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## Interpretation, Imagination, and Transformation in the Creation of the “Timang XekorY”

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### Abstract

This study is about the creation of the XekorY composition (by Laura Pranti Tutom), that aims to visualize the traditional Iban invocation ritual of *Timang Tuah* (Goodluck chant). This exploratory study recounts from the first person perspective, the process in bringing to life creativity from three different levels: interpretation, imagination and transformation, before a live audience at Sultan Idris Education University on 24<sup>th</sup> of May, 2019. This paper narrates through music and visual artistry, the journey and experience of the *lemambang* (bards) on a mission to deliver the *Timang Tuah*. For interpretation, the content is summarized from a chanting text and conceptualized through the composer’s inspirational framework, ideas and imagination. The imagination has been transformed into a musical performance created through a combination of 4D (luck based numbers) and XY coordinates, followed by a series of pitch. The data include field data collected from questionnaires, semi structured interviews and participant observation involving bards, community leaders, ritual specialists, and students from the Music program from UPSI and UNIMAS. The findings suggest that most students (88%) who participated as music players and audience of the *Timang XekorY* performance could understand and appreciate the creative effort and were willing to watch the “real” *Timang Tuah* performance, while members of the public who had limited musical knowledge benefited from the Program Book of the *Timang XekorY* distributed before the performance.

**Keywords:** Composition of Timang XekorY, Timang Tuah, Interpretation, Imagination, Transformation, Iban

### Introduction

The *Timang XekorY* is a new musical composition developed to visualize the monotonous musical note widely used in the invocation of the *Timang Tuah* rituals by the Iban community in Kapit, Sarawak. Incidentally, *Timang* in Iban means to chant while hitting the floor with a staff and encircling the *pandung*<sup>1</sup>. The ritual is conducted by three *lemambang* (bards) and would last for five to nine days. Given the complexity of the Iban language, which is made of deep Iban and shallow Iban, the monotonous chant is often less understood and not

<sup>1</sup> A circular enclosure covered with the *pua kumbu* (Iban weaving) filled with tawak, vase and iron rod.

appreciated by the younger generation who lack in-depth understanding of the figurative language and the added assumption that the ritual is an act carried out by elders and onlookers play passive roles.

The name “Timang” originates from the root word of *Timang Tuah*, and XekorY is taken from the lottery term 4D and combined with the X and Y axis. The use of the X and Y coordinates is to obtain a new series of pitch, obtained through a combination of random lucky numbers.

The primary purpose of the *Timang XekorY* is to visualize the mystical journey and experience of the bards, as the lyric poem of the *Timang Tuah* is chanted. This is in line with Sather’s (2016) description of Iban rituals where through the medium of the *leka main*, *lemambang’s* (priest bards) can dispatch unseen spirit ‘messengers’ (pesan) into the upper-world, or ‘sky’ (langit) who will then invite individual gods/deities to descend to this world as the ‘invited guests’ (pengabang) of the ritual’s human sponsors, participate with their hosts in the ritual and achieve the purpose of the event (p. 272). This article aims to analyze the sign, symbols and iconic representations encapsulated within the text and music in this mystical journey.

The study has several secondary aims. First, it aims to introduce this ancient musical ritual to a wider audience through a combination of western musical and Iban traditional musical elements. Second, the new composition based on the inspiration and imagination of the researcher needs to appeal to the younger audience. By analyzing the meanings of content and context of the lyrical text which include plot and external markers, the study intends to “transform” the work using a combination of randomly created numbers. This new work would not alter the existing music tradition of the *Timang tuah* ritual but ensure that the *Timang XekorY* is no longer seen as a complex repetitious rendition, but as a rich imagery filled composition depicting the Iban cosmology. The combination of aesthetic language infused with the rhythm and music of the environment is meant to cater to a wider range of audience.

The *Timang XekorY* is made up of seven movements<sup>2</sup> known as the *Renggat* (level), with 8 minutes per composition. Each *Renggat* comprise several sections or parts and the overall composition last approximately 56 minutes.

The selection and application of musical instruments depicting the chanting text would be explained according to scenery, setting, and events taking place in the spiritual world (e.g. animal, insect and female/male deities). The structure of the composition of the *Timang XekorY* for the whole *Renggat* would be through-composed songs that replace the narratives, with no repetitions for the continuous journey. The idea for the songs in the *renggat* comes from the rhythmic motives of the *taboh*<sup>3</sup> iban, the *timang tuah* chanting song, borrowings for the drone and pentatonic scale comes from *Sape*<sup>4</sup>, as well as from the bard’s singing style like their ornamentations and the melody tune from *Pantun Iban*.<sup>5</sup>

The questions that arise at this juncture being, to what extent would youths understand and appreciate the composition of *Timang XekorY*? Is it possible that only those

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<sup>2</sup>An extended musical piece, usually called movements, which in their succession and totality make up a larger whole.

<sup>3</sup> Iban traditional music *taboh*, comprises of *bebendai* (small gong), *gendang* or *dedumbak* drum, *tawak* and a set of 6 to 9 smaller gongs, *engkerumong*.

<sup>4</sup> Sape is a traditional lute of many of the Orang Ulu or “upriver people”, mainly the Kayan and Kenyah community who live in the longhouses that line rivers of Central Borneo.

<sup>5</sup> The poetry of Iban known as *Pantun Iban* or simply Iban Song, is usually sung by a woman to compliment, cherish, praise the guests and at times demonstrate sorrow and sadness in life.



The lucky number is 8765 and the intercept would be G. The intercept G XY 8765 positive would be D#, D, C# while intercept G-X-Y 8765 would be B, C, C#, D. Hence intercept G XY, -X-Y 8765, the series of pitch produced would be D#, D, C#, C, B, C, C#, D.

