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ARTICLE

Reinventing Tradition: The *Karakol* of General Trias, Cavite

Aidel Paul G. Belamide

ABSTRACT

This paper explores the *karakol* of General Trias, Cavite, as a case study of the reinvention of tradition. In contrast to Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger's view of traditions as elite inventions serving sociopolitical ends, this view demonstrates how communities actively reinterpret and reconstruct practices in response to changing contexts. The study employs a qualitative approach that combines three methods: (1) archival research of nineteenth-century periodicals, memoirs, and travel accounts to reconstruct the coastal *caracol*; (2) participant observation during the 2024 feast of Saint Francis of Assisi to document contemporary performance, setting, and ritual practice; and (3) ten key informant interviews with clergy, parish leaders, historians, and devotees to capture local understandings and meanings of *karakol.* Findings trace the transformation of the nineteenth-century c*aracol*, a fluvial procession held in Manila Bay towns, into the inland *karakol* of General Trias. Initially reinterpreted as a rainmaking rite and a prayer for agricultural livelihood, *karakol* was reframed in the late twentieth century as thanksgiving for the safe return of overseas workers, coinciding with the state's labor export policy and the rise of export-oriented industrialization. In recent decades, it has further evolved into a general prayer of thanksgiving and petition, reflecting the diversification of society and economy in an urbanizing city. This trajectory underscores that traditions are not static inheritances but living practices continually reshaped by ecological, institutional, and socioeconomic conditions. *Karakol* thus embodies both continuity and creative agency, illustrating the resilience of faith-based traditions in the Philippine context.

KEYWORDS

Tradition, Performance, Religion, Fiesta, Local Culture

51-86

Introduction

Traditions are often considered inventions following the publication of "The Invention of Tradition" by Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger in 1983. While many traditions are perceived as ancient, they are, in reality, modern constructs designed to fulfill specific social, political, or cultural functions.[1] These traditions

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are presented as long-standing and unchanging, yet their supposed continuity with the past is deliberately created within a specific period. Through repetition and symbolism, they reinforce a sense of identity, assert legitimacy, or unify communities. One example is the Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols at Cambridge, regarded as an age-old Christmas tradition but established in 1918 for spiritual renewal after the war.[2]

Nonetheless, constructionists such as Guy Beiner,[3] Ronald Grime,[4] Richard Handler, and Jocelyn Linnekin argue that viewing traditions as mere inventions is misleading. First, the term "invention" carries connotations of falsity, implying that traditions, if invented, must be forgeries. Second, it assumes that the authenticity of traditions is tied to empirical observability, but proves that the immutability of a tradition is often impossible.[5] Third, the idea implies that elites can easily impose traditions on the masses, yet individuals exercise agency in receiving, reshaping, and even challenging traditions.[6] Finally, Hobsbawm and Ranger assert that tradition is characterized by invariance, distinguishing it from custom, which is defined by flexibility. In reality, tradition is not static; it is a dynamic cultural practice, the transmission of which is fluid.[7]

Constructionists propose viewing tradition as a reinvention rather than an invention. They suggest that (1) traditions emerge from a community's living memories, beliefs, and practices, and (2) people actively exercise their agency to rediscover, reinterpret, and reconstruct traditions. Adapting a tradition to specific circumstances is rarely a passive act; rather, it is often a conscious, collective decision.[8] This is not to say that new practices are never introduced, but their success—measured by integration into popular traditions—largely depends on their connection to pre-existing traditions.[9] In this sense, traditions do not exist independently of people's practices; instead, they are best understood as dynamic practices, continual, communal re-creations that respond to ever-changing historical and sociocultural landscapes.

This perspective directly addresses the above-mentioned limitations. First, it avoids the connotation of falsity by framing tradition as an ongoing reconstruction rather than a contrived fabrication. Second, it counters the assumption that authenticity depends on empirical observability, acknowledging that traditions evolve while retaining deep-rooted meanings. Third, it challenges elitist undertones by emphasizing individuals' agency in shaping traditions. Fourth, it affirms that traditions are inherently adaptive, unlike Hobsbawm and Ranger's rigid distinction between tradition and custom.[10] Finally, the resilience of traditions in the face of shifting contexts is highlighted, as the idea that modernity erases traditions is rejected.

Objective

This paper seeks to demonstrate that the *karakol*—a traditional street dance performed in honor of patron saints during religious fiestas in Cavite, particularly

in the City of General Trias—constitutes a reinvention of the *caracol*, a fluvial procession once celebrated during nineteenth-century fiestas in towns along Manila Bay. Over time, Caviteños adapted the *caracol*, transferring it from the waterways to the streets and investing it with meanings rooted in their own contexts. Thus *karakol* emerged as a cultural practice shaped by the Caviteños' creative agency, continuously evolving to reflect collective experiences and adapt to shifting communal needs.

The discussion is organized into three major sections. The first reconstructs the *caracol* as it was performed in nineteenth-century Manila Bay towns, drawing from archival periodicals, memoirs, and reports. The second part presents an ethnographic account of the *karakol* in General Trias, as revealed through key informant interviews and participant observation during the town fiesta. The third section presents the processes of reinvention by comparing the convergences and divergences between *caracol* and *karakol*. In particular, it situates the ritual change within the sociocultural context of Cavite—contrasting the maritime economy of the bay towns with the inland locality once agrarian yet subsequently transformed into a commercial and industrial hub—and explores how geography, livelihood, and institutions facilitated the reinvention of the tradition. Although practiced throughout Cavite, this study focuses on the *karakoI* in General Trias. The distinct geography of the city—as a landlocked area surrounded by coastal towns—adds depth to the understanding and appreciation of the reinvention that transpired in *karakol*.

Framework

This study draws on the theory of reinvented tradition advanced by cultural historian Jeremy DeWaal in his analysis of the Cologne Carnival in Germany. During the medieval period, the Carnival was performed as a diabolical spectacle, filled with grotesque figures that embodied sin. By the nineteenth century, however, these same forms were preserved but radically reframed: the jester, once a Christ-denier, became a cheerful citizen of Cologne; the ship of fools, once doomed to sink, was transformed into a proud vessel of joy; and the Carnival "state" shifted from a diabolical kingdom into an empire of Rhenish jollity. In the twentieth century, Carnival was appropriated by the Nazi regime as a Germanic festival and, after 1945, reinvented again as a symbol of democracy and tolerance. While outward forms remained recognizable, changes were still visible, such as the introduction of the Rose Monday parade and the Carnival triumvirate in 1823 or the Nazi prohibition on cross-dressing. Carnival illustrates how authentic traditions can originate from earlier practices yet undergo reinvention, with meaning shifting more profoundly than form, in response to cultural and political contexts.[11]

Building on this framework, the present study interprets the *karakol* as a reinvention of the older *caracol*. Like the Carnival, the *karakol* has undergone transformations in practice and meaning over time and space. These changes are

responses to geographical, economic, and institutional contexts, representing the creative agency of communities whose participation ensures the continuity of the tradition.

