

EXPLORING RUNGUS *LONGOI DOT PONGIZAP* (COUNTING SONGS) OF SABAH

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ABSTRACT

The Rungus are one of the indigenous Dusunic ethnic groups of Sabah, the northernmost region of Malaysia on Borneo Island. Most Rungus people reside in the administrative Districts of Kudat and Pitas of northern Sabah. In Rungus culture, many different genres of intangible cultural heritage, including traditional secular folk songs, have been passed down orally over generations. An important category of *longoi tanganak* (children's songs) is *longoi dot pongizap* (counting songs). The author collected 87 Rungus *longoi tanganak* from Kudat and Pitas Districts. This paper discusses the *longoi dot pongizap* from a detailed study that aimed to (a) document and transcribe the *longoi dot pongizap* of Rungus from the field that are recalled by the older people, and (b) analyse the musical characteristics of the collected *longoi dot pongizap*, and provide recommendations for connecting the Rungus *longoi dot pongizap* with the principles of Kodály. This research employed ethnographic field techniques including participant observation, in-depth and focus group interviews, as well as audio and video recording. The musical transcriptions of selected songs were then analysed using the Kodály Folk Song Analysis. This study suggests that more indigenous folk songs from other ethnic groups in Sabah should be collected, documented, and introduced to the public, as it will build cultural awareness among different ethnicities in Malaysia.

Keywords: Counting song, *longoi tanganak*, *longoi dot pongizap*, Rungus, music education, Sabah, Kodály.

INTRODUCTION

Music educators in many countries have been concerned with the importance of multicultural music education in the past few decades (Anderson, 1992; Blair & Kondo, 2008; Campbell, 2002; Chong, 2012; Loong, 2008; Simeon & Pugh-Kitingan, 2021; Wong, Pan & Shahanum Mohd Shah, 2015; Wong & Chiu, 2017). As a term, "multicultural music" or "music of many cultures" refers to music from any assortment of worldwide cultures (Volk, 1993). Volk's (1993) study focused primarily on the global perspective of music education that was developed by

adding music from many cultures to the curriculum. Through active engagement with new musical ideas, students learn about unfamiliar music and the cultures of other people.

Multicultural music includes an eclectic mixture of music representing different ethnic groups in the curriculum, showcasing a celebration of ethnic diversity (Loong, 2008). In terms of music education, multicultural music approach can help students become more understanding of their own cultural heritage as well as other cultures around them. This will lead them to have greater tolerance and respect for everyone. To Loong (2008), this should be a major goal of music education.

Regarding collecting materials for multicultural music, Loong (2008) pointed out that music teachers need to examine the quality of the materials, conduct background research, determine the authenticity of music materials which may include musical instruments accompanying songs including the singing styles of particular cultural performances. The most important is the language used in the songs and its original meanings which must be translated accurately. Multicultural music education should facilitate students to understand music through the lens of another culture. This is important in providing a teaching platform of diverse multicultural music experiences (Alarcio et al., 2017).

Introducing musical concepts such as listening, singing or movement through Rungus culture are in line with Kodály's musical philosophy. In the Malaysian KSSR music curriculum (2019), most repertoire for the primary school music classroom comprises of a mixture of Malaysian and folk songs from other countries; there is still a lack of indigenous folk materials from Sabah. Rungus *longoi tanganak* (children's songs) have not been used as one of the teaching materials in the Malaysian children's music classroom, hence it is suggested that it be incorporated in the primary school music classroom.

According Lim (2019), the published primary school music song books in the local market contains very few traditional Malaysian songs. Most songs are mainly Western or self-composed songs by the music teachers. Therefore, it can be surmised that many Malaysian children lack experience to their indigenous musical culture, of which traditional children's songs are vital components.

Malaysia is a multicultural country where an integrated multicultural music education can help students to become aware of the country's diversity and promote better understanding, tolerance and acceptance of others around them (Wong et al., 2016). However, not many Malaysian children's songs have been collected, preserved, and studied by past researchers (Loong, 2008; Chong, 2013; Lim, 2019). Besides Malay, Chinese, and Indian folk songs, there is still a lack of indigenous songs used in the Malaysian music curriculum.