The reason behind the formation of the concept of *Timang XekorY* is based on the Iban communities' penchant for trying their luck based on random draw of numbers for a prize. This is connected to the *Timang Tuah* event. Following the end of the *Timang tuah* ritual, the sponsors and audience would purchase 4D numbers motivated by belief that luck would be on their side as 'good fortune' has been bestowed upon the sponsor of the event.

The *Timang XekorY* composition is created from a combination of 4D digits and the XY, -X-Y coordinates, will help formulate the series of pitch. Refer Table 2: Approach of the *Timang XekorY*.

Table 2  
*Approach of Timang XekorY*

APPROACH	CENTER XY AND LOTTERY NUMBER	SERIES OF PITCH
One	Center C XY, -X-Y (7981)	G A G# C# F D# E B
Two	Center G# XY, -X-Y (7198)	D# A F E C# G B C
Three	Center D# XY, -X-Y (36115)	F# A D G# C A E A#
Four	Center B XY, -X-Y (4732)	D# F# D C# G E G# A
Five	Center E XY, -X-Y (2941)	F# C# G# F D G C D#
Six	Center D XY, -X-Y (2695)	E G# B G C G# F A.
Seven	Center G XY, -X-Y (2695)	A C# E C F C# A# D
Eight	Center F XY, -X-Y (8361)	C# G# B F# A D B E
Nine	Center C# XY, -X-Y (8361)	A E G D F A# G C
Ten	Center A XY, -X-Y (35270)	C D B E A F# E G D A
Eleven	Center D XY, -X-Y (6249)	G# E F# B G# C A# G
Twelve	Center A# XY, -X-Y (2978)	C G F F# G# C# D# D
Thirteen	Center B XY, -X-Y (5297)	D B F# E E G C D
Fourteen	Center G# XY, -X-Y (4173)	C A D# B E G C# F
Fifteen	Center D# XY, -X-Y (3784)	F# A# B G C G# G B
Sixteen	Center B XY, -X-Y (5382)	E D G C# F# G# D# A
Seventeen	Center F XY, -X-Y (5341)	A# G# A F# C D C# E
Eighteen	Center F XY, -X-Y (3521)	G# A# G F# D C D # E
Nineteen	Center G XY, -X-Y (2978)	A E D D# F A# C B
Twenty	Center E XY, -X-Y (6981)	A# C# C F A# G G# D#
Twenty One	Center G# XY, -X-Y (2978)	A# F D# E F# B C# C
Twenty Two	Center D# XY, -X-Y (1365)	E F# A G#D# C# A# B
Twenty Three	Center F XY, -X-Y (3765)	G# C B A# D A# B C
Twenty Four	Center B XY, -X-Y (8527)	G E C# F# D# F# A C

### Methodology

This study uses a mixed method design and includes qualitative and quantitative data. The field work was carried out in Kapit, Sarawak on 17<sup>th</sup> March 2015. The study includes

observation and interview data from leading traditional bearers (e.g. *lemambang* (bards), community leaders) at three stages (before-while-after) of the ritual. Experienced elders and youths were interviewed informally. During the practice sessions, the researcher distributed the questionnaires to the orchestra players of Sultan Idris Education University prior to the performance and to the audience after the presentation. The audio recordings were played to the music students of Universiti Malaysia Sarawak to obtain feedback on the questionnaires.

## Findings

### Interpretation of *Timang XekorY* Composition

Meanings that exist in signs, signifiers and language, exist in the creation of music. These include compositions based on styles that resemble the Renaissance era to Contemporary music (20th. Century composition). The musical scripts generally include signs and symbols such as expression markers, tempo, time signature, key signature and each have their own meaning. Viewed from the perspective of the audience, individuals will have their own perception, emotion and preference and this would include assessment of the composition in terms of meaning, comprehension, evaluation and self appreciation. Also, many of these properties are subject to the individual's musical experience.

More importantly, music has the potential to stir one's emotions. However, the intensity of being "moved" through music is dependent on the listener's experience with music, awareness and interpretive ability. Many of these skills are acquired from family, environment or learned. This is not to belittle the interpretive ability of those without a musical background since individuals bring their own schemata to the setting. As mentioned by Kitelinger (2010), cited in Machfauzia et al (2018): "without interpretation, it is just poor pen and paper music" (p. 195). Taken together, any musician who fails to take interpretation into consideration while presenting a song, risk making the song becoming "monotonous" or "bland". In other words, the music presenter needs to have sufficient knowledge of music, and understand good musical quality, in order to be able to interpret a music work effectively.

Interpretation means to analyse, explain, provide meaningfulness, create meaning, opinion or highlight a theoretical view of an object following deep reflection and intense consideration. Therefore, the ability to provide depth and meaning to a musical composition is to ensure that understanding and meaning is not compromised and not deviate too far from the original. According to Hermeren (2001), interpretation in music is a process that aims to obtain something desired by the composer. It also means expressing and communicating one's innermost feelings, visualizing the history, social meaning and psychology of the music piece.

In Ricoeur (1976) it is stated that Plato showed the problem "truth" noun or estrangement will not destroy the power or function of speech. Slang requires at least a noun or verb or a combination of both to form the first part of language and thought pattern. Ricoeur (1976) argued (against Plato) to state that writing possesses a certain iconicity, a power to evoke a plenitude of meaning that transforms one's world. The estrangement of writing thus becomes a creative transformation and the text "retrieves its meaning through and beyond a creative transformation and the text retrieves its meaning through and beyond estrangement." In other words, "interpretation, philosophically understood is nothing else than an attempt to make estrangement and distinction productive" (p. 44).

Based on the above philosophical interpretation, the data for the writing of the *Timang XekorY* comes from a source working with the *Timang Tuah* ritual and the outcome from

musical text was obtained by transcribing the recordings of the live musical renditions. The outcome which was analysed found that the motive for the song of the *Timang Tuah* to be inconsistent and dependent on the range of the voice of the *lemambang* and texts used. For instance, the *lemambang* will not go below the third interval when singing. Additional issues being for instance, the ritual song would also contain *mordent*<sup>6</sup> which needs to be pressed for notes with a longer duration.