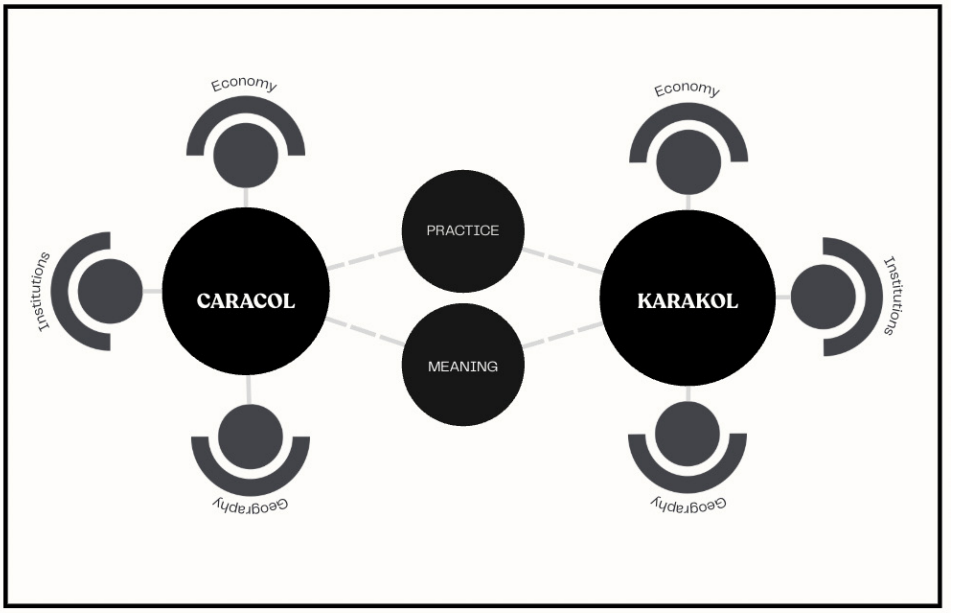

Figure 1. Framework

Methodology

The study employed a **qualitative research design** aimed at understanding *karakol* by examining the lived experiences, meanings, and interpretations of individuals and groups involved in the tradition. Treating *karakol* in General Trias as a **case study**, the research situated this cultural phenomenon within its unique sociocultural and historical context. Multiple sources and methods were employed for data collection. The nineteenth-century *caracol* was reconstructed primarily through archival research, including periodicals, autobiographies, and travel accounts available in online repositories, the Cavite Studies Center, and the National Library of the Philippines. The ethnographic account of *karakol* was developed through **participant observation** in the 2024 Feast of Saint Francis of Assisi in General Trias, complemented by **key informant interviews.** Key informants included clergy from the Diocese of Imus, members of the Diocesan Ministry of Cultural Heritage, parish leaders, local historians, and devotees of Saint Francis of Assisi. These individuals were purposively selected for their knowledge of local religious traditions or long-standing participation in *karakol*. The table below presents the key informants, their roles, and the perspectives they contributed to the study.

Table 2. Key informants

Name	Affiliation	Relevance to Study
Rev. Fr. Virgilio Saenz Mendoza	Parish priest and Priest-Animator of Diocesan Ministry of Cultural Heritage	Clergy perspective
Rev. Fr. Oliver Genuino	Parish priest and native of General Trias	Local clergy perspective
Dr. Alain Austria	Member, Diocesan Ministry of Cultural Heritage	Scholarly perspective
Bro. E. J. Tiglao	President, St. Francis of Assisi Parish Pastoral Council	Devotee perspective
Bro. Arvin Oracion	Devotee of Saint Francis of Assisi	Devotee perspective
Mr. Dennis Columna	Devotee of Saint Francis of Assisi	Devotee perspective
Mr. Vic Columna	Farmer, Local Historian, and Devotee of Saint Francis of Assisi	Historical memory and devotee perspective
Dr. Jeffrey Lubang	Local Historian and Devotee of Saint Francis of Assisi	Historical memory and devotee perspective
Rev. Fr. Dominador Medina	Parish priest	Local clergy perspective
Mr. Wenceslao Camingay	Devotee of Saint Francis of Assisi	Devotee perspective

The interview data were coded thematically, generating seven categories that guided the analysis: (1) the origin of *karakol* in General Trias; (2) the setting of *karakol*; (3) the act or performance of *karakol*; (4) the meaning of *karakol*; (5) changes in the practice of *karakol*; (6) changes in the meaning of *karakol*; and (7) the causes of these changes. These themes provided a structured lens through which to examine the reinvention of *caracol* into *karakol*.

Caracol vs the caracol

Nineteenth-Century *Caracol* in Manila Bay Towns

This section presents the origins, practice, and meanings of *caracol* as documented in nineteenth-century periodicals, along with accounts by Emilio Aguinaldo[12] and Gervasio Pangilinan.[13]

Origin

Scholars are uncertain about the exact origin of *the caracol* due to the lack of records.[14] The earliest documented references this author found are Pangilinan's account in Barrio San Rafael, San Roque, in 1877,[15] as well as news reports in Navotas in 1878[16] and Tondo in 1883.[17] Pangilinan recounted that during the *caracol* in San Rafael, the image of Saint Raphael Archangel fell into the water, and the fishermen immediately dove in after it. On the other hand, both news reports emphasized that the *caracol* was a central event in the feasts of the Solemnity of Saint Joseph in Navotas and the Holy Child Jesus in Tondo, attracting locals and visitors alike.

The *caracol* was likely practiced even earlier than the recorded dates suggest. For one, the 1883 news report on the *caracol* in Tondo states that it was already an established tradition in the area. For another, Filipinos had long engaged in fluvial processions. One of the earliest recorded instances occurred during the sixteenth century, possibly in 1571, when a solemn procession was held in Cebu, with the entire fleet participating, after Miguel López de Legazpi established the first Spanish settlement.[18] Similarly, Pedro Murillo Velarde documented a grand fluvial procession in 1653 along the Pasig River, as the image of Our Lady of Peace and Good Voyage was returned to Antipolo after traveling aboard the galleon to Acapulco in 1651.[19]

Scholars disagree on the origin of the word "*caracol.*" In various publications, Isagani Medina suggests it is derived from "*caracoa,*" an ancient watercraft.[20] On the other hand, Father Virgilio Mendoza, the foremost historian of the Diocese of Imus, Cavite, claims that *"caracol"* originated from the Spanish word "*caracol*," which means "snail."[21] He explains that the procession moves slowly, taking several hours to complete, resembling the pace of a snail crawling across a surface.

Nonetheless, the term *"caracol*," meaning snail, is the closer lexical origin of the tradition. One, the *caracoa* was primarily associated with the Visayans and Kapampangans and served for raiding, slave trading, dispatch carrying, and defending against pirate attacks. Two, Wenceslao Retana noted that *caracoa* does not appear in early Tagalog or Visayan dictionaries and may have been a colonial adaptation of the Malay *corocoro*.[22] Three, in contrast, "*caracol"* appears in early Tagalog dictionaries, such as *Vocabulario de la Lengua Tagala*, referring to various mollusks with spiral shells.[23] Finally, an article in the 1890 *Diario de Manila* stated that the *fluvial* procession was named *caracol* for its winding movements along the river.[24] Similarly, an 1891 *El Comercio* article explained that the name derived from the twists and turns of the *pagoda* carrying the town patron's image during the procession.[25] These descriptions suggest that the tradition was named "*caracol*" because the movements of the *pagoda* and the boats resembled the spiral shape of snail shells.