According to Bank (2003), multicultural education helps students develop cross-cultural competency, which consists of abilities, attitudes, and understanding that students need to function effectively within the American national culture, their ethnic subsocieties, and in different ethnic subsocieties and cultures. From America, the awareness of the importance of multicultural music education has spread worldwide, including Malaysia. The 2011 standard curriculum of "World Music" (*Dunia Muzik*) for primary schools in Malaysia aims to build students' potential to become creative individuals who enjoy music through musical experiences and

appreciate a broader range of musical genres. This music includes Asian music, Western classical music, popular music, and Malaysian traditional music (Wong, Pan, & Shahanum, 2015). Against this background, the researcher selected Rungus children's songs of Sabah as a case study for multicultural music education in Malaysia.

Kodály philosophy points to traditional folk songs as the foundation of music education. The folk songs of a child's own language constitute a musical "mother tongue", and should be a vehicle for all early instruction. Language and music fit together in a special way, especially in folk songs. Young children not only learn tunes and words, but also understands their mother tongue. Folk songs are valuable, and can give children a sense of cultural identity and continuity to the past (Choksy et al., 2001). Kodály advocated that a teaching sequence should be based on the folk material of each country.

Johami Abdullah (2010) highlighted the need to use the Kodály method in Malaysia, there is still a lack of research in Malaysia. In 2009, Kodály method courses were introduced in Malaysia, hosted by the Faculty of Music, Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM) in collaboration with the Young Choral Academy (YCM). Later, the Kodály method was actively used in the private sector such as Young Choral Academy and Poco Studio. However, based on the Kodály Levels Workshops attended by the researcher, it was found that the teaching materials used were mainly Western-based folk songs. Likewise, all Malaysian primary schools using Kodály teaching methods also used Western folk songs and other Malaysian children's songs but still lacked indigenous children's songs as their teaching materials. Hence, it is critical to include Sabah's indigenous children's songs as part of music teaching material.

This paper aims to introduce the Rungus *longoi dot pongizap* (counting song) into the music education among Malaysian children. The selected *longoi dot pongizap* for this study was based on the simple phrases and appropriate lyrics for children. Each counting song discussed here will be analyzed for its musical characteristics that make it suitable for musical teaching purposes. Through multicultural music education, it can help children better understand themselves and gain a much broader perspective on the fundamentals of music. Kodály philosophy highlights the use of local folk materials, where the sequencing for learning should be based on a nation's folk materials.

METHODOLOGY

This research employed ethnographic techniques including in-depth and focus group interviews the singers, as well as audio and video recording of their singing. Creswell (2014) stated the ethnographic design as "qualitative research procedures for describing, analysing, and interpreting a culture group's shared patterns of behaviour." This approach allows researchers access to the social group culture and allows them to obtain first-hand an understanding of the life and society of a people.

Field trips from January 2015 to October 2017 were conducted to record Rungus songs in Kudat (Figure 1) and Pitas Districts (Figure 2), for a total of 15 visits. The researcher had visited all the nine villages. The singers were the

villagers, mainly the senior villagers were able to recall Rungus songs from their childhood, and were willing to share them for this study. During this period, the researcher recorded various kinds of Rungus *longoi tanganak*, including both solo and group singing. The singers in this study were twenty-three Rungus singers between the ages of 47 to 87.

A total of eighty-seven of Rungus songs were collected. These included the genres *longoi pogondoi* (lullabies) and *longoi tanganak*. The Kodály philosophy guided this study from recording the original songs sung by Rungus singers in the field, to transcribing the songs and their texts, to analysing musical characteristics of the songs, and then to adaptation of the selected *longoi dot pongizap* for teaching musical concepts to children in the classroom.



Figure 1 Five villages in Kudat District used as research sites in the study
Source: Salbiah Kindoyop, 28 April, 2021.



