

## EXTRA-MUSICAL ELEMENTS OF THE MUSIC FILM *KAWYAGITA MANDALA*

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### ABSTRACT

This study examines the extra-musical elements of the music film *Kawyagita Mandala*, which highlights *gong luang* as a sacred and increasingly rare Balinese gamelan. The novelty of this research lies in conceptualizing extra-musical elements not merely as cultural background, but as structuring principles that shape cinematic form. Data were collected using a qualitative descriptive method through interviews with *karawitan* experts and the production team, supported by a literature review and observation. The findings identify four interrelated dimensions: *tattwa* (philosophy), *susila* (ethics), *lango* (aesthetics), and *gegebug* (technique), which guide the film's *mise-en-scène*, cinematography, montage, and sound. *Tattwa* dictates ritual-based visual construction; *susila* regulates ethical production practices; *lango* shapes visual and sonic harmony; and *gegebug* reflects reconstructed performance techniques at Apuan Singapadu Studio. By framing these elements as cinematic structures, the study offers a novel perspective on translating sacred musical ontology into contemporary audiovisual practice while supporting cultural preservation.

**Keywords:** extra-musical, gamelan, gong luang, music films

### ABSTRAK

*Studi ini meneliti unsur-unsur ekstra-musikal dalam film musik Kawyagita Mandala, yang menyoroti gong luang sebagai gamelan Bali yang sakral dan semakin langka. Kebaruan penelitian ini terletak pada pengkonsepan unsur-unsur ekstra-musikal bukan hanya sebagai latar belakang budaya, tetapi sebagai prinsip-prinsip struktural yang membentuk bentuk sinematik. Dengan menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif, data diperoleh melalui wawancara dengan para ahli karawitan dan tim produksi, didukung oleh tinjauan pustaka dan observasi. Temuan mengidentifikasi empat dimensi yang saling terkait: tattwa (filsafat), susila (etika), lango (estetika), dan gegebug (teknik), yang memandu mise-en-scène, sinematografi, montase, dan suara film. Tattwa menginformasikan konstruksi visual berbasis ritual; susila mengatur praktik produksi yang etis; lango membentuk harmoni visual dan suara; dan gegebug mencerminkan teknik pertunjukan yang direkonstruksi di Apuan Singapadu Studio. Dengan membingkai elemen-elemen ini sebagai struktur sinematik, studi ini memberikan perspektif baru tentang penerjemahan ontologi musik sakral ke dalam praktik audiovisual kontemporer sekaligus mendukung pelestarian budaya.*

**Kata kunci:** film musik, gong luang, gamelan, ekstra musikal

## 1. Introduction

Bali has approximately 40 types of gamelan, each with its own distinct instrumentation, orchestration, and function. Of these Balinese gamelans, the development and distribution of gongs has been uneven. Some are nearly extinct and rarely played. One such rare gamelan is the gong luang. Only six sets of this instrument remain, scattered throughout the island of Bali (Darma, 2009).

Gong luang is a sacred and sacred gamelan in Balinese tradition. This gamelan is a relatively old form of gamelan, with a repertoire of classical music. This Balinese gamelan, set in a 7-note *pelog* scale, is used to accompany *Dewa Yadnya* ceremonies and *Pitra Yadnya* or *Memukur* funeral ceremonies, thus this gamelan is often referred to as spirit-carrying music (Kariasa, interview, February 2, 2023). Some of the repertoire is used in the cremation ceremony procession, such as the body bathing (*layon*), wrapping, and even the farewell ceremony (*mepamit*). *Gong luang* gamelan, which was originally very vital to community life, because this gamelan is not only played to accompany *Pitra Yadnya* and *Dewa Yadnya* (*odalan*) ceremonies but also functions to accompany other performing arts such as *topeng*, *arja*, and free dances (Muryana, 2020).

Based on observations, in the last two decades, the *gong luang* gamelan has begun to experience a shift, with its use becoming less common in performing arts, with its development limited to accompanying cremation ceremonies. This factor is strongly influenced by internal and external factors. Internal factors relate to the aesthetic value of the *gong kebyar* gamelan, while external factors refer to the social situation of the supporting community (Sugiartha, 2015). *Gong luang*, which has a single scale, *pelog*, is less popular among the younger generation, so it is rarely played (Rai, interview, February 2, 2023).