Setting

The caracol was held in Tondo, Malabon, Navotas, Ermita, Parañaque, Bacoor, Kawit, San Roque, and Caridad. The *caracol* in Tondo and in Malabon were the most renowned.[26] In San Roque, it took place in San Rafael and San Antonio.[27] In Kawit, it was held in Binakayan and the town proper.[28]

These towns, located along the eastern shore of Manila Bay, were part of the adjoining nineteenth-century provinces of Tondo and Cavite: the province of Tondo included its capital town of Tondo, together with Malabon, Navotas, Ermita, and Parañaque, while Cavite comprised Bacoor, Kawit, Caridad, and San Roque. Tondo, Navotas, and Malabon formed part of the bay's North Harbor, while Ermita, Parañaque, Bacoor, Kawit, and San Roque belonged to the South Harbor. Within

this geographic distribution, the *caracol* emerged as a shared tradition across the Manila Bay, celebrated not only in Cavite—as is often assumed—but also in Tondo. The coastal setting of these towns also shaped their economy, with fishing as a principal occupation: by the late nineteenth century, seven percent of Tondo's population engaged in fishing; Malabon already had fishponds by 1863, operated by merchants such as Domingo Cornel; and by 1891, fishing, salt-making, and the exporting of goods to Manila were flourishing in Kawit and Bacoor. Appropriately, Saint Raphael the Archangel was chosen as the patron of Barrio San Rafael, whose residents were largely fishermen.

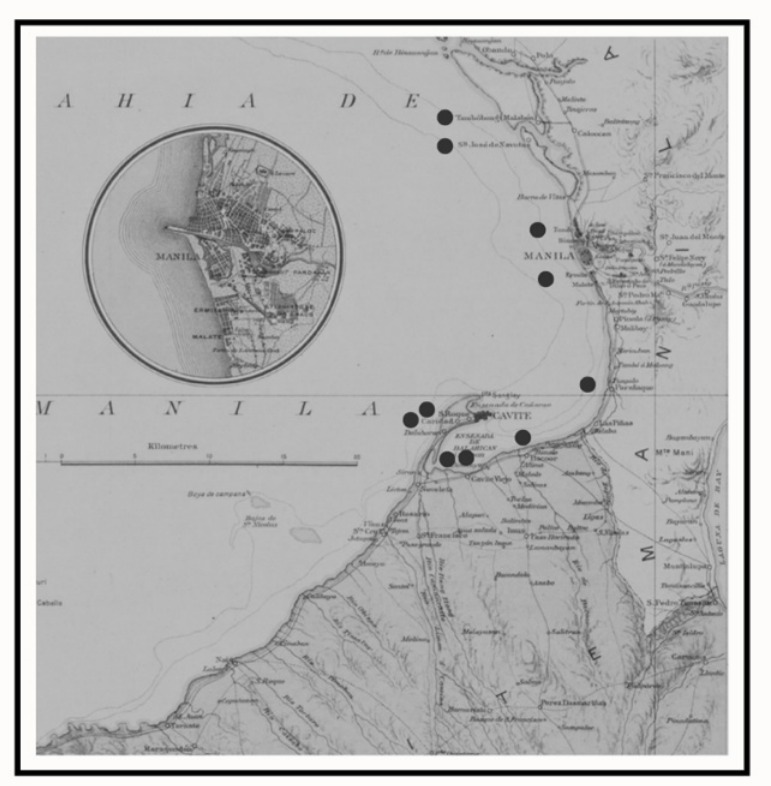

Figure 2. Caracol sites around Manila Bay

The *caracol* was held on the *vísperas*, the day before the feast of the town's patron saint. In Tondo, it was held on the second Saturday of January in anticipation of the feast of the Holy Child Jesus, which falls on the second Sunday of January. In Caridad, it was celebrated on May 25, leading up to the feast of Saint Isidore of Labrador on May 26**.** In Kawit**,** it was held on June 21**,** the day before the feast of Saint Mary Magdalene on June 22. Scheduled on the eve of the fiesta, the *caracol* reflected the tradition of ushering in the feast day with a joyous celebration. The table below presents a selection of Manila Bay towns with patron saints, and dates of fiesta and *caracol*:

Table 2. Caracol sites and schedule

Locale	Town Patron	Date of Fiesta	Date of Caracol
Tondo	Holy Child Jesus	2nd Sun. of January	2nd Sat. of January
Malabon (Concepcion)	Immaculate Conception	December 10	December 9
Navotas	Saint Joseph	May 10	May 9
Ermita	Our Lady of Guidance	December 18	December 17
Parañaque (San Nicolas)	Saint Nicolas of Tolentino	June 11	December 10
Bacoor (Banolo)	Our Lady of Holy Rosary	May 7	May 6
Kawit (Binacayan)	Saint Michael Archangel	May 8	May 7
Kawit	Saint Mary Magdalene	June 22	June 21
San Roque (San Antonio)	Saint Anthony of Padua	June 27	June 26
San Roque (San Rafael)	Saint Raphael Archangel	December 26	December 25
Caridad	Saint Isidore of Labrador	May 26	May 25

Act

The *caracol* was often referred to in reports from *Diario de Manila, El Comercio, La Opinión, La Oceanía Española,* and *El Grito del Pueblo* as *"procesión del caracol (caracol* procession)*,"*[29] *"procesión marítima del caracol (*maritime *caracol* procession*),"*[30] and *"la procesión por el mar (*the procession by the sea*)."*[31] The following descriptions highlight the *caracol* in Tondo, Malabon, Kawit, and San Roque.

Tondo

In Tondo, devotion to the Holy Child Jesus was expressed most vividly through the *caracol*, one of the highlights of the week-long festivities. In 1891, the *caracol* opened with a grand procession from the church at dusk, with *gigantones* (large figures or effigies), candle bearers, soldiers, prominent townsfolk, and marching bands leading the way. In Bancusay, the image of the Sto. Niño was placed on an elaborately decorated pagoda and set afloat, gliding along the rivers and Manila Bay toward San Antonio as smaller boats circled in devotion. Fireworks, music, and pyrotechnics lit up the night, their reflections shimmering on the water before countless spectators gathered along the shore. By nine in the evening, the *caracol* returned to Bancusay, where the image was transferred to a grand carriage, paraded once more through the streets, and brought back to the church, with the festivities culminating in another dazzling fireworks display.[32]

Malabon

In Malabon, the devotion to the Immaculate Conception is expressed through a grand festival held every December 9–13, with the highlight on December 10.[33] On December 9, the celebrations began with marching bands at dawn and fireworks at noon, culminating in the afternoon *caracol* when the image of the Immaculate Conception was brought out of the church in Concepción and enthroned on a pagoda adorned with lights. Recall that priests accompanied the sacred image, while two other pagodas carried images of different saints.[34] As the pagodas sailed along the rivers of Malabon and Navotas, fireworks lit up the sky, marching bands played festive tunes, and crowds gathered along the riverbanks, balconies, and aboard ships. The image was then disembarked at *La Princesa Tabacalera* (The Tobacco Princess) and carried in a solemn procession back to the church, typically at one o'clock in the morning.[35]

