tragic love stories of Emperor Constantine and Empress Fausta, of Emperor Heraclius and Empress Martina, and of Emperor Khosrow II and Empress Shirin.
Battle against Emperor Khosrow II	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Surrender of Emperor Khosrow II	x	✓	✓	x	✓	This part will be rectified. Emperor Sheroe will be the one to surrender the holy cross.
Baptism of Emperor Khosrow II and his Followers	x	✓	✓	x	✓	This part will be replaced by the baptism of Emperor Constantine.
Retrieval of the Holy Cross	x	✓	✓	x	✓	

Table 2: Juxtaposition of the Narrative Elements of the Proposed Two-Part Arakyo with the Narrative Elements of the Four Arakyo Manuscripts of Peñaranda, Nueva Ecija

Table 2 shows that the proposed two-part revision of the Arakyo will more or less remain familiar to the people of Peñaranda, Nueva Ecija, as most of the current narrative elements from the four manuscripts are either retained, or slightly modified, or replaced with an analogous narrative element.

By rectifying the telescopings and Moro-fications, the proposed two-part revision would make the Arakyo a trustworthy historical and evangelical komedya. With these amendments, the Arakyo will continue to be a komedya de capa y espada, but it will cease to be moro-moro, and would no longer be culturally offensive to Filipino Muslims. The insertion of the otherwise unhistorical and unhagiographic pandot dancing on the first and second days of the performance should be taken as a compromise that would preserve the Arakyo's being a devotional komedya as well. Without the pandot, the revised manuscript would cease to be an Arakyo. The pandot and the panata done by the maestros, hermanos, hermanas, performers and audience will help ensure the continual performance of the Arakyo in Peñaranda, Nueva Ecija. The existing three unpublished manuscripts from Las Piñas, Santo Tomas and Las Piñas—filled with telescopings and Moro-fications—should nevertheless be carefully archived for posterity, just like the published manuscript from San Josef.

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