Efforts to preserve arts and culture require persistent struggle. Currently, arts and culture, especially traditional arts, are facing a concerning situation. According to a September 2021 national survey by public indicators on issues of concern to young people, the erosion of traditional values and culture is one of the most pressing concerns. This is not without reason, given that the current era of

globalization has opened up opportunities for cultural exchange. Traditional arts and culture are facing relentless pressure from Western culture (Payuyasa, 2022).

Preservation efforts through the use of new media are widely undertaken, especially following public interest. This new media offers an audio-visual position that meets the desires of the audience. In this regard, documentary practice also demonstrates that film can operate explicitly as cultural safeguarding; the *Mappadekko* documentary, for instance, is described as “a form of cultural preservation” that addresses the endurance of a tradition at risk of disappearance (Annisa et al., 2024). This supports the position that audiovisual work is not only representational, but also a strategic medium to reactivate cultural attention and public memory toward endangered traditions. To that end, 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 cultural arts through the power of visuals and audio through one of the creations entitled 'Sound of China' and 'Sound of Japan'. The uniqueness of these works, besides being pampered by beautiful visuals, the ears are also heard ambiance and foley that transport the audience to truly be there in the video. The creation of this technique is very appropriate to be applied in efforts to popularize the *gong luang* gamelan to the wider community.

In order to preserve the *gong luang*, a musical film entitled "Kawiyagita Mandala" was created, meaning music that guides the spirit to unite with the Creator. In the process of creating a film, there are two main elements, namely audio and video. Referring to the external music film, this study emphasizes music with visual interpretation. There are two elements in a musical film, namely musical elements and extra-musical elements. Musical elements are elements directly related to music, namely tone, rhythm, harmony, technique, dynamics, and other elements included in music. Extra-musical elements are elements outside of music or non-musical, but have a very strong influence in practical music. These elements affect the soul of the creator, the soul of those who play for offerings, and these elements are part of the culture.

The urgency of research related to the extra-musical elements of audio-visual works with the concept of musical films, with the object of the creation of *gong luang*, can echo *gong luang* as a heritage that needs to be introduced in an attractive audio-visual package. The implication of the creation of this spirit-introducing musical film as an alternative audio-visual work to increase public awareness of the rare art of *gong luang* through the use of film media while still referring to the rules of inherited traditions.

## 2. Literature Review

In her book *Mise En Scene Film Gundala*, Susanthi (2021) states that the four elements that make up a film—setting, makeup and costumes, lighting, and actor movement—play a significant role in visually enhancing the audience's emotions. Susanthi (2022) similarly argues that the success of shaping visual culture lies in the key elements of *mise-en-scène*. These arguments emphasize that film meaning is structured through visual organization. *Mise-en-scène* therefore becomes the primary site where emotional and cultural meanings are arranged and stabilized.

However, audiovisual meaning cannot be reduced solely to visual organization. Nuraini (2023), in her study of multimodality in Indonesian music video, argues that meaning in audiovisual texts emerges from the interaction of multiple semiotic modes: language, image, music, sound, and movement, which operate simultaneously to construct emotional and symbolic narratives. Rather than functioning independently, these modes create an integrated interpretive system in which affect, symbolism, and storytelling are co-produced through audiovisual layering (Nuraini, 2023). This multimodal perspective broadens Susanthi's emphasis on visual structure by situating film meaning within the dynamic interplay between visual and sonic elements. The film's aesthetic coherence emerges from this layered coordination of philosophical intention and technical execution (Susanthi et al., 2018).

Beyond shaping visual culture, film must also be understood as an active mediator of cultural meaning. The recent article *Ethnographic Film as World-Making: Connecting Visual and Multimodal Anthropology* (Verstappen & Davies, 2024) sharpens this understanding by arguing that ethnographic film is not merely

representational but epistemological. Film acts as a knowledge-making practice that bridges visual anthropology, multimodal methodologies, and Science and Technology Studies (STS). Rather than reflecting culture as an external object, film participates in producing and stabilizing particular cultural realities (Verstappen & Davies, 2024).

Verstappen and Davies (2024) conceptualize filmmaking as world-making: an ontological practice in which research methods do not simply describe reality but enact it. This perspective shifts the question from “Does the film accurately represent culture?” to “What kind of world does the film bring into being?” Thus, *mise-en-scène*, cinematography, montage, and sound are not only aesthetic components but methodological interventions that mediate and shape cultural meaning.