Kawit

Saint Mary Magdalene was highly revered in Kawit. In fact, revolutionaries against Spain in 1896—including Emilio Aguinaldo—sought her protection.[36] Aguinaldo's pseudonym and Katipunan faction were named *Magdalo* in her honor. Her feast is celebrated every July 22. On the afternoon of the *visperas*, the image of Saint Mary Magdalene was placed on a b*oat* called *bangkilas* and carried through the waters of Kawit. Devotees aboard boats joyfully danced to the marching band's music. Pilgrims and guests from nearby towns in Manila and Bataan, including Udyong, Pilar, Balanga, and Limay, traveled to Kawit by boat to participate in the celebration.[37]

San Roque

In San Roque, now part of Cavite City, devotion to Saint Raphael the Archangel was celebrated with the *caracol* on December 25 during the eve of his feast. On Christmas morning, bands played the *diana* (morning parade march) to awaken the townspeople, followed by youth in costume caroling through the streets. By late afternoon, the images of Saint Raphael and the Virgin Mary were brought from the church on a portable platform called an *andas* and transferred onto a *guilalo*, a large Tagalog outrigger boat, which sailed around the bay, accompanied by smaller fishermen's boats called *tagsai* and *cupcup, all moving in whimsical patterns*. After the water procession, the images were returned to the church, and the celebration continued with a grand serenade featuring operatic and orchestral pieces.[38]

Meaning

Several news reports referred to the *caracol* as a *juego*, meaning "game," emphasizing its role as entertainment.[39] With pagodas, bands, dances, and fireworks illuminating

the sky, the *caracol* created a mesmerizing, lasting spectacle, drawing and delighting crowds. In 1888, during the *Visperas* in Malabon, throngs of visitors from Manila and nearby towns poured into the area as the steam tram continuously carried passengers, while carriages and carts lined the roads in long queues. Concepcion was described as being so densely packed with locals and tourists, not unlike a giant barrel of sardines.[40] In 1891, even the *Marquis de Palmerola* (the Marquis of Palmerola) watched the *caracol* from a balcony belonging to a certain Mr. Camus.[41]

Nonetheless, as mentioned above, most reports described *caracol* as a procession. At its core, it was an act of prayer—a moving petition expressed through dance in honor of town patron saints. Emilio Aguinaldo stated that the *caracol* was believed in Kawit to bring an abundant catch. Similarly, in Tondo, the faithful carried out the *caracol* to seek blessings for their livelihoods. Meanwhile, in Malabon, the image of the Immaculate Conception was brought out to the seas to sanctify the waters. For coastal communities, especially fishermen, *caracol* was a spiritual offering and a fervent plea for sustenance.

20th–21st Century *Karakol* in Inland Cavite[42]

This section provides an ethnographic account of the *karakol* in the City of General Trias, drawing from on-site observations and interviews with key informants.

Origin

The people of General Trias regard *karakol* as an age-old tradition in their community. They describe it as "*kinamulatan*" or "*kinagisnan*" — meaning, a practice they were born into, just as their parents and grandparents did. Even Vic Columna, an 85-year-old former Tourism Officer and member of the General Trias Historical Society, shared that *karakol* was part of his "*kinalakhan*"—a tradition he grew up with. He and the local community hold that *karakol* in the City of General Trias dates back to the nineteenth century, during Spanish rule.[43]

There are reasons to question this common understanding about *karakol* in General Trias. Notably, nineteenth-century news reports made no mention of such an event. A *La Oceania Española* report from 1895 described the fiesta in *San Francisco de Malabon* (Saint Francis of Malabon), the old name of General Trias, as an event with religious solemnities, a procession, and open-air performances by a theater company.[44] Similarly, a *Diario de Manila* report from 1891 detailed the festivities, highlighting a solemn morning mass, music from the marching bands throughout the day, a grand afternoon procession, fireworks, and lively dances at night held in private homes.[45] Both reports confirmed that dancing was part of the celebration, but it was conducted indoors rather than on the streets. The activity on the roads was the afternoon solemn procession and not a lively dance.

In addition, *karakol* was absent from the memoirs of revolutionaries Artemio Ricarte of *San Francisco de Malabon*[46] *and* Santiago Alvarez of Noveleta.[47] Alvarez

documented a grand fiesta celebration in *San Francisco de Malabon* in 1897, which included a high mass, a sermon on the virtues of Saint Francis of Assisi, and an afternoon procession. Similarly, Ricarte detailed the morning mass, a sung liturgy, and an afternoon program featuring speeches by town leaders. Neither Alvarez nor Ricarte mentioned an animated street dance akin to *karakol.*

Indeed, no historical evidence suggests that the *karakol* was held in *San Francisco de Malabon* during the nineteenth century. The available sources indicate the opposite: *karakol* only emerged in *San Francisco de Malabon* in the twentieth century. This conclusion is supported by interviews with elderly residents who recalled witnessing the tradition as part of local festivities during their lifetime. Corroborating this are the surviving souvenir programs of the General Trias fiesta, dated 1964 and 1982,[48] which explicitly list the *karakol* among the activities. While its exact origins within the twentieth century remain unclear, the evidence confirms that the tradition was already established by mid-century.

Setting

Karakol is celebrated across General Trias on the eve of the feast of the town's patron saint. In General Trias, the patron is Saint Francis of Assisi, and his feast is observed on October 4, with the *karakol* held the day before.[49] General Trias is situated in the northeastern part of Cavite, approximately 35 kilometers southwest of Manila. This inland city is bordered by Noveleta and Rosario to the north, Amadeo to the south, Silang to the southeast, Dasmariñas and Imus to the east, Trece Martires and Tanza to the west, and Kawit to the northeast.[50]

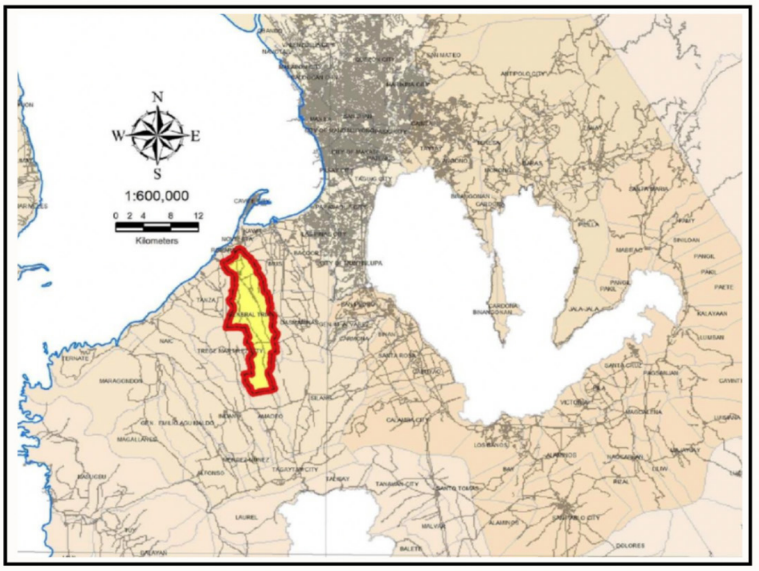

Figure 3. General Trias in the Province of Cavite

Act

On October 3, the celebration begins with a mass led by the parish priest. Present are the *magkakarakol* (dancers of *karakol*), composed of youth, civic groups, and officials from the city and barangays, together with the *mosiko* (marching band)—*Banda Matanda* (Old Band) 1888, *Banda Kabataan* (Young Band), Sta. Cecilia (St. Cecile) Band 89, Sta. Veronica (St. Veronica) Band, and the Community Wind Ensemble. After the mass, the *magpapasan* (bearers) assemble at the altar to carry the *andas* of St. Francis of Assisi, decorated with flowers.

