



Transformasi Ritual *Togak Balian* dalam Komposisi Musik Programa: Eksplorasi Sonata pada Musik Tiga Bagian

Transformation of *Togak Balian* Ritual in Programmed Music Composition: An Exploration of Sonata in Three-Part Music

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Abstrak

Togak Balian merupakan ritual pengobatan tradisional masyarakat Kenegerian Sentajo, Kabupaten Kuantan Singingi, Provinsi Riau, yang menggunakan musik *robab* dan nyanyian *nandong* sebagai elemen utama dalam prosesi spiritualnya. Musik dalam ritual ini memiliki pola repetitif dengan interval sempit yang menciptakan suasana mistis dan transendental. Seiring dengan perkembangan zaman, ritual ini semakin jarang dipraktikkan, sehingga diperlukan strategi revitalisasi melalui pendekatan artistik. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mentransformasikan elemen musik ritual *Togak Balian* ke dalam komposisi musik tiga bagian berbasis konsep programa, dengan menekankan eksplorasi Sonata sebagai bentuk adaptasi dan inovasi. Metode penelitian artistik dengan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif, dengan data yang diperoleh melalui observasi partisipatif, wawancara mendalam dengan pelaku ritual, serta analisis musikologis terhadap transkripsi melodi, ritme, dan harmoni *Togak Balian*. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa transformasi ini dapat mempertahankan karakter musikal asli dengan tetap memberikan ruang bagi inovasi melalui harmonisasi progresif, eksplorasi timbre, dan adaptasi ritme dalam format komposisi tiga bagian. Struktur komposisi yang dikembangkan terdiri dari Bagian I (*Masuk ka Tampuruang*), Bagian II (*Manjopuik Samangek*), dan Bagian III (*Baliak ka Alam Awak*), yang menggambarkan perjalanan spiritual dalam ritual *Togak Balian* melalui pendekatan musik programa. Penelitian ini berkontribusi dalam pengembangan seni pertunjukan, pendidikan musik berbasis budaya, serta pelestarian musik tradisional Indonesia, dengan menunjukkan bahwa tradisi dapat berkembang tanpa kehilangan akar budayanya, serta menjadi model dalam mengadaptasi musik tradisional agar tetap relevan dalam seni modern.

Kata Kunci: *Togak Balian*; musik programa; eksplorasi sonata



Abstract

Togak Balian is a traditional medicine ritual of the Kenegerian Sentajo community, Kuantan Singingi Regency, Riau Province, which uses *robab* music and *nandong* singing as the main elements in its spiritual procession. The music in this ritual has a repetitive pattern with narrow intervals that create a mystical and transcendental atmosphere. Along with the times, this ritual is increasingly rarely practiced, so a revitalization strategy through an artistic approach is needed. This research aims to transform the elements of *Togak Balian* ritual music into a three-part musical composition based on the concept of programa, emphasizing sonata exploration as a form of adaptation and innovation. An artistic research method with a qualitative approach was used in this research, with data obtained through participatory observation, in-depth interviews with ritual performers, and musicological analysis of *Togak Balian* melody, rhythm and harmony transcriptions. The results show that this transformation can maintain the original musical character while still providing space for innovation through progressive harmonization, timbre exploration, and rhythm adaptation in a three-part composition format. The structure of the developed composition consists of Part I (*Masuak ka Tampuruang*), Part II (*Manjopuik Samangek*), and Part III (*Baliak ka Alam Awak*), which describes the spiritual journey in the *Togak Balian* ritual through a musical progression approach. This research contributes to the development of performing arts, culture-based music education, as well as the preservation of Indonesian traditional music, by showing that traditions can develop without losing their cultural roots, as well as being a model in adapting traditional music to remain relevant in modern art.

Keywords: *Togak Balian; programmed music; sonata exploration*

Introduction

Indonesia is known as a country with a rich and diverse cultural heritage, including in the field of traditional music. Each region has a distinctive form of music, which not only functions as entertainment but also has deep ritual, social and spiritual meanings. One of the traditional art forms that still survives in the community is *Togak Balian*, a typical medical ritual of the Kenegerian Sentajo community, Kuantan Singingi Regency, Riau Province. This ritual has the main function as a healing medium performed by a shaman through a series of spiritual processions, which involve prayers, mantras, and traditional music played with *robab* instruments (Hasbullah et al., 2014). The music in this ritual is believed to connect the shaman with the supernatural world and become a means of communication between humans and spirits that are believed to bring illness.

