

Visual Culture of Gong Luang in a New Dimension of Music Film for Escort Soul

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Abstract This study aims to describe the visual culture of gong luang in a music film entitled "Kawyagita Mandala". This film offers a visual position that meets the target audience. The visual culture of gong luang appears in a new dimension in the form of an interesting music film to study. The purpose of this research is to analyze the visual cultural icon of the gong luang in the transformation of a musical film. This study uses the theory of visual culture and mise-en-scene with a qualitative descriptive method. The technique of collecting primary data is from content analysis of music films, literature studies, and field studies through in-depth interviews with the film production team. The results of the study revealed that the cultural symbol of the gong luang tradition as music for the death of pitra yadnya (ngaben) appears as the main visual. Other additional visuals that appear are the visuals of musicians, resource persons and women meeting as a character driven film.

Keywords: gong luang, music film, visual culture

INTRODUCTION

One genre of film is a musical film that combines elements of music, song, dance (dance) as well as movement. (choreography). In musical films, the most frequently appearing elements are songs and dances. These two elements play an important role in musical films and very minimal dialogue. In Gorbman's book *Narrative Film Music*, it is stated that film music forms the perception of a narrative, its existence cannot be considered minor. Like illumination, free of verbal tightness, music regulates the mood and tone of sound in a film narrative. The audience receives a more real movie atmosphere, heavily determined on the creative system of camera placement, editing, lighting, and even music. But music is different from the lighting and other film elements. Seeing something means instantly identifying the light beam with the object that reflects it; while in hearing we do not automatically identify the sound with its source. In addition, hearing requires a longer duration of sound stimulation than vision (Gorbman, 2000).

Music is one element of the film. Music has been a part of a film for a long time. Music in films is used to help set the mood of the film and to help keep the story flowing from the images in the film. The influence of film cannot be underestimated, music guide the audience emotionally and intellectually, as music can determines the mood of a scene. Music guides the audience emotionally and intellectually because it can set the mood of a scene. There are two ways to use music in films, namely score and source. In score, music playing in the absence of an obvious visual source. While the source, music playing with the visual sources seen in the film (Rea, P. W., & Irving, D. K., 2015).

Music in the film is divided into some kind. First, music can be a helpful setting for mood the viewer is immersed in the world of the film. Music can help to fill blank audio and visual passages, by distracting audience of blank sections. Music can help determine the setting, the characters and narrative events. Music can also incorporate elements from a film.

Dynamics in music can be used to convey emotion. Like what is said (Chapin, H., Jantzen, K., Kelso, J. A., Steinberg, F., & Large, E, 2010) when listening to a person's music the listener will feel the emotion communicated by the performer. Music can affects the part of the brain that is responsible for emotions, with playing dynamics in music various emotional reactions can be achieved (Sonnenschein, D, 2013).

Gong luang is a sacred and sacred gamelan in Balinese tradition. This gamelan is a form of gamelan that is relatively old, with a musical repertoire that is still classical in nature. This Balinese *barungan* gamelan, with a 7-tone pelog harmonic, is used to accompany the *Dewa Yadnya* ceremony and the *Pitra Yadnya* or *Memukur* death ceremony, so this gamelan is often referred to as the music of conveying the spirit (I. N. Kariasa, personal communication, February 2, 2023). Some of the repertoire is used in the cremation ceremony procession, such as the procession of bathing the corpse (*layon*), wrapping, and up to the farewell ceremony (*mepamit*). Gamelan gong luang, which was originally very vital for people's lives, because this gamelan is not only played to accompany the *Pitra Yadnya* ceremony, *Dewa Yadnya* (*odalan*) but also functions to accompany other performing arts such as masks, arja and other dances (Muryana, 2020).

Based on observations, in the last two decades the gamelan gong luang has begun to experience a shift with it being used less and less for performing arts purposes, its development is limited to accompaniment to the *ngaben* ceremony. This factor is strongly influenced by internal factors and external factors. Internal factors are related to the aesthetic value of the gong kebyar gamelan, while external factors are related to the social situation of the supporting community (Sugiarta, 2015). Gong luang has one scale, namely pelog, this gong is rarely played because the function of the sacred gamelan is only played for ceremonies (I. W. Rai, personal communication, Mei 2023).