As the image leaves the church, the *mosiko* plays the fandango and mobile sound systems join in. The crowd shouts "*Viva, Tata Kiko!* (Hail Father Kiko!)" as confetti falls from the church porch. The *magkakarakol* form their groups and begin to dance, with the bands positioned behind them. The *magpapasans* move the *andas* in time with the music, at times circling the image or being encircled by the dancers. Popular songs performed during the *karakol* are "*Lubi Lubi* (Coconut)," "*Lawiswis Kawayan* (Rustle of the Bamboo)," "*Sa Libis ng Nayon* (In the Valley of the Village)," "*Pista* (Feast)," and "*Santa Clara* (St. Clair)."

Figure 4. Saint Francis of Assisi and the bell tower of Saint Francis of Assisi Parish Church in General Trias

The procession follows the city's main streets. Residents wait outside their homes, waving and making the sign of the cross as the image passes. Along the route, food and drinks are offered to the dancers and musicians during the practice known as "*pacaridad*." Some step forward with sampaguita garlands for *pakwintas*, placing them on the image before kissing it. Fireworks, or *pakwitis*, are set off at intervals.

Figure 5. Karakol in General Trias

At the city government hall, officials carry the *andas* and circle with it around the building. The procession then turns back toward the church. The dancers continue until its return, ending with more shouts of "*Viva, Tata Kiko!*" When the image is placed back inside the church, fireworks are released outside. Devotees stay to pray, some kneeling in the pews, others retrieving flowers from the *andas* or kissing the image.

Meaning

Karakol is a vibrant celebration. The *magkakarakol* eagerly prepare their attire, either the traditional baro at saya (traditional blouse and skirt) or custom-printed shirts bearing their group's name. The *mosiko* stand ready with their complete ensemble of musical instruments. Smiles and cheers fill the air as dancers and onlookers share in the joy, shouting praises for each other and their patron saint. With unrestrained enthusiasm, the *magkakarakol* move with gusto, their energy surging as they pass through crowds. The lively music fuels their movements, and as the procession continues, the excitement builds, creating an atmosphere of communal exhilaration.

However, *karakol* is more than just a celebration; it is a religious procession. It is an act of faith and reverence for Saint Francis of Assisi as an intercessor to God. Alain Manalo of the Diocese of Imus describes *karakol* as a "…rhythmic prayer with your body. When we are dancing, we are praying."[51] Indeed, *karakol* is often described as a "*sayaw-dasal* (dance-prayer)," "*sayaw-prusisyon* (dance-procession)," or "*sayaw-parangal* (dance-praise)."[52] This prayer takes many forms—thanksgiving for blessings received, such as healing from illness, passing an exam, or opening a business. More often, it is a prayer of supplication, a heartfelt plea for divine intervention, especially for the sick and needy.

Tracing the Reinvention of a Tradition

Studies indicate that the *karakol* in Cavite has evolved over time. As early as 2009, Itugot observed that in some towns, the practice was shifting from a public manifestation of faith into a spectacular parade.[53] Fresnido, however, documented in 2018 the *karakol* in Imus that retained its solemn and prayerful character.[54] More recently, Dioso and Demeterio proposed a three-fold typology: traditional religious, modern religious, and modern secular. The first is slow, simple, and solemn dancing, performed mainly by the elderly as panata, a devotional vow. The second is faster and livelier, involving youth groups whose synchronized steps transform the practice into both devotion and spectacle. The third departs from sacred character, organized as competitions with costumes and folk dance steps, turning *karakol* into a cultural performance.[55]

This study extends the literature in three ways. First, it situates *karakol* historically by tracing its roots in *caracol* and examining how this coastal form gradually transformed into the inland *karakol* of General Trias. Second, it interprets these transformations as reinvention, showing that authenticity lies not in an unchanging model but in responsiveness to shifting conditions. Third, it identifies the concrete interventions—in practice and meaning—that shaped *karakol* over time. Earlier works recognized change and classified performances accordingly, but this study builds on them by examining shifts more precisely and in closer relation to context.

Convergences and Continuities

Existing literature states that inland *karakol* in Cavite originated from the coastal *caracol* of Kawit, Rosario, San Roque, and Bacoor, but provides no direct evidence.[56] Medina indicates that the *karacol* in Cavite began as a fluvial procession. The Diocese of Imus explains that the practice originated from the slow movement of snails along the seashore after the sea had grown calm and the surroundings were serene. Fr. Oliver Genuino, the former parish priest and a native of General Trias, admitted that their tradition traces its roots to the caracol of nearby coastal towns. Fr. Virgilio Mendoza affirmed this link, noting that the inland celebrations began in coastal communities such as Rosario, from where it is assumed the tradition spread to other coastal and eventually upland towns:

> *Ang karakol ngayon sa mga bayan sa loob ng Cavite ay nagsimula sa mga baybaying komunidad tulad ng Salinas o Rosario. Tapos, it spread sa mga coastal areas. Then, sa upland towns. Sa Rosario, ang tingin ko, very special. Ang original na caracol sa Rosario, mahinay na mahinay.* The karakol now celebrated in the inland towns of Cavite began in the coastal communities such as Salinas or Rosario. From there it spread to other coastal areas, and then to the upland towns. In Rosario, I think it is very special. The original *caracol* in Rosario was very, very slow.[57]

Indeed, Rosario has been regarded as the birthplace of Cavite's caracol. The town's patroness, Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary, is venerated under the title "Reina del Caracol (Queen of *Caracol*)"—a devotion that reflects both the community's maritime identity and its deep expression of faith through *caracol*. This enduring reverence was solemnly affirmed on October 9, 2025, when the image of Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary–*Reina del Caracol* was granted canonical coronation by the Roman Catholic Church, through a ceremony officiated by Charles John Brown, D.D., Apostolic Nuncio to the Philippines. The coronation stands as a symbolic recognition of the Caviteños' unwavering faith in the Lord through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin and of the caracol as both a ritual and a cultural expression of that devotion.[58]