From a musical point of view, *Togak Balian* has unique melodic, rhythmic and structural characteristics, which are reflected in the *robab* playing and *nandong* singing patterns. The melodic patterns in this ritual are characterized by constant repetition, the use of minor scales with magical nuances, and a tempo that tends to be free to follow the dynamics of the ritual (Hasbullah et al., 2014). However, along with the development of the times and social changes in society, ritual music traditions such as *Togak Balian* are increasingly rarely practiced and are at risk of extinction. Modernization factors, changes in community beliefs, and lack of academic documentation are the main challenges in maintaining the sustainability of this traditional art. Therefore, innovative efforts are

needed to revitalize and transform this ritual music into a broader form that can be appreciated by younger generations.

One approach that can be used in efforts to preserve and transform ritual music is through the concept of programa music (Nur & Yensharti, 2020). Programa music is a form of musical composition based on a certain narrative or concept, which describes events, atmosphere, or stories through musical elements (Alifa et al., 2020). This approach allows further exploration of *Togak Balian*'s musical elements, while maintaining its meaning and identity. By adopting a three-part musical structure consisting of exposition, development and recapitulation, the ritual music can be repackaged in a more systematic format, without losing the essence of the original ritual.

In this process of transformation, Sonata exploration plays an important role in adapting traditional sounds into a broader compositional system (Martinkus, 2021). Sonata exploration refers to the processing of sound color, texture, harmony, and timbre in a musical composition. In this context, the original elements of *Togak Balian*, such as *robab* rhythm patterns, *nandong* melodies and the magical atmosphere of the ritual, will be combined with conventional musical approaches to create a new auditory experience. Thus, the previously localized ritual music can be introduced to a wider audience, both in the academic sphere and in the world of contemporary music performance.

The transformation of *Togak Balian* ritual music into three-part music with a programmatic approach aims not only to adapt its musical elements but also to recontextualize its meaning in modern society. This process is not just about transforming ritual music into compositional works, but also a form of documentation and preservation of the cultural values contained therein. In this case, the composer has a role as a link between the past and the present, who is tasked with re-presenting a tradition in a form that remains relevant to the times. In addition, this research also opens space for interdisciplinary studies that combine ethnomusicology, music composition, and cultural studies in one broader approach (Scott, 2019).

Thus, this research aims to analyze and compose the elements of *Togak Balian* ritual music into a three-part musical composition based on the concept of programa, as a form of sonata exploration that enriches perspectives in the creation of tradition-based music (Venn, 2021). In addition to making an academic contribution to the field of music and performing arts, this research is also expected to inspire similar efforts in the preservation and transformation of other traditional music in Indonesia. By combining traditional elements and modern approaches, the transformation of *Togak Balian* ritual music can be an example of how cultural heritage can continue to develop without losing its historical roots.

Method

This research uses a qualitative approach with a content description method, which combines theoretical analysis and compositional practice in transforming *Togak Balian* ritual music into three-part music based on the concept of programa (Baburao & Madhukar, 2015; White & Marsh, 2006). Research data were obtained through participatory observation, in-depth interviews with ritual actors and traditional musicians, and audio-visual documentation analyzed using a musicological approach (Islam & Aldaihani, 2021). In

addition, a literature study was conducted to understand the concepts of progression music, three-part music, and sonata exploration in contemporary music composition (Paul & Criado, 2020).

The research stages included exploration and analysis of ritual music, Sonata experimentation, composition, and evaluation and reflection (Guerrieri et al., 2023). The musical elements of *Togak Balian*, such as *robab* melodic patterns, *nandong* rhythms, and harmonic structures, were studied and adapted into a three-part musical format, consisting of *Masuk ka Tampurung* (mystical opening), *Manjopuik Samangek* (musical acculturation), and *Baliak ka Alam Awak* (dramatic resolution). The transformation process is carried out through the exploration of structure, timbre and harmony to create a musical narrative that retains the original ritual meaning.

The data obtained was analyzed using a musicological and conceptual approach, comparing the original structure of *Togak Balian* with the resulting composition (Paul & Criado, 2020). The analysis technique also includes artistic interpretation and reflection on cultural sustainability, to see the extent to which the programmatic music approach can be used as a strategy for revitalizing traditional music (Carrier, 2017). The results of this research are expected to contribute to the preservation and development of traditional music through innovative artistic approaches.