Figure 2 Four villages in Pitas District used as a research site in the study.
Source: Salbiah Kindoyop, 28 April 2021.

RESULTS



Categories of the Rungus *Longoi Tanganak*

In the Rungus language, *longoi* means “singing” or “song”, which have been orally passed down from one generation to another. Apart from lullabies known as *longoi pogondoi*, all Rungus singers in this research referred to children’s songs as *longoi tanganak*. According to elderly Rungus, *longoi tanganak* contains rich cultural information about the Rungus. In all the 87 Rungus children’s songs collected and analysed in this research, numerous songs contain phrases related to traditional customs, beliefs, and lifestyle that provide us with a deeper insight into Rungus culture. These songs can be categorised into various types such as counting songs (7 songs), word chain songs (17 songs), call-and-response songs (4 songs), songs that tell a story (28 songs), singing games (3 songs), tickling songs (2 songs) and lullabies (26 songs).

The general function of all these songs is for children’s entertainment, to pass time. Most Rungus memorised the words of the songs without understanding their meaning because the lyrics contain old Rungus words that are poetic, which may not be familiar to the younger generation. Mr. Ranjamal bin Montuduk (Figure 3) observed that some lyrics of the *longoi tanganak* contained old Rungus words which many modern Rungus would not understand because they are words not frequently used.



Figure 3 Ranjamal bin Montuduk, 58 years old from Kampung Matunggong, Kudat.

For the Rungus *longoi tanganak*, the most common rhythmic patterns are *tiri- ti*  (20.89%) and *tiri-tiri*  (21.14%) patterns. For melodic patterns, the most common patterns are *do-mi-so* (9.86%) and *do-re-mi-so* (11.27%).

The text is important as the rhythmic patterns of songs are derived from their words. Sometimes rhythms are complex, irregular or mixed meter, depending upon the words. Ornamentation is also used by different singers. This is dependent on the individual singer's ability to memorise and perform the songs according to preference.

***Longoi Pongizap* (The Counting Song)**

Blacking (1967) stated the counting songs are amongst the first songs in a child's musical repertoire, because they are easy to remember. The action of counting with fingers usually accompanies the counting songs. For the Rungus, the children's counting songs are generally known as *longoi dot pongizap*. Dr. Paul Porodong (pers. comm., 2021) stated that in the past, Rungus parents taught *longoi dot pongizap* to their little children to develop their counting abilities from numbers one to ten, *iso, duvo, tolu, apat, limo, onom, turu, valu, sizam, hopod* and to enrich their vocabulary.

According to Madam Inowoling binti Montuku from Kampung Tinangol, Kudat (Figure 4), this counting song is a particular kind of *longoi dot pongizap*

known as *pongizap dot rogon* meaning counting *rogon* (demon) or *kiraan hantu* in Malay. Dr. Paul Porodong (pers. comm., 2021) explained that the words for the numbers in this example traditionally functioned as secret number codes that were sometimes used by Rungus adults when discussing quantities or negotiation of prices in front of non-Rungus listeners. The code words are the names for types of *rogon*. These words tend to rhyme with or contain the sounds of number names. These would be unintelligible to non-Rungus speakers. Prior to the coming of Christianity among the Rungus in the early 1950s, children were not permitted to play *pongizap dot rogon*, although they often played *longoi pongizap* using the usual names for Rungus numbers. When most of the Rungus became Christians and the fear of *rogon* diminished, children also used these *rogon* terms as number codes to play *pongizap dot rogon*.



Figure 4 Inowoling binti Montuku, 64 years old from Kampung Tinangol, Kudat.