*Tongkat Timang – Staff Chant*

Fig. 1: Transcription of the *Timang Tuah*, Bar 1 to 4

Through the process of data collection and observation, the researcher was able to identify and summarize the rhythm and motive of the predominant melody. The summary of the motive of rhythmic melody is as indicated in Fig. no. 2.

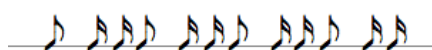


Fig. 2: Melody of Rhythmic Motive

**The Language and Meaning of *Timang Tuah* Musical Text Used in the Composition of *Timang XekorY***

The compilation and transcription of the lyrics were conducted simultaneously. In the musical text there were seven *Petara* or deities called: *Lang Sengalang Burung* (Deity of War), *Menyaya* (Deity of Shaman), *Raja Biku Imam Bunsu Raja Petara* (Female Deity with mystical knowledge), *Raja Selempetuh* (Deity for determining sex of newborn infant), *Segangga Gunggung* (Deity of good fortune who keeps the lucky stone), *Ini Andan* (Deity who give good fortune) and *Raja Sempulang Gana* (Deity of Agriculture). The chant for these ritualistic texts is meant to visualize the travels, experience, and journey of *Sigai* (son to the Deity *Sempulang Gana*) and *Aji* (son in law of the Deity *Sempulang Gana*) and his entourage.

The following is a brief categorization of the themes from the music text translated from the book “*Timang Gawai Ngiga Tuah*”, written by (Jim bun, 2017). The categories are divided according to *menua* or “world” travelled by the *lemambang* which include images of an invisible raised world located midway between ‘this world’ (*dunya tu*) and the ‘sky’ (*langit*), with external markers like water fall, streams, rivers, trees, hills and other *Petara* (deities) who

<sup>6</sup> A *mordent* is an ornament indicating that the note is to be played with a single rapid alternation with the note above or below.

occupy the regions. Table 3 provides an outline of the locations, *Petara* inhabiting a particular location, the scenery and accompanying animal Deities.

Table 3

*Summary of the Texts of the Ritual Timang Tuah in the Timang XekorY*

Location of Seven Renggat	<i>Petara</i> (inhabiting the region)	Scenery	Animal Deity
<b>First Renggat:</b> <b>Menua Sempulang Gana</b> Location of the Deity <i>Sempulang Gana</i>	<i>Ini Manang</i> (Grandmother Shaman), Deity of Storm, Wife of Deity <i>Sempulang Gana</i>	The longhouse began to shake due to the presence of the deity of storm, the good luck charms scattered, and the storm became heavy. By using a telescope, the wife of Deity <i>Sempulang Gana</i> , could see the plates (offerings) placed at the long house of the sponsor of the <i>Timang Tuah</i> ritual.	Nil
<b>Second Renggat:</b> <b>Menua Wung Kelansau</b> Location of waterfall named <i>Kelansau</i>	Son in law of Deity <i>Lang Sengalang</i>	Lengthy grass weeds against the backdrop of a waterfall. The riverbank approaching the Crocodile's world is filled with dried leaves covering the river, and the bird's world has big bamboo poles and waterfalls.	Deity of Civet Cats, Deity of Cobra, Deity of Fish, Deity of Birds, Deity of Wasps, Deity of Lizards
<b>Third Renggat:</b> <b>Daluh Sungai Buluh</b> (Valley of bamboo rivers) Location of former longhouse of Deity <i>Sengalang Burung</i> prior to departing with humans	<i>Segangga Gunggung</i> , son in law of <i>Sengalang Burung</i> , <i>Selempetuh</i> .	Land filled with paddy plants, break good luck stones from hill of going of good luck stones, secne from canopy of tall trees reveals a land like <i>tawak</i> gongs with bamboo stems and river and hills standing against one another	King of Antlers, World of Ant nests,
<b>Fourth Renggat:</b> <b>Menua Kemara</b> (Land filled with valuables and riches)	Nil	*D1: Golden world. Ancient burial site of family of Deity <i>Sengalang Burung</i> . Place is filled with bamboo stems. *D2: Riverbank and valley filled with <i>Sabang</i> (a type of palm plants) and <i>Bungai Panggil</i> (Magical flowers) located at the seven creeks. *D3: The mountain resembling a fish trap filled with bamboo sticks. Guardian of the <i>Pengasah stone</i> (a special sharpening stone for weapons). <i>Menua Ini Antu</i> (World of Giant spirits).	



		*D4: Next to doorway to sky. View from the sky reveals forest filled with gigantic, twisted roots below. There are no animal deities in this <i>Renggat</i> .	
<b>Fifth Renggat:</b> <b>Menua Tuchung Tempalung Subang</b> (Location of hilltop resembling an Iban tobacco package)	Nil	On top of the <i>Kara</i> tree (a magical tree that can transform into a ladder) trying to hear the beating of the <i>taboh</i> from earth, the chanting of the <i>timang tuah</i> and sounds of corns exploding (pop corn) – a sign that the pathway to earth is opened. From the sky, the mountains wind their way to the red skies above.	Deity of Lightning
<b>Sixth Renggat:</b> <b>Menua Bujang Abang Remang</b> (World of <i>Bujang Abang Remang</i> )	*D1: Nil *D2: Nil *D3: Nil *D4: Deity of World of <i>Beguna</i> , rich with paddy	*D1: Climb up to the sky through the shoots of the <i>Kara</i> tree using ladder, obtains charm, uses ladder to cross the land of the dead. *D2: Hot land sizzling with heat waves, filled with flowering starfruit plants, sound of the <i>tawak</i> gongs and the beating of drums signifying the presense of humans celebrating <i>bumai</i> (planting paddy) or celebrating <i>gawai</i> (festival), seen with small bells hanging from <i>sirat</i> (loincloth or cloth wound like shorts among Iban men). *D3: Scene of <i>teresang</i> (Rattan weaving and split bamboo for the purpose of placing the offering which is plenty and high from far) *D 4: This place looks like it is afloat and jagged mountains that forms a stairway	*D1: Nil *D2: Wife of Deity <i>Menua Nyiruk</i> , a bird *D3: Wife of Deity <i>Radau Ensirau Hari</i> which is a type of insect *D 4: <i>Kejatan bungah</i> , wife of Deity <i>Menua Beguna</i> has the ability to fly at night and likes stealing the paddy harvest of human.
<b>Seventh Renggat:</b> <b>Menua Riguh</b> (Place of <i>Riguh</i> )	<i>Manang Menjaya</i> (Deity of Shaman), <i>Sempetuh</i> , <i>Sempulang Gana</i>	Valley with rolled mountains where the long house of Deity <i>Sempulang Gana</i> is situated. There is an event for receiving the good luck stone, and upon seeing the footprints of the seven wanderers, the prints are cleansed and purified through a ceremony to ensure future travelers will not be lost when pass the area. The entourage	