The present study supports the view that the *karakol* of General Trias originated from the *caracol* of the nearby coastal towns. First, for Caviteños, *caracol* and *karakol* are essentially the same—fiesta rituals of thanksgiving and petition addressed to the town's patron saint. Second, *caracol* itself had both sea and land components: the image was carried from the church to the shore, placed on a *pagoda* that sailed around the sea, then returned to the church through the streets. Caviteños knew this practice as "caracol del mar y de la tierra (*caracol* by the sea and on land)." Third, even within the coastal towns, the caracol occasionally extended inland, with the image brought to farms during droughts or pest infestations. As these towns developed a dual economy of fishing and farming, maritime rituals were adapted to agricultural contexts[59] and extended to agriculture. For example, in Kawit, devotees bring the image of Mary Magdalene to the rice fields and dance in a ceremony called "*Pagbisita sa Palay* (*Visit to the Rice Field*)," held on the last Thursday of November to seek blessings for a bountiful harvest.[60] In Tanza, Armando Malay observed in the mid-twentieth century that people not only prayed but also danced in the fields to beseech rain.[61] This inland iteration of *caracol* was simple, unlike the town fiesta celebrations: farmers would fetch the original image of their patron saint, Saint Augustine, place it in a modest andas, and proceed directly to the barrios or sitios affected by drought. Finally, the resemblance between coastal and inland practices is evident, as the table below demonstrates:

Table 3. Similarities between caracol and karakol

Aspect	***Caracol* (19th Century, Coastal)**	***Karakol* (20th–21st Centuries, Inland)**
Name	*Caracol*	*Karakol*
Practice		
-Dedication	Town Patron Saint	Town Patron Saint
-Act	The town patron's image is carried on a pagoda in the sea, with smaller boats circling it.	Devotees parade through the streets with the andas carrying the patron's image, circling around it or being circled by it.
-Accompaniment	*Mosiko*	*Mosiko* and mobile sound system
Meaning	Prayer of thanksgiving and supplication	Prayer of thanksgiving and supplication

Both practices are performed on the vísperas of the feast, accompanied by brass bands, and function as collective prayers of thanksgiving and supplication. Even the names are linked: *caracol* in Spanish and *karakol* in Tagalog, a linguistic indigenization of the same tradition. In caracol, small boats circled the *pagoda* bearing the town patron, evoking a snail's spiral shell; in karakol, dancers perform circular movements around the andas. The Diocese of Imus underscores this shared circular, rhythmic motion, observing that the movement of the boats in the caracol parallels the procession of devotees around the andas in the karakol, often extending the celebration for several hours.

Alain Austria suggests that the *caracol* gradually spread inland through cultural diffusion, noting that residents of interior communities may have observed the maritime *caracol*, joined its land-based component, or witnessed drought processions held in the fields. General Trias was particularly exposed to such influences, as it bordered the coastal towns of Noveleta, Kawit, Tanza, and Rosario—all of which celebrated the *caracol*. By the late nineteenth century, a network of roads facilitated these cultural exchanges. San Francisco de Malabon was linked by a carriage road to Noveleta, Rosario, and Tanza; from Noveleta, another road led to San Roque and Cavite Puerto, while a separate route connected it to Kawit through two masonry bridges. From Kawit, a road extended to Bacoor, with a masonry bridge connecting the two sites. These improved connections not only enhanced trade and mobility but also allowed religious and festive practices such as the *caracol* to circulate more freely between coastal and inland communities.[62]

Economic and political connections reinforced the ties among these towns. Tanza and Rosario were originally *visitas* (chapels) and *barrios* (villages) of *San Francisco de Malabon*, while *San Francisco de Malabon*, Rosario, and Noveleta formed part of the Augustinian-administered *Hacienda de San Francisco de Malabon* (*Estate of St. Francis of Malabon*). Formerly called "*Santa Cruz de Malabon* (Holy Cross of Malabon)", Tanza separated from *San Francisco de Malabon* in 1780, was later reabsorbed in 1903, and eventually became an independent municipality in 1910. Rosario, on the other hand, became independent from *San Francisco de Malabon* in 1846. Before the colonial government purchased the friar estates in 1904, Rosario and Noveleta remained within the vast *Hacienda de San Francisco de Malabon*, which included two *casa haciendas:* the *Casa Hacienda de Tejeros* (Estate House of Tejeros) and the *Casa Hacienda de San José de Buenavista* (Estate House of Buenvista). The *Casa Hacienda de Tejeros*, situated between Rosario and *San Francisco de Malabon*, served as a hub where tenants *carried out transactions, such as paying rent and selling produce.* Local commerce through *comercio de cabotaje*—the coastal trade that transported farm goods by raft and boat to Manila markets—further intertwined these towns socially and economically.[63] These enduring connections provided fertile ground for the diffusion of shared religious and festive traditions such as the *caracol*.

Austria further noted that the Roman Catholic Church played a role in reinforcing continuity.[64] Bishop Felix Perez of Imus (1962–1992) consistently highlighted the significance of tradition in the Church's growth, viewing Christian discipleship as deeply intertwined with the economic, political, and cultural values of both individuals and communities. During the Diocese's 25th Founding Anniversary, he called on the faithful to reflect on the past as a way to nurture the seeds of goodness sown in the province.[65] Fr. Dominador Medina, who began his priesthood under Bishop Perez and later served as parish priest in Cavite City, recalled that the bishop constantly highlighted the importance of traditions in his homilies. When visiting a town during its *caracol*, Bishop Perez would explain its meaning and relevance to Christian life, interpreting it as an expression of devotion and thanksgiving.[66] Though he never formally required parishes to hold *caracol*, his theological framing—linking heritage and faith—may have inspired many communities to adopt and sustain the practice as a manifestation of religious identity.

Divergences and Transformations

When the people of General Trias first encountered the *caracol* in the late nineteenth or early twentieth century, they did not merely adopt the practice but reshaped it into what became the inland *karakol*. Hence, *caracol and karakol* reveal differences, as summarized in the table below.

Table 4. Differences between caracol and karakol

Aspect	*Caracol* (19th Century, Coastal)	*Karakol* (20th–21st Centuries, Inland)
Practice		
-Locale	Coastal communities	Inland communities
Meaning	Prayer of thanksgiving and supplication for maritime livelihood	Prayer of thanksgiving and supplication for farming livelihood

The people of General Trias first reinvented the practice of *caracol* in terms of locale. Unlike Manila Bay towns, General Trias is an inland town, consisting of 8,000 hectares of flat to rolling plain, traversed by deeply incised river channels. Without open seas and bays, *caracol* was relocated from water to streets. This reinvention had precedent: even coastal *caracol* began and ended with land procession, and processions extended to farmlands during drought and locust infestations.