This argument is further strengthened by Bee (2024), who examines collaborative and participatory filmmaking in anthropological and activist contexts. Bee (2024) situates film as a methodological and situated knowledge practice, emphasizing that filmmaking is embedded in specific social, political, and historical relations. Drawing from Haraway’s concept of situated knowledge, Bee (2024) argues that film does not stand outside power structures; instead, it participates in negotiating authorship, authority, and representation. In collaborative contexts, knowledge is co-produced rather than extracted, and film becomes a relational site of epistemic exchange (Bee, 2024).

This ontological and situated dimension resonates with Sergei Eisenstein’s Formalist Aesthetics, which outlines four key cinematic components:

1) *Mise-en-scène*

Eisenstein’s notion of *mise-en-cadre* emphasizes the compositional arrangement of images within and across shots. Meaning emerges relationally through spatial organization. When viewed through the lens of world-making (Verstappen & Davies, 2024), *mise-en-scène* does more than enhance emotion—it enacts a structured cultural world. The arrangement of ritual space, sacred objects, lighting contrasts, and embodied gestures stabilizes one interpretation of cultural reality over others. From Bee’s (2024) perspective, such arrangements are also situated decisions shaped by collaborative dynamics and positionality.

In addition to Susanthi (2021; 2022), Maulida Usman and Harini (2021) emphasize that *mise-en-scène* functions as a narrative and social structuring device. In their analysis of *Tilik* (2018), they argue that visual elements such as setting, costume, and actor movement construct character, conflict, and social critique through meaningful visual arrangement. This perspective strengthens the reading of *Kawyagita Mandala*, where ritual settings, symbolic costumes (black and white kebaya), and ceremonial properties operate not merely as background elements but as structured visual signs that articulate grief, transcendence, and Balinese cosmology (Maulida Usman & Harini, 2021).

## 2) Cinematography

Eisenstein likened a shot to a hieroglyph each image contains conceptual density beyond literal depiction. Cinematography therefore functions as a visual unit of meaning. In the framework of multimodal analysis (Nuraini, 2023), cinematography interacts with sound, gesture, and language to generate layered signification. As Verstappen and Davies (2024) argue, filmmaking disciplines ways of seeing, similar to how scientific practice trains observation. The camera does not passively record; it mediates how cultural phenomena are perceived and understood. In participatory filmmaking, this mediation may involve shared visual authority (Bee, 2024).

## 3) Montage

For Eisenstein, montage is dialectical: the collision of shots generates intellectual and emotional synthesis. Montage constructs cinematic syntax rather than relying on verbal explanation. From a world-making perspective, montage enacts relationships between images—ritual and memory, body and spirit, sacred and mundane—thereby constructing a specific ontology (Verstappen & Davies, 2024). At the same time, montage in collaborative film contexts may reflect negotiated meaning-making processes, revealing its methodological and political dimensions (Bee, 2024).

## 4) Voice (Sound)

Sound creates the experiential bridge between image and perception. Beyond dialogue, it includes ambient sound, music, and silence. Contemporary film theory (Chion, 1994) describes sound as producing added value. In the context of

ethnographic film as world-making, sound does not merely support the image; it expands the sensory and affective world of the film (Verstappen & Davies, 2024). Music, rhythm, and ambient sound mediate cultural atmosphere and spiritual presence, making meaning experiential rather than purely visual.

By integrating Susanthi (2021; 2022), Eisenstein's formalism, Verstappen & Davies' (2024) concept of world-making, and Bee's (2024) framework of collaborative and situated knowledge practices, film can be positioned as: an aesthetic structure, a dialectical cinematic system, an ontological world-making practice, and a collaborative negotiation of meaning. Within this framework, *Kawyagita Mandala* can be read not merely as an object of analysis, but as part of an ongoing cultural practice and negotiation of meaning. The film does not simply document gong luang or ritual performance; it participates in shaping how that cultural reality is understood, circulated, and re-situated within contemporary audiovisual space. In this sense, the film operates simultaneously as representation, intervention, and cultural enactment bridging aesthetic form, epistemological production, and lived cultural practice.

### 3. Methodology

This study uses a qualitative research method by describing and analyzing the creative process of the musical film entitled *Kawyagita Mandala*, examined from the perspective of its extra-musical elements. The use of qualitative descriptive methods, such as interviews, observations, and literature studies, is clearly explained. Still, more elaboration on data analysis procedures (for example coding, thematic analysis) would increase academic rigor and replicability.