		<p>go down to the long house having the <i>Timang Tuah</i> recital, bathe at a nearby river close to longhouse of <i>Menua Riguh</i>, ascend the long house of the people conducting the <i>timang tuah</i> ritual, pantun <i>Iban</i>, chants of <i>timang tuah</i> are heard. There is no deity of the animals in this <i>Renggat</i>.</p>
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\*(D) for drawing

### The Song texts of the *Timang Tuah* ritual in the *Timang XekorY*

The analysis of the musical texts is to assist with the interpretation and comprehension of the old Iban language. The text comprise various nicknames (*ensumbar*) and vivid descriptions of the voyages and places travelled by the bards. These include thick rainforests filled with animals and insects. The landscape in the texts spans the visible world inhabited by man to the spiritual world inhabited by the deities of animals (e.g., birds, snakes, crocodiles, etc.). According to Charlie (2012) in *Ibanpedia Wordpress*, *ensumbar* refers to titles or nicknames given to individuals to instill bravery, strength and wisdom involving self defence and spiritual protection. In ancient times, the *ensumbar* were long and linked to warfare and reflective of strength, bravery, and skilfulness in self defence. During war, the *ensumbar* is hollered to instill fear in the enemy. With warfare being a thing of the past, the nickname *ensumbar* is used to commemorate the work and services of individuals e.g., police force, army or skills requiring sacrifice while protecting a fellow Iban.

### Sign and Signifier: The *Timang Tuah* ritual in the Development of the *Timang XekorY* Rendition

Traditional Iban believe in the existence of good and bad spirits (e.g., *antu manah*, *antu jai*). In the *Timang Tuah* ritual, both female and male deities are said to provide signs to humans through *burong*.<sup>7</sup> Thus, any signs from the birds, snakes, frogs, and other animals and through dreams are considered omens to be accepted or rejected. Masing (1981) states that all ritualistic events carried out by the Iban are based on dreams. Through dreams, it is possible to determine whether an event is to be carried out. Based on the interview scripts of *Lemambang Enggong anak Baning in Kapit in 2017*, after the end of the *Timang Tuah* event, the visitors returned to their homes happily, satisfied with the receptions and there were no quarrels nor fights. It is important though that food and drinks be in abundance while the event is being carried out. This is symbolic since the *Petara* and his entourage will be present among the audience and will participate in the celebration. Several symbolic occurrences add testimony to this belief. There will be a group of eagles circling around the house of the sponsor of the event. There will be warm showers during the *miring* (offerings) ceremony. On the second night of the ritual, when food was being presented to the *Petara*, there was a blackout for the whole of Kapit Town. The long house was without electricity, and all lamps around the longhouse were blown out suggesting a sign of the presence of the *Petara* and his entourage. Addition signs were as follows:

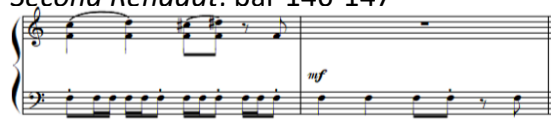



- i) *taboh* was played for the duration of wood cutting session prior to the ceremony to avert bad omens like the sound of *burong*

<sup>7</sup>A sign whether it comes from birds, snakes, frogs, and other animals.

- ii) throwing of *rendai* (popcorn) during the *miring* ceremony to pave a pathway to the human world
- iii) warm rain, indicating the presence of the *Petara* and other *urang Panggau* (people from heaven)
- iv) blackout or blowing out of lamps, suggesting the presence of the heavenly visitors
- v) eagles circling the house where chanting is held, indicating the house as identified by the heavenly visitors
- vi) *lemambang* places the *ilang besarung* (the *ilang* (knife) is inserted into its sheath) at the *pandung*, indicating that the ritual is ending

Table 4

Summary of signs, omens and meanings of the ritual of *Timang Tuah* in *Timang XekorY*

Sign	Signifier	Meaning	Extract from <i>Timang XekorY</i>
1. <i>Taboh</i> played throughout the proses of wood cutting.	Evading sounds of <i>burong</i> the bring misfortune.	<i>Taboh</i> played during the duration of wood cutting to ward off ill omen.	<p>Second <i>Renaat</i>. bar 146-147</p>  <p>Piano played the rhythmic motive of <i>taboh</i></p>
2. <i>Rendai</i> (popcorn) scattered on mat and left until the end of the ritual.	Throwing of <i>rendai</i> (popcorn) during <i>miring</i> ceremony.	Opens pathways to human world.	<p>Letupan <i>Randai</i> (popcorn yang ditabur)</p>  <p>Fifth <i>Renggat</i>, bar 16. It is played using String Quartet made of Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Cello</p>
3 Warm rain.		Belief in the presence of the <i>Petara</i> and others heavenly visitors.	 <p>Opening of Seventh <i>Renggat</i> at <i>Menua Riguh</i> indicating the presence of the <i>Petara</i> amidst the</p>
4. <i>Blackout</i> or blowing out of oil lamps at the longhouse.		Belief in the presence of the <i>Petara</i> and other heavenly visitors.	 <p>Seventh <i>Renggat</i>: Bar 147-149, From 148 to 149 for the whole orchestra, playing each note freely, <i>subito</i></p>