Result and Discussion

The transformation of *Togak Balian* ritual music into a three-part musical composition based on the concept of programa is an effort of preservation as well as innovation in tradition-based musical exploration (Venegas & Vanessa, 2020). This process starts from mapping the elements of ritual music in traditional forms that are still practiced in the community, then developed through conventional compositions that adopt Western music notation systems, until it reaches a Three-Part Song format (Sonata Form) that organizes musical elements in the structure of exposition, development, and recapitulation (Allegraud et al., 2019; Drzymalski et al., 2023). In its development, the Sonata's aspects of exploration, dynamics, and expression became the main focus to maintain the sacred and transcendental character of the original ritual, while allowing reinterpretation in a modern musical context (Santa, 2021). This concept is not only applied in karawitan music, but also developed in orchestral and experimental formats, reflecting how traditional music can evolve without losing its identity. As seen in the following image.

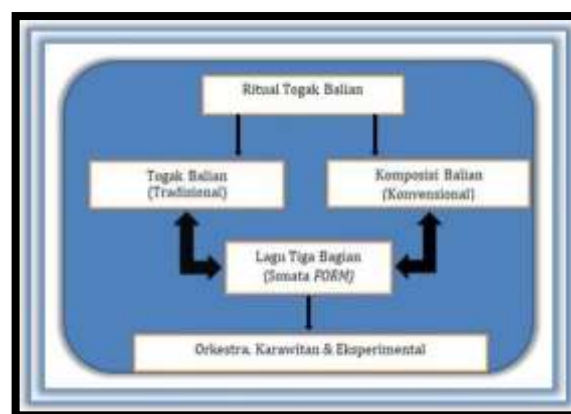


Figure 1. Composition creation concept

1. *Togak Balian*: Ritual Music in Cultural Context

Togak Balian is a traditional healing ritual that developed in Kenegerian Sentajo, Kuantan Singingi Regency, Riau Province. This ritual is carried out by a shaman as an intermediary to restore balance between the human world and the spirit world, with the main aim of curing diseases believed to originate from disturbances by supernatural beings (Venydhea & Rosaliza, 2020). The ritual procession is supported by distinctive musical elements, namely the singing of *nandong* accompanied by a traditional string instrument called *robab* (Hasbullah et al., 2014). The music in this ritual is not just entertainment, but has a symbolic role as a communication bridge between the shaman and the spirits believed to be present in the ceremony.



Figure 2. *Togak Balian* cultural ritual
(Doc. Hasbullah, 2024)

In practice, *Togak Balian* has a unique musical structure, where the melodic pattern relies heavily on repetitive patterns and narrow intervals, which provide a hypnotic effect in the ritual procession. The notation shows how the melodic pattern in this ritual is dominated by pentatonic tones with unique intervals, such as C# – D – E – F – G. The rhythmic pattern in this ritual is also flexible, following the dynamics of the ceremonial procession, with a tendency for tempo to change according to the stages of the ritual.

2. Transformation of *Togak Balian* in Program Music Composition

In an effort to transform the musical elements of the *Togak Balian* ritual into a three-part musical composition based on the program concept, a Sonata exploration was carried out which aimed to adapt the original sound color into a more systematic composition format (Tsai, 2024). This process begins with a musicological analysis, which examines elements such as musical structure, melodic motifs, harmony, and rhythm of the original ritual music (Wirandi & B. P., 2021). From this analysis, it was found that the *Togak Balian* melody pattern uses many repetition techniques and tone progressions that emphasize a magical atmosphere, so it needs to be reinterpreted with a conventional musical approach without losing its original character.

In the composition that was developed, a three-part structure was used as the basis for creation, namely:

- a. Part I – *Masuk ka Tampuruang*. This part describes the process of the spirit entering the shaman's body, with a musical approach that emphasizes monotonous and repetitive tone patterns.

- b. Part II – *Manjopuik Samangek*. This part reflects the stage of interaction between the shaman and the spirit, where the musical elements experience acculturation between ritual music and Western harmony.
- c. Part III – *Baliak ka Alam Awak*. This part describes the process of the shaman's return to the real world after completing the healing ritual.