In this new context, the meaning of *caracol* also shifted. For coastal towns, the practice was tied to maritime livelihood. However, for an agricultural community like General Trias, it became linked to farming. *Karakol* became a prayer of thanksgiving for the harvest and a supplication for another year of abundance. Parish leader E. J. Tiglao recounted the story shared by his parents, who were

farmers:

> Every month of April. *'Yun po kasi rin ang pistang bayan. Hindi siya* October *dati. 'Yun kasi yung* time *ng* paggiik ng palay. *So dadalhin ang image ni* St. Francis, *magkakarakol, tumatanaw siya sa palayan. Kinakarakol siya sa palayan. Nagpapasalamat sa ani. At humihiling na rin sila kaagad kay St. Francis kasi April is summer, napakainit. Humihiling sila na ibigay na kaagad ang ulan ng Mayo. Para mapaararo na ulit kaagad ang bukid,* and then *makapagtanim na ulit nang panibago.* (Every month of April. That is also when the town fiesta is held. It was not originally in October. April was the time of harvesting. So, the image of St. Francis would be brought out for the karakol, with him facing the rice fields. He was carried in procession around the fields as an act of thanksgiving for the harvest. And they would also immediately pray to St. Francis, because April is summer and it is very hot. They prayed that the rains of May would come soon, so that the fields could be plowed again right away, and they could plant a new crop.)[67]

Agriculture framed this reinvention. From the late nineteenth to early twentieth century, *San Francisco de Malabon* produced rice, sugarcane, and other crops in impressive volumes, rivaling nearby towns of Imus and Tanza. By 1918, after being renamed General Trias, it already counted 1,666 farms. Rice was harvested three times a year in 1944, and by the 1970s, the adoption of high-yield varieties, fertilizers, and pesticides further boosted productivity. Columna recalled that in his childhood, nearly all the surrounding land was devoted to farming, with rivers opening into wide stretches of fields planted with rice, bananas, sweet potatoes, ginger, and other crops, such that 80 to 85 percent of the area was agricultural. [68]

Within this agrarian framework, the *karakol* assumed the function of a collective plea for rain during drought. From the late nineteenth century, they followed two-crop cycles: the first began with nursery preparation in June, transplanting in August, harvesting in December, and threshing between March and April; the second, or "*palagad*," planted in February and harvested from June to July.[69] This rhythm depended on a steady water supply, and when drought disrupted the cycle, farmers turned to *karakol* as a plea for rain. Columna shared:

> *Natatandaan ko n'ong araw, taong bukid din naman ako e. Taong bukid din ako. 'Pag Agosto na'y 'di pa naulan, dito sa amin, may kilala akong magsasaka riyan, si Kakang Lazaro Morga. Pagka iyon e, hindi naulan, sasabihin niya, kailangan nating magkarakol kay San Francisco de Asis, sapagkat huli na ang ating pagtatanim. Maraming nasama. Ibig sabihin, humihingi sila ng himala, 'yung ulan. (*I remember in the old days, I was also a person of the fields. I was a farmer, too. When August came, and it still had not rained, here in our place, there was a farmer I knew, Kakang Lazaro Morga. When there was no rain, he would say, "We need to hold a *karakol* for Saint Francis of Assisi because our planting is already delayed." Many people would join. It meant they were asking for a miracle—for rain.)[70]

The *karakol* also served as a broader communal prayer for protection from typhoons,

pest infestations, and unstable crop prices—conditions that made agriculture increasingly precarious. Archival records from the early American colonial period reveal the hardships that tenant farmers endured in San Francisco de Malabon. In 1903, for instance, Domingo Colmener, a tenant farmer, lamented that he could not harvest twice a year because of typhoons. In the same year, another tenant, Mariano Bunzalan, reported that his yield had dropped to fifty *cavanes* of rice per hectare—down from seventy in previous years—because the soil in the *Hacienda de San Francisco de Malabon* had become depleted.[71] In this context, many farmers turned to faith as a source of endurance, joining the *karakol* as a *panata*. Columna recounted:

> *Oo, taon-taon akong sumasama noon. Hindi ako nakakalimot. Panata! Pananampalataya. Kung mayroon kang hihilingin para sa iyong bukid o sa iyong pamilya, humihingi ka at ika'y pagbibigyan.*. (Yes, I used to join every year. I never forgot. It was a vow—a matter of faith. If you had something to ask for, whether for your field or for your family, you prayed, and you would be granted.)[72]

Thus, the *karakol* evolved into a devotional vow of supplication rather than a simple expression of gratitude. It came to embody the farmers' appeal for divine protection over their fields and forthcoming harvests. Annual participation was understood as an offering and act of sacrifice to God, mediated through the intercession of the town's patron saint, and served as a collective petition for deliverance from the uncertainties of rural life.[73]

Continuing Reinvention

The reinvention of *karakol* continued in the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The practice and meaning of *karakol* have been reconstructed, as shown in the table below:

Table 5. Variations in karakol across time

Aspect	Early-Mid 20th Century	Late 20th Century	21st Century
Practice			
-Accompaniment	*Mosiko*	*Mosiko*	Mobile Sound System
Meaning	Prayer of thanksgiving and supplication for farming	Prayer of thanksgiving and supplication for overseas employment	Prayer of thanksgiving and supplication for varied livelihood and good health

The people of General Trias have preserved the *karakol* in a form that has remained largely consistent across generations, with the sequence of acts, the route of the procession, and the dance movements repeated in much the same way over time. This continuity sets it apart from nearby towns, such as Tanza, where the *andas* is swayed vigorously and the event resembles a street party. As Tiglao observed, the *karakol* in General Trias has retained its solemn character.[74] Following Dioso

and Demeterio III's typology, it remains a traditional religious procession. Oliver Genuino, parish priest of *San Francisco de Malabon* Parish Church and native of General Trias, noted that this preservation is deliberate, as the church *has* taken steps to safeguard the practice. The Parish Pastoral Council produced flyers explaining its history and meaning, and convened meetings with barangay and city officials to ensure decorum, prohibiting alcohol and disco music.[75]

One variation permitted by the *San Francisco de Malabon* Parish Church is the use of mobile sound systems alongside *mosiko*. General Trias has a long brass band tradition, exemplified by *Banda Matanda* 1888, which played the *Marcha Nacional Filipina* (Philippine National March) at the 1898 Philippine Independence declaration in Kawit. Today, however, brass bands have become costly, as sponsors must cover both performance fees and food for each member. To reduce expenses, organizers rent or borrow mobile sound systems, requiring provisions only for the driver and assistant. This adaptation ensures that music remains central to *karakol* while making the celebration more affordable.

A more profound variation was in the meaning of karakol. Originally tied to farming, *karakol* gradually came to reflect the rise of overseas employment. For many families, it became an expression of gratitude for work abroad and the safe return of loved ones. Arvin Oracion, a member of the General Trias Historical Society, recalled that in areas like Pasong Camachile, which remained largely farmland until the 1990s, returning overseas workers could request a *karakol* in their honor even outside fiesta periods, and the parish would grant it. In such cases, the balikbayan acted as sponsor, covering the expenses for music, food, and flowers, turning the ritual into both a public testimony of faith and a gesture of thanksgiving—an offering back to the Lord for the fruits of overseas labor and a prayer for continued safety and prosperity.[76]

This reinvention of the meaning of *karakol* began in the 1970s, when residents of General Trias increasingly sought work abroad, mainly in the United States and Saudi Arabia, to supplement farm income. It was linked to the government's labor export program, which created agencies that offered incentives for migration and deployed labor attachés, while export-oriented industrialization rezoned agricultural towns like General Trias into industrial hubs. Many farmers sold land to finance migration, though success overseas was uncertain.[77] For those who prospered, *karakol* became a public act of thanksgiving, embedding the struggles and triumphs of overseas work into local devotion. Columna further shared:

> *At meron dyan sa amin, pagka may dumadating, galing State. Sya ang magbabayad sa lahat, pati sa banda, pati sa pagkain. Magpapakarakol sya bilang pasasalamat sa kanyang pagkakauwi. Parang, parang pasasalamat sa Dyos.* (And there, in our place, when someone arrives home from the States, there's always something. If they want, they'll pay for everything—the band, the food. They will sponsor a *karakol* as thanksgiving for their safe return. It's like an expression of gratitude to God.)