				(suddengly), freely in rhythm is increased with the whisper from choir, “sudah datang” (have arrived) and return to original tempo and rhythm from bar 150.
5.	Noisy clucking of chicken reared at backyard of sponsor of ritual event.	A convocation of eagles flying around the house where chanting is held.	House where <i>Timang</i> chant has been identified by visitors from the skies.	Refer to Extract 4: <i>First Renggat</i> , Seksyen II: Bar 17 - 20 (graphic score). Sound of chicken can be heard at bar 20.
6.	<i>Lemambang besarung</i> placed at the <i>pandung</i> .	<i>ilang</i> (shield sword)	The ritual ends.	Presentation of <i>Timang XekorY</i> ends with a music presenter placing the sheath on the <i>ilang</i> (sword) before the orchestra.

### Imagination in the Composition of *Timang XekorY*

Imagination is a thought process carried out through the subconscious mind, and its function is to combine information from the various senses and memory, change and summarize the action based on one’s emotion until a new conclusion emerges. According to Salleh and Sailin (2014), imagination helps forecast our future since imagination has a high thinking capacity. Csikszentmihalyi (1996), showed that the analyse of all factors that encompass a system that allow for the phenomenon to occur, would contribute to understanding the truth. To obtain further understanding about factors that influence and provide access to meanings in music, it is important for research to encompass a relevant context. As shown by Csikszentmihalyi, observation over the whole system allows for close observation in qualitative research. An approach related to anthropology and ethnography can provide a “thicker picture” of the phenomenon dealing with music in the context.

In the creation of *Timang XekorY*, the next step would be to communicate and present the performance in an expressive manner until it influences the audience. This will be conducted with the outcome of interpretation and meaning determined. At this level, the researcher imagines what is told through the text. An expressive imaginative skill is required to increase the ability to be creative. As mentioned by Abd Hamid (2001), creativity happens to be a thinking skill and action that does not necessarily depend on normal logic because logic is based on “assessment of the ability to think and act which is judgemental”. A high level of analytical skills and creativity is necessary for producing the final product since an original idea may not always be successful when marketed.

The name of the place in each *renggat* is included with the musical instrument that pay close attention to replicating the environmental sound, the characteristics of the *Petara* and the animal deities that accompany the textual plot of the *Timang Tuah* ritual. The outline of the imagination for the use of musical instruments are as follows:

Table 5

Outline of the Imagination for Use of Musical instruments in Timang XekorY  
(Original source: Table 3)

Location for seven <i>Renggat</i>	<i>Petara</i> inhabit the following places	Scenery	Animal Deity
	Musical Instrument	Musical Instrument	Musical Instrument
<b>First Renggat: Menua Sempulang Gana</b>	Piano depicts all characters in <i>First Renggat</i>	Piano portrays all characters in <i>First Renggat</i> .	None
<b>Second Renggat: Menua Wung Kelansau</b>	Depicted through Choir	Choir sound used to describe grass weeds. Timpani and the viola used for crocodile sounds, violins for the cicadas, <i>pizzicato</i> strings for the dry leaves, bird world's sung by the choir, waterfall with strings and timpani.	Civit cat's deity is by the choir, The Cobra's deity is by the choir, the Fish deity is by strings, Bird deity is by choir, the Wasps deity and Lizard deity is by strings.
<b>Third Renggat: Daluh Sungai Buluh</b>	Piano and Cello	Piano and Cello	Piano and Cello
<b>Fourth Renggat: Menua Kemara</b>	Piano, Flute, Clarinet, Violin, Viola, Cello, Double Bass, Glockenspiel, timpani, and choir	Piano, Flute, Clarinet, Violin, Viola, Cello, Double Bass, Glockenspiel, timpani, and choir	Piano, Flute, Clarinet, Violin, Viola, Cello, Double Bass, Glockenspiel, timpani, and choir
<b>Fifth Renggat: Menua Tuchung Tempalung Subang</b>	Violin, viola, and cello	Violin, viola, and cello	Violin, viola, and cello
<b>Sixth Renggat: Menua Bujang Abang Remang</b>	Piano, Flute, Clarinet, Violin, Viola, Cello, Double Bass, glockenspiel, timpani, choir, and blocks of bamboo	Piano, Flute, Clarinet, Violin, Viola, Cello, Double Bass, glockenspiel, timpani, choir, and blocks of bamboo	Piano, Flute, Clarinet, Violin, Viola, Cello, Double Bass, glockenspiel, timpani, choir, and blocks of bamboo
<b>Seventh Renggat: Menua Riguh</b>	Piano, Flute, Clarinet, Violin,	Piano, Flute, Clarinet, Violin,	Piano, Flute, Clarinet, Violin,

	Viola, Double glockenspiel, timpani, and choir	Cello, Bass,	Viola, Double glockenspiel, timpani, and choir	Cello, Bass, and	Viola, Double glockenspiel, timpani, and choir	Cello, Bass,
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### Imagination in Narrative and Descriptive forms

The Programme Music was used to work on the music composition of the *Timang XekorY*. The term Programme Music is used for instrumental music (compositions without musician and lyrics) and not used for Opera or *Lieder*. Programme Music is from the single movement symphonic poem (Kamien, 2000; Sadie, 2001). Programme Music of *Timang XekorY* is a type of musical art that combines both descriptive illustrations with narration for the music presented. In the performance of the *Timang XekorY*, the narrative of the Programme Music is presented beforehand in written form via a program. This is to provide coherence to the context of the musical composition and to enrich the imagination of the audience during presentation.