Conservation efforts through the use of new media have been carried out, especially following public interest. This new media offers an audio-visual position that fulfills the desires of the audience. For this reason, Indonesia has an audio-visual work labeled 'Wonderful Indonesia' to introduce cultural arts tourism to the international community and 'Pesona Indonesia' for promotion to the national public. Several developed countries such as China and Japan introduce their art and culture through visual and audio power through one creation entitled 'Sound of China' and Sound of Japan'. The uniqueness of this work, in addition to the eyes being pampered with beautiful visuals, the ears are also exposed to the ambience and foley that lead the audience to really be present in the video.

The work of a spiritual music film entitled "Kawyagita Mandala" wants to answer this problem by presenting itself to popularize a sacred gamelan in Bali called gong luang. The urgency of creating this film is to be able to popularize the gong luang as soon as possible as a legacy that needs to be introduced in an attractive audio-visual package. The implication of creating this spirit-introducing music film as an alternative to audio-visual works is to increase public awareness of the rare art of gong luang through film media.

Based on this phenomenon, visual culture has shown an increasingly rapid development in this information age. Visual culture is a form of culture that has material values and culture (objects), can be captured by the senses (visual) to improve the quality of life and is understood as a link of the human (Dikovitskaya, 2005). Of the various forms of visual culture, there are video clips as the forerunner of music films that are present for the purpose of promotion in accordance with the ultimate form of an idea of human visual culture to go global. The presence of music films is formed by a long process of transformation, the dynamics that occur make visual culture often formed from shifts in values that have a tendency to correlate with various broad cultural discourses. Thus, all elements encompassing culture influence each other and position themselves as equals in various forms. This spirit-inducing music film is a manifestation of the achievement of human intelligence to subdue nature that can be immediately noticed by the senses visually. Therefore, a music film entitled Kawyagita Mandala is a new form of presenting gong luang in a visual that is tangible (real, visible) and is urgent for scrutiny. For this reason, this study wanted to find out how the visual culture of gong luang in the spirit introductory music film entitled "Kawyagita Mandala".

METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative method with a descriptive analysis approach. The variable of this research is in the form of a film that raises gong luang as an object of creation entitled "Kawyagita Mandala". This film was used as a source for research. The data collection technique used in this study was library research, namely collecting research-related material from scientific journals, literature, and authors. Literature study aims to obtain theoretical information so that researchers have a strong theoretical basis. The data in this study are based on books and journals that are relevant to the author's research. The next data collection technique is a field study, through in-depth interviews with producers, directors and film scriptwriters regarding the concept of the film. The data analysis technique in this study is qualitative, confirming the opinions of the producer, director and screenwriter regarding the film concept that fits the visual culture of gong luang in the mise en-scene of the film entitled Kawyagita Mandala. The data is used as a basis to strengthen the author's argument in analyzing the importance of visual and aural art in a film which is then linked to the theory of visual culture.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Cultural learning, basically consists of two adjectives namely the word "visual" and the word "culture", which are actually united, from the word "visual" itself can be understood only through the meaning of creating cultural and psychological processes. Therefore, visual studies make use of social theories such as the theory of Marxism, semiotics and psychoanalytic theory, which are the same as cultural studies, social theories which have meaning embedded not in the object but in human relations (Dikovitskaya, 2005). Another characteristic of visual studies is the emphasis on visual systems rather than single objects (referring to a permanent classic work of art). This is because in a study of art history itself it emphasizes more on efforts to fill the empty social space around it with works that are oriented towards art history itself, which are characterized by using detailed patterns and can classify the social structure of society based on these patterns. Instant and fast use of "tools", also supported by the latest developments in digital technology. In visual culture, the role of digital technology in question, helps in development in exposing the "everyday" of its users for everyone to enjoy (Elvira, 2018).

In film, the five senses that can capture are the eyes and ears, namely seeing visuals and hearing sound from the film. So in observing the visual culture of this film, watching is the main method for getting concepts or ideas (Susanthi, n.d.). Dissecting visual culture is used to interpret the elements and structures in the film. The cinematic element is a way to process the material (material) of a film seen from the technical aspects of film formation. One of the cinematic elements of the film is the mise-en-scene which has four main elements namely, setting or background, lighting, costumes and make-up, as well as acting and player movements.

Gong Luang Visual Culture Related to Death

In the film, Kawyagita Mandala places the music of gong luang as film illustration music, so that when examined in terms of the extra musical elements of gong luang, there are elements that are outside of the musical elements, including visual meanings, namely gong luang as music that conveys the soul to unite with the God. The producers, directors and scriptwriters in this film use several visuals that interpret death. According to the four elements of the film in mise-en-scene.