3. Sonata Exploration as a Strategy for Revitalizing Ritual Music

Sonata exploration in the transformation of *Togak Balian* into three-part music based on the concept of *programa* is one of the important strategies in the revitalization of traditional ritual music (Santa, 2021). One of the main challenges in this process is how to maintain the original musical identity while still providing space for innovation and artistic expression. Therefore, exploration of musical elements such as timbre, harmony, and texture is carried out carefully so that the final result still represents the essence of the *Togak Balian* ritual.

In addition to the compositional approach, Sonata exploration also includes the selection of instruments used in this transformation. The *Togak Balian* transformation instruments show a combination of traditional and modern instruments, such as *robab*, violin, cello, and percussion, to create a more complex sound color (Silahudin, 2019).

4. Melodic and Harmonic Structure in the Transformation of *Togak Balian*

In the transformation of *Togak Balian* ritual music into three-part music based on the concept of *programa*, one of the main aspects of focus is the melodic and harmonic structure (Rozak et al., 2019). *Togak Balian* ritual music has the characteristics of a simple melody, but is strong in its mystical nuances. To maintain the essence of the melodic pattern, in the composition that is developed, an exploration of progressive harmonization is carried out. The next scheme shows how the main melody is maintained, but with the addition of more complex harmonies. Minor scales, diminished, and the use of the Gregorian mode are one of the main techniques in creating a transcendental impression that is richer in musical texture.

In Part I (*Masuak ka Tampuruang*), the harmonic structure tends to be static with sustain chords and drone effects to create an atmosphere that resembles the beginning of the original ritual. Then, in Part II (*Manjopuik Samangek*), the melody is developed with modulation to several non-diatonic scales, which describe the transition of the spiritual journey in the ritual. In Part III (*Baliak ka Alam Awak*), a combination of complex rhythms, tempo changes, and timbre explorations are used to create a dramatic effect from the climax to the resolution of the composition.

5. Exploration of Rhythm and Texture in Three-Part Music

In addition to melodic and harmonic structures, rhythm and texture are also important elements in the transformation process (Lu, 2022). The exploration shows how the rhythm in this ritual is often flexible and follows the dynamics of the ceremonial procession. In the transformation into a three-part musical composition, this rhythmic aspect is maintained but with a more structured approach.

In Part I, the rhythmic pattern is adopted directly from the original ritual, with the repetition of rhythmic motifs that support the mystical atmosphere. Shows how the original

rhythm is translated into a more structured notation format, but still maintains its repetitive character. In Part II, the rhythm begins to develop with the addition of polyphony and syncopation, which creates a more dynamic nuance. Shows how changes in accentuation are used to add complexity to the musical texture. In Part III, the rhythm becomes more varied with a combination of 4/4 and 5/4 metrics, reflecting the tension that occurs in the shaman's spiritual journey. Shows how changes in tempo and accentuation are used to build the climax of the composition.

6. Exploration of Timbre and Instruments in Composition

One of the challenges in transforming *Togak Balian* ritual music into a three-part music format is the selection of the right instruments. The original ritual music only uses the *robab* string instrument and the *nandong* vocal, which have a distinctive sound color with mystical nuances.

In the developed composition, timbre exploration becomes an important part in creating a balance between the elements of ritual music and the modern composition approach. Shows how various instruments are chosen to enrich the texture of the composition.

- a. The original instruments (*robab* and *nandong* vocal) are still used in several parts to maintain the ethnic and ritualistic character.
- b. String instruments (violin, viola, cello, contrabass) are used to expand the range of harmonies and provide a richer orchestral dimension.
- c. Percussion instruments (timpani, bass drum, and traditional drums) are used to add dramatic effects, especially in the climax of the composition.
- d. Woodwind instruments (clarinet and bassoon) are used in several parts to add a darker and more reflective sound color.

This section shows how this combination of instruments is used to create an atmosphere that remains rooted in tradition but also has a wider expressive power.

7. Program Music as a Narrative Approach in Composition

In the context of program music, this composition is designed to create a musical narrative that depicts the *Togak Balian* ritual procession in the form of three-part music (Nur & Yensharti, 2020). Each part has its own meaning and is supported by the exploration of structure, harmony, rhythm, and timbre.

- a. Part I functions as an introduction to the atmosphere, with a slow tempo and exploration of static textures to create a mystical atmosphere.
- b. Part II functions as a narrative development, where changes in harmony and rhythm reflect the spiritual journey in the ritual.
- c. Part III functions as a climax and resolution, with stronger dynamics and a more complex musical structure.