The forms of the descriptive Programme Music used in the *Timang XekorY* replicated the sounds of the environment and infused animal sounds with the mystic of the spiritual world. This effort is meant to transform a traditional artwork into a music composition. The composition is a descriptive musical composition of a traditional narrative. The descriptive text narrated the journey to the invisible spiritual world experienced by the *lemambang*. All the pictures from the sounds of the visible world and invisible world required high levels of imaginative skills which were then transformed to music.

Additional efforts were initiated to interpret the meaning of plot in the *Timang Tuah* ritual. This was through imagery that closely resembled the meanings of the text and by transposing them into descriptive drawings.

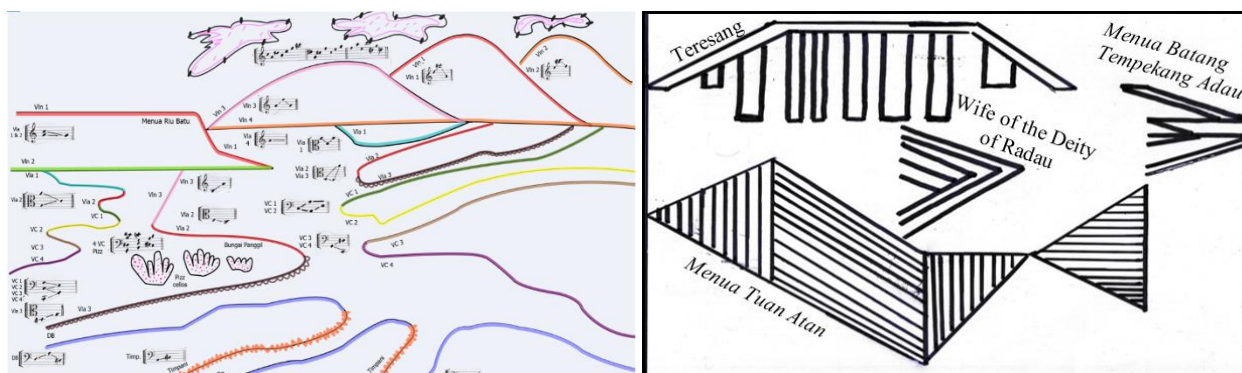


Fig. 3: Excerpt of Drawing 2 in *Fourth Renggat* (left) and Excerpt of Drawing 3 in *Sixth Renggat* (right)

The second drawing from *Fourth Renggat* depicts *Menua Riu Batu*, an area located at the riverbank known as *Menua Ai Chelali Laling* which depicts a valley filled with *Sabang*, palm like tree plants and *Bungai Panggil*. *Bungai Panggil* is a flower, believed to have magical powers which can influence humans, and turn water from the lake into a soothing potion that can heal the ill and change the bad to kind individuals. At this juncture, *Aji* and *Sigai* decide to “mandi bebulah” (take a bath) to make them strong, healthy, and appealing. According to the

ritual texts, bathing in the water from the lake can transform a fat person into a thin and good looking person and the old to a young person.

The third drawing from *Sixth Renggat* depicts the *Menua Radau Ensirau Hari* (*World of Radau Ensirau Hari*) which from afar appears like *teresang piring segandi* and is the land of the people of *Rajang Nanggung*. *Teresang* are high bamboo walls placed like upright stakes facing the skies. The top of each bamboo pole will have ten slits. The slits will be woven with rattan to allow for the plates or bowls containing offerings of food to be placed for the deities. The wife of the Deity *Radau Ensirau Hari* happens to be an insect helpful to humans. For instances it will remind humans working on farms or padi field to return to their longhouses when dusk falls. Then *Aji* and *Sigai's* entourage arrive at the place of *Bujang Terentang Bejit*, better known as *Menua Batang Tempekang Adau*, located near the *Empit Empeliau* hills. At *Menua Tuan Atan* which is a little further from *Bandar Tapang Meripir Beketapu Anyam Burai Geruntung* (A place where the high mountains and scenery are similar to the rattan war hat of the Iban) the team decide to take a rest.

### Transformation in the composition of *Timang XekorY*

The definition of transformation in the *Kamus Dewan Edisi Keempat* (2010) is to experience a change in character, shape, and setting. In other words, transformation refers to a change from an existing situation to a new dimension with the aim of improvising an existing form in terms of quality and achievement. With the *Timang XekorY*, care was taken to ensure that the change in presentation of the musical texts for the ritual of *Timang Tuah* was not disturbed, but the story within the texts had to be transformed to become a musical performance suited to a wider audience. The concept of transformation used in this writing is based on the identification, comprehension, and addition of new meanings to structure, cosmology, believes in deities, taboos, rituals, and individuality.

The next step was coming up with a formula or theoretical design. This was obtained through an indepth study of existing data and reanalyzing the data in terms of motivic transformation which include attention to repetition, augmentation and diminution. This helped the researcher arrive at the theoretical design.

### The outcome of the Transformation of the *Timang XekorY* composition

As explained in Table 1: Center X and Y, *XekorY*. Both concept and theory in *Timang XekorY* were conceived and applied based on approaches outlined in Table 2: Approach *Timang XekorY* and produced. The researcher only provided excerpts of the music notes and scores for selected *renggat* accompanied with the meanings of the musical texts of the *Timang Tuah* ritual, the approach used and how augmentation was carried out.

### *First Renggat, Menua Sempulang Gana*

Sekysen II: Bar 17-37

Fig. 5: Excerpt of Score for *First Renggat* Section II: Bar 17 – 20

The technique for writing the notes for the composition is *original* in that it moves from the right to left, and the notes follow a series of pitch based on approach one: Center C XY, -X-Y (7981), G A G# C# F D# E B. The piano tones which depict the journey of *Aji* and *Sigai* were filled with suspense with the Tenor and Bass humming the individual drones at note C and Db. Interval minor 2<sup>nd</sup> which is the drone is aimed at creating a suspenseful environment.