Variations of *Longoi dot Pongizap*

Through analysis, the author noticed that there are similarities and differences among the Rungus counting songs sung by six different Rungus singers. Table 1 shows the variation of Rungus *longoi dot pongizap* as sung by different singers:

Table 1 Variation of Rungus *Longoi dot Pongizap*

No	VA	VB	VC	VD	VE	VF	VG
1	<i>Isokin</i>	<i>Kolondiso</i>	<i>Korondiso</i>	<i>Korondiso</i>	<i>Isongki</i>	<i>Kolondiso</i>	<i>Sogo</i>
2	<i>Duvokin</i>	<i>Kolonduvo</i>	<i>Koronduvo</i>	<i>Koronduvo</i>	<i>Duoki</i>	<i>Kolonduvo</i>	<i>Dugo</i>
3	<i>Tolukin</i>	<i>Kotolunggai</i>	<i>Kotolunggai</i>	<i>Kotolunggai</i>	<i>Tolungki</i>	<i>Duwayaku</i>	<i>Motug</i>
4	<i>Apat taku lumangkin</i>	<i>Parapat</i>	<i>Parapat</i>	<i>Parapat</i>	<i>Pat</i>	<i>Magandawai</i>	<i>Map</i>
5	<i>Koliman</i>	<i>Timbou</i>	<i>Timbou</i>	<i>Timbou</i>	<i>Ingki</i>	<i>Impupulu</i>	<i>Milo</i>
6	<i>Sangadau</i>	<i>Badjil</i>	<i>Badjil</i>	<i>Badjil</i>	<i>Lumingki</i>	<i>Madi madi</i>	<i>Miom</i>
7	<i>Turugan</i>	<i>Ponipu</i>	<i>Ponipu</i>	<i>Ponipu</i>	<i>Togonom</i>	<i>Kuyakuku</i>	<i>Pitu</i>
8	<i>Goronom</i>	<i>Buntarang</i>	<i>Buntarang</i>	<i>Buntarang</i>	<i>Usugan</i>	<i>Kumayau</i>	<i>Mau</i>

9	<i>Tingga walu ginsin</i>	<i>Sarapung nga</i>	<i>Sarapung nga</i>	<i>Sarapung nga</i>	<i>Turupu nga</i>	<i>Sarapung nga</i>	<i>Miang</i>
10	<i>Sigupuku sigundai</i>	<i>Pungguk</i>	<i>Pungguk</i>	<i>Pungguk</i>	<i>Singgawan</i>	<i>Pungguk</i>	<i>Siput</i>

- VA: Variation A from Ranjamal Montudok (Kampung Matunggong, Kudat)
 VB: Variation B from Azlan @ Raymond Majumah (Kampung Matunggong, Kudat)
 VC: Variation C from Jelny binti Borukot (Kampung Tinangol, Kudat)
 VD: Variation D from Inowoling binti Montuku (Kampung Tinangol, Kudat)
 VE: Variation E from Pangayak binti Surumpit (Kampung Tinangol, Kudat)
 VF: Variation F from Mojihut bin Malisap (Kampung Barambangon II, Kudat)
 VG: Variation G from Mojihut bin Malisap (Kampung Barambangon II, Kudat)

In the past, Rungus children sang these songs as a game, without stopping for a breath while they counted from one to ten. To win in the game, the child would sing as fast as they could, which is why these counting songs have variations in speed or tempo.

In terms of pronunciation, VA and VE (see Table 1) are similar for numbers one to three, while the counting of numbers four to ten is different. As stated earlier, the differences in the pronunciations of numbers one to three might be due to the different dialects spoken in different villages. This way of counting numbers is believed to have originated from a spiritual being known as *bubuha* in the Rungus language or grave spirit (*hantu* or *orang bunian* in Malay) (Ranjamal, singer 2). According to Ranjamal, the Rungus of the past overheard the *bubuha* or spirit counting the number of days pertaining to a ritual held for them. Children later sang this song as entertainment in the yard of the longhouse, usually accompanied by the action of counting their fingers. The differences between VA and VB occurred because the person who heard it from the grave spirit pronounced it differently. Differences in counting might also be due to differences in the Rungus dialects spoken. In other words, both counting songs originated from different *bubuha*.

On the other hand, the pronunciation of numbers one to ten in Variations B, C, D, and F are similar. These are other ways of counting from one to ten other than Variations A and E. Some Rungus believe they obtained it from the *rogon himbaan* (jungle demons). According to legend, there was once a war between the *rogon himbaan*. In the war, they used such a counting system to launch their cannons. This song was later sung by children as entertainment in the yard of the longhouse. Variation F differs from Variations B, C, D in lines 3f to 8f.