This part shows how these three parts are arranged in the form of exposition – development – recapitulation, which is in line with the sonata form structure in classical music.

8. Philosophical Influence in the Transformation of *Togak Balian* Composition

Togak Balian ritual music not only has aesthetic and therapeutic functions, but also contains deep philosophical meaning (Kablova & Pavlova, 2017). The basic concept of this ritual is the restoration of balance between body, spirit, and nature, which is in line with the principle of balance in various traditional belief systems in the archipelago. In the developed composition, this principle of balance is represented through a symmetrical structure in three-part music, where each part has opposing characteristics but still forms a unified whole. Showing how this balance is reflected in the musical organization, where Part I and Part III have opposing but complementary characteristics, while Part II functions as a bridge between the two parts. Symbolically, this approach reflects the cycle of life and death in the Sentajo people's belief system, where humans experience a spiritual journey before finally returning to their original state. Therefore, the transformation of *Togak Balian* into a three-part musical composition not only functions as a strategy for preserving culture, but also as a medium for reinterpreting traditional values in a more universal musical format.

9. Implications of Ritual Music Transformation in the Context of Education and Performance

The transformation of *Togak Balian* ritual music into a three-part musical composition based on the concept of *programa* has broad implications, both in the fields of music education, performing arts, and ethnomusicology studies. In an academic context, this research opens up opportunities for further exploration in culture-based music learning, where learners at various levels can understand how a tradition can be studied, analyzed, and developed in a broader format (Sularso, 2022).

In the world of performing arts, this composition can be a model for introducing ritual music into contemporary concert halls and music festivals. With a more modern presentation, ritual music can be more easily accepted by a wider audience, without eliminating the philosophical values inherent in it (Yusman et al., 2024). In addition, this approach can also be a strategy in preserving traditional music, by providing a new context that allows this cultural heritage to remain alive and relevant to the times.

10. Implications in Education and Preservation of Traditional Music

The transformation of *Togak Balian* ritual music into a three-part musical format based on the concept of *programa* has broad impacts in the fields of music education and cultural preservation. By adapting elements of ritual music into a more academic and contemporary composition format, this study opens up new opportunities in the study of ethnomusicology and tradition-based music composition (Steven et al., 2023).

In the context of music education, this study can be used as a reference in culture-based music learning, especially in understanding how a tradition can be developed without losing its identity (Yusman, 2021). This shows how this approach can be integrated into the music curriculum in universities. In addition, this study can also be a model in the strategy of preserving traditional music, by presenting a new context that allows this cultural heritage to live in a wider space. With a more modern format, ritual music such as *Togak Balian* can be more easily appreciated by a wider audience, including in concert halls and contemporary music festivals.

The transformation of *Togak Balian* ritual music into a three-part musical composition based on the program concept is an approach that combines academic and artistic exploration in an effort to revitalize traditional music (Candra, 2022; Nasir et al., 2023). Based on artistic research using observation, interview, and musicological analysis methods, it was found that repetitive melodic structures, flexible rhythmic patterns, and the distinctive timbre of *robab* are the main elements that shape the character of this ritual music. In the discussion, the composition developed still maintains the original musical essence, but with exploration of harmony, orchestration, and metric changes to create a more complex auditory experience. The results of this study indicate that the programmatic music approach allows for the depiction of ritual narratives in a more systematic format without eliminating its original cultural values.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that transforming *Togak Balian* ritual music into a three-part composition format based on the programmatic concept (Sonata Form) is an important strategy in the revitalization of traditional music. The results reveal that *Togak Balian* ritual music is characterized by repetitive melodic patterns with narrow intervals, flexible rhythms that follow the ceremonial procession, and the distinctive timbre of the *robab* and *nandong* vocals that create a sacred atmosphere. Through musicological analysis, these elements are transformed into a structure of exposition, development, and recapitulation, each depicting a stage of the shaman's spiritual journey in the ritual. This transformation is carried out while maintaining the original musical essence, but enriched through exploration of harmony, rhythm, texture, and timbre by combining traditional and modern instruments. The result is a programmatic musical work that not only functions as a ritual musical narrative but also represents the philosophical meaning of the Sentajo people regarding the balance of body, spirit, and nature. These findings demonstrate that a programmatic approach is able to maintain the musical identity and sacred values of the tradition, while opening up space for innovation, culture-based music education, and the preservation of tradition in the context of contemporary performances.

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