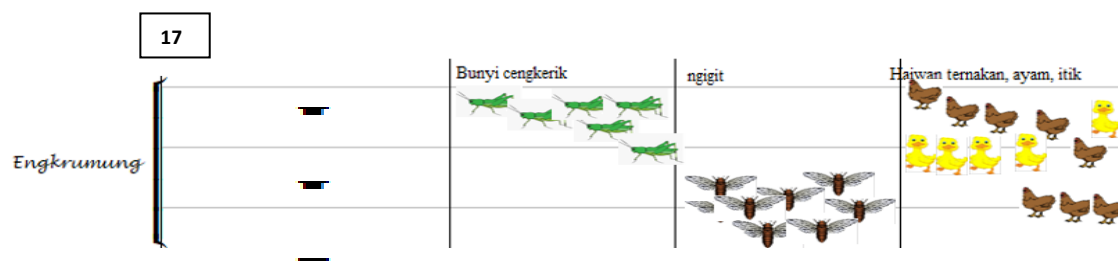


Fig. 6: Excerpt of Score for *First Renggat*, Section II: Bar 17 – 20 (Graphic scores)

Bar 17 is a sign to rest. At bar 18, the pictures of cricket were included, and the sounds of the cricket chirping is played by a soprano singer at high range and mid range. At bar 19, the picture of cicada or *indu ngingit* (in Iban) is included. As for depicting farm animals, the picture of ducklings and chicken were displayed. The clucking of the chicken begin with a high range and alternate with a low range. As for the duck, the sounds are placed at mid range. At this bar, the visual image of the scenery from the perspective of *Aji* and *Sigai* are displayed.

### Second Renggat Menua Wung Kelansau



Fig. 7: Excerpt of Score for *Second Renggat*, Section I: Bar 20 – 23

The range between bar 20 till bar 23 acts as the bridge to *Menua Baya* or crocodile's habitat. The eight center approach F XY, -X-Y (8361) = C# G# B F# A D B E, is used for the strings. Violin 1 uses F# which is similar to the sound of the *cicada* also known as *indu ngingit* in Iban. As for the choir, a combination of the six center approach D XY, -X-Y (2695) = E G# B G C G# F A and seven center approach G XY, -X-Y (2695) = A C# E C F C# A# D are used for the section on the bridge. The notation technique for this composition is random (does not follow the original sequence), and is picked from the series of pitch from Center C XY, -X-Y (7981), G A G# C# F D# E B.



**Third Renggat Daluh Sungai Buluh**



Fig. 8: Excerpt of Score for *Third Renggat*, Section III: Bar 61 - 65

Approach ten was used for this section together with two notes A# and G# from approach eleven, Center D XY, -X-Y (6249) = G# E F# B G# C A# G. In this section the bird's world (bar 61 until 65) experience a change in time signature. There is a mirror sequence at bar 62 and 63, interval of semitone at the cello which is repeated at bar 64 and 65. Bars 62 and 63 also happen to be a tonal sequence. The sequence at bar 63 happens to be sequence which has been raised to as high as Major 2<sup>nd</sup>, originating from bar 62.

**Fourth Renggat Menua Kemara**

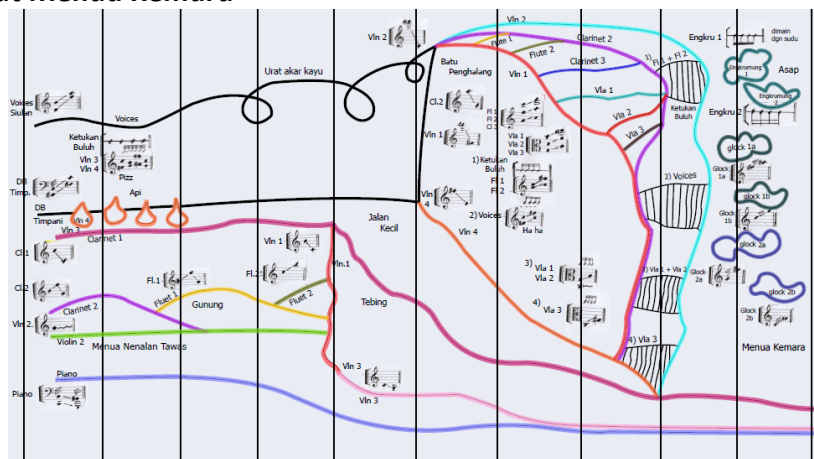


Fig. 9: Excerpt of Drawing 4 of Timeline sequence

The *fourth Renggat* contains four drawings, with each section constituting a duration of 2 minutes and the vertical line (on an A4 size paper) is aimed at determining accurate timing in terms of timeline. The paper is further subdivided into 10 columns with each column lasting 12 seconds. The music players will play the composition based on the drawing which is divided according to selected musical instruments and subject to suitability of the sounds indicated in the drawing. Should the line in the drawing rise, then the tone and accompanying pitch would rise as well and is played as such by the players. Also, at a section of the drawing, suitable notes have been incorporated according to the designated approach. The approach used in the *Fourth Renggat* motive for drawing four would be approach fifteen with center

D# XY, -X-Y (3784) = F# A# B G C G# G B. Based on the storyline of the musical text *Timang Tuah, Menua Apai Jamit Pengerit Antuk Nuyan* is placed not far from the place named *Bingkar Langit Luar, Getar-getar Baka Belayar Kapal Asap* (Outside the Sky, Vibration of Vessels like Sailing Smoke Ships). Next to this place is the location of *Menua Jegung Tali Tenung*, the world of a prognostic or necromancer. The travelers finally arrive at *Menua Dan Bemban Berakit, Kayu Baung Nelingkung Bukit* (World of Tree branch of rattan *bemban* wavy, wooden fish-shaped around the hill), which is situated at *Pintu Langit* (Sky Door). As the doorway to the sky is tightly closed, the travelers are forced to make a detour and bypass the place. However, the alternate route is filled with obstacles such as thorny rattan plants and the land is filled with fire. The entourage is advised to hold tightly to the veins of a huge root (*urat kedandi liat*) which they do. After travelling with their hands gripping tightly to the veins of the root, the travelers see the world of *Kemara*. The only way to *Kemara's* world was to jump down. The world of *Kemara* is inhabited by a shaman named *Manang Remang*. From afar *Menua Kemara* it is possible to make out the figure of the spouse of *Manang Remang* which is Bachelor *Sigat* (good looking) walking by the edge of the sky (in Iban it is called, *urang ditisi langit baka ringgit mayang nibung*). Upon arrival at the spacious, clean, and beautiful *Nenalan Tawas*, the entourage decide to rest for the day.