Death comes from the word die which in general means the exit of the spirit from the body. According to medical science, it is said to be dead when the heart organ stops. Death is the first realm that every human will pass after life in his world. The word death here means the separation of the soul from the body/body of humans and living things. Death in divine religions has a very large role in strengthening the faith and fostering a spirit of devotion. Without death, people would not think about what to do after death, and would

not prepare themselves for it. Therefore, religions encourage people to think about death (Yunus et al., n.d.).

Setting is an important element in visuals, covering all parts of the audience's viewing which informs the setting of time and place (Susanthi & Budiyan, 2022). This film takes place in the 2000s and takes place in Bali which is divided into two dimensions, namely indoor (inside the studio) and outdoor (outside the studio). The connotative meaning of death is taken in the studio while the denotative meaning of death is taken from the visuals of the procession of the death ceremony in Bali known as *Ngaben*.



Source: Research results

Figure 1. Indoor setting in the studio for visual connotative death

The second element of mise-en-scene is the costume, or clothing and accessories, which are important visual elements in film. Producers, directors and scriptwriters pay attention to the meaning of color in clothing which makes the visuals strong by studying the style of clothing, textiles and dyes used by the talent according to the needs of the role. Costumes are an indispensable means of establishing authenticity. In this case, costume creation is carried out so that it fits the concept and special function in the film. Costumes also serve to enhance the narrative, or stories that show the social position of the characters, the psychological disposition of the characters, hint at character development, and serve as a buffer for unity. The director and the arrangement of the costumes position the mise-en-scene aspects of the costume to give him the control of the visual elements needed to effectively convey the symbolic message (Susanthi & Budiyan, 2022). The costume for this film character uses a black traditional Balinese kebaya as a meaning of deep sorrow. Black is considered bad and is characterized by the absence of light and can connote darkness, gloom, sadness and turmoil. Black in the western community is associated with funeral clothes and other things related to death (Zuhriah & Muhammad, 2018). Death is also associated with the *atma* or soul, for this reason the soul in this film is visualized using a naked costume, namely talent wearing skin-colored tight clothes, and when the soul has been finished for ceremony, she uses a white cloth. In addition to wearing a black costume, it is also strengthened by a photo frame property symbol that is placed with ceremonial means such as *canang sari*. In Bali, to pay homage to people who have died, they are worshiped by placing photos with *canang* and offerings known as *mesoda*. In the empty frame there is a flower which is also often placed close to the corpse.



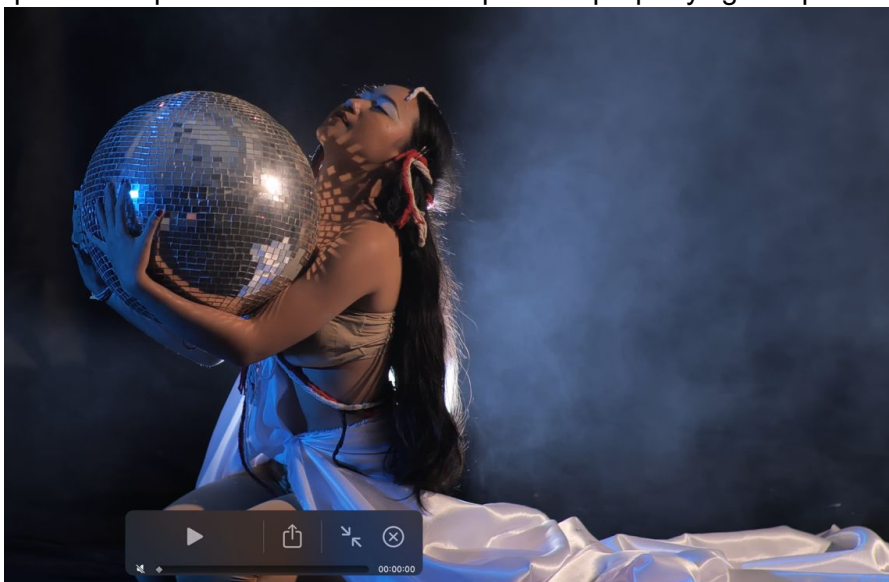
Source: Research results

Figure 2. Talent is wearing a black kebaya while holding a flower as a symbol of losing someone



Source: Research results

Picture 3. Talent plays the role of *atma* or soul who wears skin-colored pants and a tank top which depicts a naked birth. The spherical property lights up as a world symbol.