Sources of information were obtained through several data collection techniques. *First*, library research was conducted by reviewing literature related to musical films, film aesthetics, gong luang traditions, ethnographic cinema, and theoretical discussions on extra-musical elements. *Second*, in-depth interviews were conducted with the director and production team, including Balinese karawitan expert I Wayan Rai S., to explore conceptual intentions, aesthetic considerations, and philosophical foundations behind the incorporation of extra-musical elements. *Third*, direct observation was carried out at the *gong luang* art

studio in Apuan Singapadu Village and at Lango Krtih Studio, where the film production process was observed to understand the interaction between ritual practice, musical performance, and cinematic construction.

The data analysis technique in this study follows a qualitative interpretative approach. Interview transcripts and field notes were first organized and transcribed systematically. The data were then subjected to a coding process to identify recurring concepts related to extra-musical dimensions. Through thematic analysis, the coded data were categorized into four principal thematic elements that structure the film's conceptual framework: *tattwa* (philosophical values), *susila* (ethical conduct), *lango* (aesthetic sensibility), and *gegebug* (technical-musical execution). These themes were derived both inductively from field data and deductively from relevant literature on Balinese aesthetics and karawitan philosophy.

Triangulation was applied by comparing interview data, observational findings, and textual analysis of the film to ensure consistency and analytical depth. This analytical process allows the study not only to describe the creative process but also to interpret how extra-musical elements function as aesthetic, cultural, and epistemological structures within *Kawiyagita Mandala*.

#### **4. Discussion**

Balinese karawitan expert I Wayan Rai S. said that the gamelan *gong luang* consists of three words: gamelan, *gong*, and *luang*. The term gamelan refers to traditional Indonesian music that uses the *pelog* or *selendro* scale. The scale includes the 5-note *pelog* and the 7-note *pelog*. Then, *gong* is the term for a large, round instrument using a *pencon*, usually at the end of each song. Besides the *pencon*, there is also a flat one called *gong beri* (flat gong). While *luang* means empty, hollow, and supernatural. So, when combined, gamelan going *luang* is a type of Balinese gamelan that uses the 7-note *pelog* scale and its function in the context of *yadnya* ceremonies, which are generally in the context of Dewa Yadnya ceremonies at temples and also *pitra yadnya* when there is a large *plebon* or *ngaben* (Interview, May 7, 2023).

There are two very important elements in the gong luang: musical elements and extra-musical elements. Musical elements are elements directly related to

music, namely tone, rhythm, harmony, technique, dynamics, and other elements included in music. Extra-musical elements are elements outside the musical or non-musical, but have a very strong influence in practical music. These elements influence the soul of the composer, the soul of those who play for the offering, and these elements are part of the culture (Interview, May 7, 2023). Extra-musical elements are used by many composers to create Balinese dance accompaniment, with the aim of exploring the mythology of Balinese gamelan. In the Prakempa palm leaf manuscript, which reveals four main aspects: *tattwa* (philosophy or logic), *susila* (ethics), *lango* (aesthetics), and *gegebuk* (technique).

#### 4.1 *Tattwa* (Philosophy or Logic)

*Tattwa* is the philosophy, teachings, and knowledge of the *gong luang* gamelan which became the guideline in the creation of this music film. *Tattwa* has another dimension, namely in the form of philosophical thoughts whose truth must ultimately be believed. Therefore, in Hindu terminology, the word *tattwa* is more accurately defined as the basis of Hindu religious beliefs. In creating the *gong luang* music film, it refers to the *tattwa* (philosophy) that the *gong luang* gamelan is a sacred gamelan that is only played for ceremonies for both the Gods and *Pitra Yanya*, depending on the village's order or known as the *Desa Kala Patra*. *Gong luang* in the context of the *Pitra Yadya* ceremony functions to guide the spirit so that it can return to being united with the realm of the Gods (the empty realm which means the *niskala* realm, namely the realm of *sunya*). In the creation of this music film, it was greatly influenced by the extra-musical elements of the *gong luang* in the Sekaa Gong Luang Banjar Apuan Singapadu Gianyar Bali, which include the *Tri Wisesa* consisting of *Satyam*, *Siwan*, and *Sundaram*. *Satyam* is truth, *Siwan* is purity, and *Sundaram* is beauty. The film's visual creation is linked to the truth of the *Pitra Yadya* ceremony, in accordance with the music of the *gong luang* being performed. Another truth is that the *gong luang* gamelan is not played in its palace, but must be played outside the *gong luang stana*. Likewise, the number of musicians must not exceed 15, and if the *gong luang* is performed, it must be accompanied by its own set of musicians. The *Siwam*, or sanctity of the *gong luang*, begins with a ceremony before the gamelan is played. The musicians play

the *gong luang* as an offering closely associated with the concept of holiness (Interview, May 28, 2023).