#### Fifth Renggat Menua Tuchung Tempalung Subang

Fig. 10: Excerpt of Score for *Fifth Renggat* Section I: Bar 10 – 13

Bar 9 to bar 18 depict the *taboh* which could be heard by *Ketupung*, a fellow member of the entourage. This is seen from Violin I and the use of the triplet for Violin II. The Viola would play the sound of the pedal note interval of perfect 5<sup>th</sup>, while the cello would take up the role of melody for this section. Bar 10 to bar 13 would use the sixteenth approach: *Center B XY, -X-Y* (5382) = E D G C# F# G# D# A. This type of notation technique is randomly assigned (refrain from the original sequence) based on random notations taken from the series of pitch from approach 16. This excerpt depicts *Ketupung* climbing the *Kara* tree and listening to the beating of *taboh* from human's longhouse.

**Sixth Renggat the world of Bujang Abang Remang**

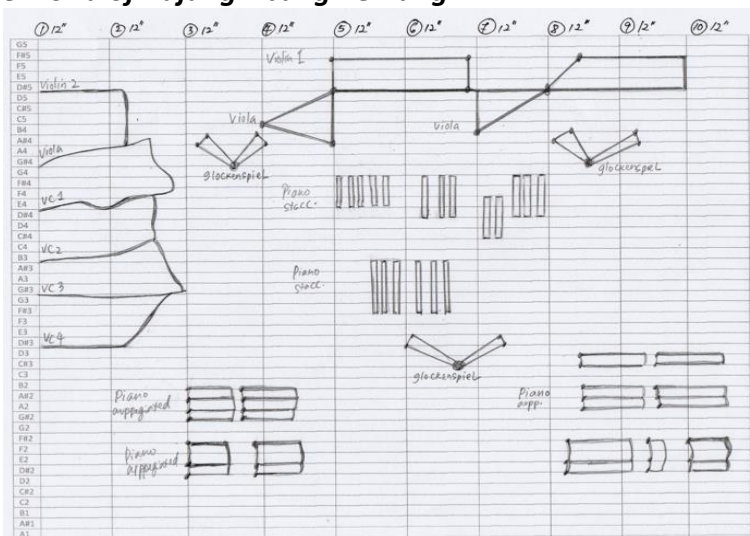


Fig. 11: Extract of Picture 4 for Sixth Renggat (Graphic Notations)

The Sixth Renggat comprise four drawings, but the drawing for the Sixth Renggat differs from the fourth in terms of placement of the chromatic notes on the vertical lines which is towards the left-hand side of the drawing. The chromatic notes are derived from selected approaches, and each drawing is based on augmented dots. The music players will play according to the drawn lines, but during this time, the lines and curves are meant to be dynamic. The steeper the curve of the lines, then the sound produced would be louder as well. In the drawing of the Sixth Renggat, each box that is prepositioned will last for a duration of 12 seconds. The total number of boxes are approximately 10. The twenty second approach uses Center D# XY, -X-Y (1365) = E F# A G#D# C# A# B.

The fourth graphic score illustration depicts the world of *Menua Beguna*, and the deity inhabiting this land has a loud bellowing voice and has a wife called *Kejatan Bungah*. The wife of this Deity has a fiery red face akin to burning rubber placed in a glowing fire. *Kejatan bungah* has the ability to fly at night and enjoy raiding human crops. From afar, this world looked like it is afloat and with jagged teethlike mountains that form a ladder to the base of the skies. This is the world of Deity of war with the *ensumbar, Bujang Abang Remang, Aji Junti Nyelundung*.

**Seventh Renggat: The world of Riguh**



Fig. 12: Excerpt of Score for Seventh Renggat, Section I: Bar 21– 24

Bar 21 to bar 24 depict the home of *Sempetuh*. *Sempetuh* is the deity who determines the sex of human babies yet to be born. The twenty third approach, Center F XY, -X-Y (3765) = G# C B A# D A# B C and twenty four, Center B XY, -X-Y (8527) = G E C# F# D# F# A C are used. The technique of writing the notation for this composition is based on a combination of approaches. There is frequent countermelody between various instruments. The intended musical image at this juncture is one of rushed and busy *Sempetuh* working to determine the sex of human babies from his home.

### Conclusions

The visualization of the plot and storyline of an ancient musical narrative like the *Timang Tuah* requires various levels of interpretation, imagination, and execution before coming up with the final musical composition. The stages begin from the initial participation and observation stage to data collection, analysis of the actual ritual of *Timang Tuah* and systemic patterning. Next, is the level of interpretation of data from the original text. This initiates a leap of imagination, involving visualization of the data and transformation of the motives using various musical notations and creative constructions.

In terms of audience appeal, the research outcome showed that a large number (88%) of music students from Universti Malaysia Sarawak and Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris who attended the performance of the *Timang XekorY* composition understood and appreciated the output to the extent that many were eager to see the actual *Timang Tuah*. Audience who lacked background in contemporary music found themselves relying on the Program Book containing the synopsis for each *Renggat* and outlines of *Timang XekorY* composition distributed beforehand to understand the interpretation, imagination and transformation of the XekorY chant.

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