Source: Research results

Figure 4. Telen wears a white costume which also acts as the *atma* or soul that is already holy with the property of a ball as a symbol of the world



Source: Research results

Figure 5, Photo frames with tuberose flowers are objects usually found in burial chambers

The third element of mise-en-scene is lighting. In this film, lighting refers to shooting locations, namely indoor and outdoor. The use of lighting applies three points lighting for filming in an indoor studio. The director added smoke elements to give a magical and artistic impression. The director considers lighting more than illumination that invites the audience to see the action in a visual. Lighting for directors is used as a tool to convey the meaning of characters to the audience, to help determine the background of a scene or to accentuate the behavior of the characters in a film. Getting the quality of light in a scene can be done by manipulating the intensity and direction of the light. The atmosphere of the past tends to use darker light intensity compared to the present era, which has a brighter light intensity.



Source: Research results

Figure 6. application of tree point lighting in shooting in the studio (indoor)

The fourth element is blocking/figure behavior. The expression of the figures and their movements are also important elements used by the director to support the narrative and develop visual thematic unity (Susanthi & Wirawan, n.d.). There are 2 expression figures played, namely singers (human symbols) and dancers (*atma* or spirit symbols). The singer of the song plays a sad expression because of the loss and a sincere expression after the cremation ceremony is held or the body has been laid. While the dancer's expression as the *atma* plays 2 expressions, namely birth in slow motion, whereas when the *atma* merges with the Creator the dancer's figure moves fast and is made in slow motion. In this case the director handed over the dance composition to a well-known dancer, namely Ayu Devi.

Gong Luang Visual Culture Related to Pitra Yadnya (Ngaben) Ceremony

The visual culture of gong luang in this film is closely related to the *Pitra Yandya* ceremony in Bali, known as the *Ngaben* ceremony. The *Pitra Yadnya* ceremony consists of two main series of ceremonies, namely *Ngaben* and *Memukur*. The cremation ceremony can be said to be the return of the human body to the universe. Balinese Hindus who have died must first return their bodies to the universe. Most of the methods used by Hindus for this *Ngaben* ceremony are by burning. The essence of the *Ngaben* ceremony is *pralina*, burning mantra or burning prayer. The *pralina* has given the meaning that the human body has returned to the universe. The return of the body is deemed necessary because both humans and the universe are seen to be composed of the same elements, namely liquids, solids, heat, wind, and subtle elements (Arjawa, 2016).

Galeman gong luang is a type of Balinese gamelan that uses a 7-tone pelog barrel and its function in the context of *yadnya* ceremonies in general is in the context of the *yadnya* ceremony at the temple and also the *pitra yadya* when there is a large *plebon* or *ngaben* cremation (I. W. Rai, personal communication, Mei 2023). For this reason, in the mise-en-scene, the first element is related to the *Pitra Yadnya (Ngaben)* ceremony. In the visual of this film, the cremation setting is located in Sanur, Bali, Indonesia in the 2000s. The costumes for the *ngaben* visual, the director does not manipulate the costumes. Visual is obtained from the footage of the *Ngaben* ceremony that takes place in Bali, especially in Sanur Village, Denpasar Bali. The visual costumes that appear in this film use Balinese traditional clothing complete with elements of *bade* and offerings for the *Ngaben* ceremony. The lighting element in the visual cremation uses available light, namely (sunlight) during outdoor production. Elements of figure expression are also natural without any design from the director.



Source: Research results

Figure 7. Mise en visual scene of the cremation procession

CONCLUSION

The visual culture of gong luang in the music film of inducing spirits entitled "Kawyagita Mandala" is observed in the elements of the mise-en-scene film. The elements of mise-en-scene consist of settings, costumes, lighting and blocking. The visual culture of gong luang in the film is related to the symbol of death and the death ceremony in Bali

known as *Ngaben*. This visual film takes the setting of Bali in the 2000s era. The costume used is a traditional Balinese costume using kebaya, *kamen*, *udeng* scarf with a black symbol of sadness. The lighting is very dependent on the shooting location, if indoor use tree point lighting and outdoor visuals use available light (sun). There are 2 expression figures played, namely singers (human symbols) and dancers (*atma* or soul symbols). The singer of the song plays a sad expression because of the loss and a sincere expression after the cremation ceremony is held or the body has been laid. While the dancer's expression as the *atma* plays 2 expressions, namely birth in slow motion, whereas when the *atma* merges with the Creator the dancer's figure moves fast and is made in slow motion.

The characteristics of visual culture in the music film conveying the spirit "Kawyagita Mandala" are measured from a visual perspective. This film celebrates visualization with the latest information-based technology. Film works are distributed instantly (fast) and easily change trends on social media. In the conative visuals of the film, there is an attempt to popularize gong luang by means of visual aesthetics featuring dance and songs.

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