Variation G is different from all other variations and uses terms that rhyme with the names of the numbers. *Sogo* (number one) refers to rattan, *dugo* (number two) means “I”, *motug* (number three) mimics the sound produced by heating the wood’s surface, *map* (number four) refers to hand tapping on a wooden surface, *milo* (number five) means smart, *miom* (number six) refers to the act of covering the mouth and turning the head from left to right, *pitu* (number seven) means “there”, *mau* (number eight) means “like” – which might have been borrowed from the Malay word, *miang* (number nine) refers to good and *siput* (number ten) means “perfect”. According to Mr. Mojihut bin Malisap (Figure 5), this is the counting system that a *rogon* formed using objects it liked.



Figure 5 Mr. Mojihut bin Malisap, around 76 years from Kampung Barambangon II, Kudat

All *longoi pongizap* was sung in heightened speech by six different singers. As shown in Figure 6, five of the seven *longoi pongizap* variations contain *tiri-tiri* and *tiri-ti* rhythm patterns (Variants A, B, D, E, and F).



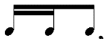


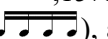


Figure 6 Rhythmic patterns of *Longoi Dot Pongizap* among different singers

Based on the above comparison of Rungus counting songs, it is clear that there are similarities and differences among them. These similarities and differences, according to the singers in this study, were learned by their forefathers' different *rogon* or mischievous earth spirits. In other words, we can say that these counting songs are rooted in Rungus culture are related to traditional beliefs about *rogon* that inhabit different places in the environment.

Selected *Longoi dot Pongizap*

To design a Kodály-based curriculum for the Malaysian music classroom, the materials collected serve as an important component of musical concepts that should be taught in the classroom. According to Klinger (1990, p. 2), long-term planning involves deciding what belongs in the curriculum and planning strategies for teaching individual curricular components.

The researcher chose *ta ti-ti*  to mark the beginning of the teaching point. For the next concept, sixteenth notes in groupings of four or *tiri-tiri* () can be introduced. The most common rhythmic patterns for *longoi tanganak* are *tiri-ti* (, 30%), follow by *tiri-tiri* (, 24%), and *ti-tiri* (, 15%). Before the *tiri-ti* or *ti-tiri* can be taught, it is necessary to teach *tiri-tiri* (), as children familiarise with the *ti-ti* and *ta* patterns. In so doing, they can easily recognise four sounds on one beat.

♩ = 110

Ko - lon - di - so, Ko - lon - du - vo, Ko - to - lung - gai, Pa - ra - pat, Tim - bou, Bad - jil,

Po - ni - pu, Bun - ta - rang, Sa - ra - pung nga, Pung - guk.

(duration= 6 seconds)

Figure 7 *Longoi dot pongizap 2*, a counting song by Azlan @ Raymond Majumah from Kampung Matunggong, Kudat District
Source: Jinky Jane C Simeon, 26 January 2015.

Musical Features:

Tone set: None
Scale/ mode: None

Rhythmic patterns:

Rhythmic Form: a b

Meter: 3/4

Suggested activities:

The teacher may introduce children to counting numbers from one to ten in the daily Rungus language, such as *iso* (one), *duvo* (two), *tolu* (three), *apat* (four), *limo* (five), *onom* (six), *turu* (seven), *valu* (eight), *sizam* (nine) and *hopod* (ten). Next, the teacher may sing the whole song *Longoi dot Pongizap 2* to the children, explaining that there is another poetic way to count the numbers from one to ten among the Rungus from Kampung Matunggong of Kudat during the past. This song also can also be used to practice the rhythmic pattern (measure 1). When children are familiar with *ti-tiri* rhythmic pattern, teachers can introduce the *tiri-ti* pattern (measure 2 and measure 3).