In more recent years, the meaning of *karakol* has expanded further. Once tied to farming and later to migration, *karakol* has evolved into an inclusive and flexible form of prayer for various concerns, from career and livelihood to health and family life. As Tiglao explained, it is a general act of thanksgiving and petition, reflecting the broadening aspirations of the community:

> *Ang karakol is sayaw-dasal, paghiling, pasasalamat. 'Yun lagi ang sinasabi namin. Hanggang ngayon, kahit paaano, ipini-feed na rin namin kaagad sa mga bata. Ang karakol ay karakol ng pasasalamat. Dito na rin 'yung pag-umpisa ng inyong paghiling, anuman 'yung kahilingan n'yo.* (*Karakol* is prayer-dance, petition, and thanksgiving. That is what we always say. Even now, in one way or another, we immediately pass this on to the children. The *karakol* is a *karakol* of thanksgiving. It is also where the act of petition begins, whatever your request may be.)[78]

Oracion further explained:

> *Sayaw-dasal po siya. Pagpapasalamat sa mga na-intercede ni St. Francis sa mga kahilingang natupad over the past days. Tapos, kapag merong hinihiling. Para pong sa Obando, 'yung kay Santa Clara, paghingi ng anak. Dito po, general na. Hindi na po distinct Talaga. (*It is a prayer-dance. A thanksgiving for the petitions that St. Francis has interceded for and were granted in the past days. Then, when there is something being asked for. It is like in Obando, with St. Clare, when people ask for a child. Here, it is more general. It is no longer really distinct.)[79]

This reframing of *karakol*'s meaning is rooted in the socioeconomic diversification that characterizes the contemporary General Trias. Once reliant on farming, residents are now engaged in factory and office work, small and medium enterprises, and overseas employment. These shifts are evident in land use: by 2018, 51 percent of the city was built-up for residential, infrastructure, and utilities, while only 42 percent remained agricultural. Between 1993 and 2018, agricultural land consistently declined as built-up areas expanded, producing an average urban growth rate of 32.07 compared with 7.47 in rural areas. Economic change was matched by demographic diversification, with 122 languages spoken—Tagalog most common, followed by Bisaya, Bikol, Hiligaynon, Waray, Ilocano, Pangasinan, Cebuano, and Kapampangan—reflecting migration into the city. These sweeping shifts culminated in the conversion of General Trias into a city in 2015, marking its formal transition from an agrarian municipality to an emerging urban center. Within this context, *karako*l has been reinterpreted as a more inclusive form of devotion that embodies the diverse aspirations of a rapidly urbanizing community.

Conclusion

This study reconstructs a cultural history of the *karakol* in General Trias, Cavite, revealing it as a reinvention of the nineteenth-century fluvial *caracol*. Drawing on multiple lines of evidence—including archival records, oral histories, and ethnographic observation—interpreted within broader cultural, social, and economic contexts, the research shows that traditions are neither fixed inheritances nor solely elite impositions, as Hobsbawm and Ranger have argued, but dynamic practices continually reshaped in response to changing circumstances. While the fluvial *caracol* of the nineteenth century provided the roots, Caviteños exercised their agency to transpose the practice inland, adapting it to the agrarian rhythms of planting and harvesting. Later, amid the precarities of labor migration and industrial transition, the *karakol* was reframed as a form of thanksgiving for overseas employment and the safe return of migrant workers. Today, in an increasingly urbanized and diverse city, it has evolved into a flexible devotional act encompassing a broad spectrum of personal and communal petitions and aspirations.

The reinvention of *karakol* shows that both practice and meaning have changed, though the transformations have been more profound in meaning. Once the coastal *caracol* was transposed inland, the form of the procession—its date, dance, and route—became relatively stable, with parish institutions and civic organizations playing key roles in preserving its structure and regulating its performance. What shifted more dramatically were the interpretations of the practice: from petitions for agricultural abundance, to thanksgiving for overseas employment, to an inclusive devotion petitioning diverse aspirations. In this way, *karakol* exemplifies DeWaal's insight that reinvention occurs more deeply in meaning than in practice, with continuity of form providing stability while transformations of meaning keep the tradition responsive and relevant across contexts.

The reinvention of *karakol* has been shaped by the broader contexts in which it unfolds, so that the trajectory of the tradition mirrors the historical experience of the community that sustains it. Geography determined its form, as the absence of bays and rivers in General Trias necessitated the transposition of the fluvial *caracol* into an inland street procession. Institutions such as the parish and the local government played pivotal roles in preserving the practice and framing it as a valued tradition. Economic transformations—from an agrarian base to labor migration and later urban industrialization—reshaped its meanings, as devotees reinterpreted *karakol* in relation to their shifting livelihoods and vulnerabilities. In this respect, the case parallels DeWaal's study of Cologne Carnival, demonstrating how institutions and economic change drive reinvention, while also highlighting natural context as a distinctive factor in Cavite.

Ultimately, the case of *karakol* in General Trias demonstrates the resilience of faith-based traditions in the Philippines. It shows how communities adapt rituals of thanksgiving and petition to changing circumstances, allowing practices to remain

meaningful across time. More broadly, it frames tradition as a dynamic cultural strategy—one that weaves continuity with transformation to sustain communal life amid shifting ecological, economic, and institutional conditions. In Cavite, as elsewhere, traditions endure not by clinging to permanence but by reshaping themselves through the creative agency of the people who live them.

Future research can build on this study by exploring comparative cases of reinvention of tradition across different towns and provinces, examining how environmental, economic, and institutional factors shape adaptation in devotional practices. Longitudinal ethnographic studies can further document how *karakol* continues to evolve, particularly as younger generations reinterpret the tradition and as urbanization, labor migration, and transnational connections introduce new social dynamics. Interdisciplinary approaches that integrate historical analysis, performance studies, and anthropological theory could provide deeper insight into the interplay of form, meaning, and community agency. Additionally, investigating the material and performative dimensions of *karakol*, as well as its representation and circulation in social media, can illuminate how contemporary practices negotiate heritage, identity, and collective memory. Such avenues will not only enrich understanding of *karakol* itself but also offer broader theoretical contributions on the transmission, adaptation, and creative reinvention of living traditions.

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42 The term karakol derives from the Spanish word caracol, with karakol serving as its Tagalog equivalent. In Cavite, both terms are used interchangeably to describe the tradition of festive street dancing. In this paper, caracol is used to refer to the nineteenth-century practice in Manila, while karakol denotes the contemporary tradition in Cavite.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Aidel Paul G. Belamide finished a bachelor's degree in Communication Arts from the University of the Philippines-Los Baños and a master's degree in Anthropology from Ateneo de Manila University. He has taught Anthropology, and Public Administration at De La Salle University-Dasmariñas, Cavite State University-Silang, and Far Eastern University-Manila. Currently, he serves as a Provincial Board Member, representing the 5th District of Cavite.