♩ = 75

Ko - ron - di - so, ko - ron - du - o, Ko - to - lung - gai, Pa - ra - pat,

Tim - bou, Bad - jil, Po - ni - pu, Bun - ta - rang, Sa - ra - pung nga, Pung - guk.

(duration= 9 seconds)

Figure 8 *Longoi dot pongizap 4*, a counting song by Inowoling from Kampung Tinangol, Kudat

Source: Jinky Jane C. Simeon, 18 August 2016.

Rungus Text:

*Korondiso,
Koronduo,
Kotolunggai,
Parapat,
Timbou,
Badjil,
Ponipu,
Buntarang,
Sarapung nga,
Pungguk.*

English Translation:

One,
Two,
Three,
Four,
Five,
Six,
Seven,
Eight,
Nine and,
Ten.

Musical Features:

Tone set: None
Scale/ mode: None





Rhythmic patterns:



Rhythmic Form: a b

Meter: 2/4

Suggested activities:

Teacher sings the whole song to children. Introduce children, this is another way of counting from one to ten from Kampung Tinangol, Kudat. The Rungus people obtained it from the *rogon himbaan* (jungle demons). According to legend, it is believed that once, there was a war between the *rogon himbaan*. In the war, they used such counting system to launch their cannons. *Longoi dot pongizap 4* also can be used to practice the  rhythm pattern (measure 1) and  pattern (measure 2 and measure 3). Next, when children are familiar with *tim-ti*  pattern rhythmic pattern, teachers can introduce the *ri-tim*  pattern (measure 3 and measure 5).

♩ = 110

(duration= 6 seconds)

Figure 9 *Longoi dot pongizap 7*, a counting song by Mojihut bin Malisap from Kampung Barambangon II, Kudat
Source: Jinky Jane C. Simeon, 10 March 2017.

Rungus Text:


*Sogo,
Dugo,
Motug,
Map
Milo,
Miom,
Pitu,
Mau,
Miang,
Siput.*

English Translation:



One,
Two,
Three,
Four,
Five,
Six,
Seven,
Eight,
Nine,
Ten.

Musical Features:

Tone set: None
Scale/ mode: None

Rhythmic patterns:

 Rhythmic Form: a b
 Meter: 6/8

Suggested activities:

Introduce *Longoi dot pongizap 7* to the children, as stated earlier, *sogo* (rattan), *dugo* (I), *motug* (mimics the sound produced by heating the wood's surface), *map* (hand tapping on a wooden surface), *milo* (smart), *miom* (covering the mouth and turning the head from left to right), *pitu* (there), *mau* (like), *miang* (good) and *siput* (perfect), a counting systems that *rogon* formed using objects it liked. Next, the teacher can sing the whole song with action of counting fingers to the children. Teacher can use this song for practice compound duple meter. After the children are familiar with *triple-ti*  rhythmic pattern, teachers can introduce the *ti-ta*  pattern (measure 1 to measure 4).

CONCLUSION

Overall, this study has used selected *longoi dot pongizap* to introduce teaching curriculum for Malaysian primary schools' music classrooms based on the Kodály method. Every type of Rungus *longoi tanganak* in Kudat and Pitas Districts has its own musical characteristic. Music educators could consider applying Rungus *longoi dot pongizap* as the cultural basis for music education. The Rungus *longoi dot pongizap* are easy to sing, treasury of short phrases, which are suitable for teaching music in the music classroom. Through learning indigenous songs, children from all ethnic groups will come to appreciate our indigenous cultures as well as their artistic expressions in the cultural context. Teachers can use additional ideas to create their own activities for teaching the Rungus *longoi*, so that the young learners will enjoy singing them. In conclusion, teaching Rungus *longoi* to children is deemed important because there is a growing need for multicultural materials in the music classrooms of Malaysia. It is hoped that more Malaysian folk songs will be developed and utilised for teaching music in schools.

GLOSSARY

bobolizan- priestess of the traditional Rungus religion

longoi- singing, song

longoi pogondoi- lullaby

longoi dot pongizap- counting song

longoi tanganak- children's song

rogon- demon

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