In the creation of this film, the application of *tattwa* can be shown in several elements of the film's mise en scène, namely the setting or background, lighting, costumes and make-up, and acting or movement of the actors. The film's setting uses footage of the cremation procession in Sanur Village, Bali in the 2000s. Other visuals are the construction of the event of loss (death) between humans and *atma* (spirits) with the current Balinese setting. The elements of lighting, costumes and movement of the actors in the film, especially in the visual procession of the cremation procession, are without engineering, the lighting uses available light (sunlight), costumes and movements of the actors are in accordance with the situation and conditions that occur in the field.

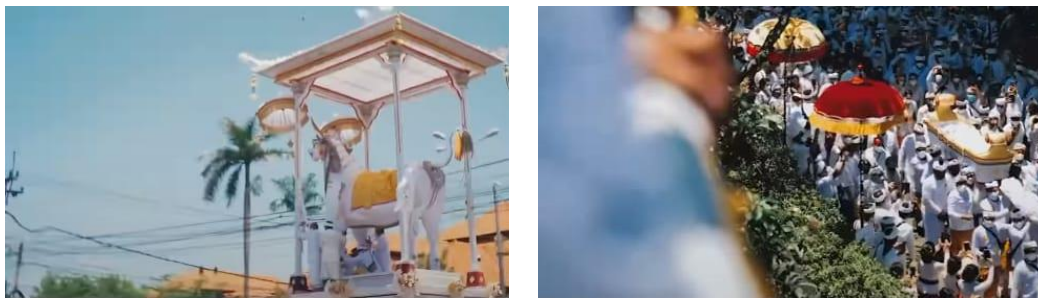


Figure 1. Visual footage of the cremation procession in the film  
(Photo: Susanthi, 2023)

Meanwhile, the visuals of the characters leaving and those left behind still adhere to the truth and *tattwa* of the funeral ceremonial elements commonly used by Balinese society. Costume elements include the female character of the bereaved wearing a black *kebaya* during mourning and a white *kebaya* when releasing the spirit to unite with the Creator or during the cremation ceremony. Props commonly found in funeral ceremonies are featured in the film, including photo frames, tuberose, *canang sari*, *pasepan*, and *kwangen*.

Similar to the cinematic strategy described in *The Intersection of Time*, where artistic expression becomes a response to socio-historical turbulence, *Kawyagita Mandala* positions aesthetic form as a vehicle of philosophical reflection. The earlier study highlights how artistic consciousness can function as cultural resistance and spiritual awareness within historical crisis (Subiyanto et al., 2024).



Figure 2. Ceremonial equipment during the cremation procession  
(Source: Google, 2023)

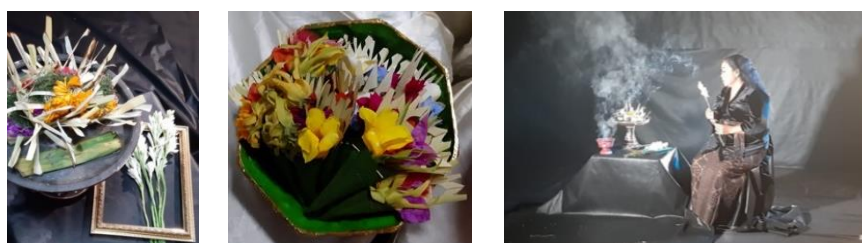


Figure 3. The creation of properties used in films that refer to *tattwa* (truth)  
(Photo: Susanthi, 2023)

#### 4.2 Morals (Ethics)

In Hinduism, ethics is defined as the study of values, the good and bad of human actions, and the principles of what should be done and what should be avoided, thereby fostering a harmonious and peaceful life. Essentially, ethics is a sense of love and compassion, where a person practices and implements ethics because they love themselves and respect others (Paramita, 2020).

The ethics of creating a gong luang music film are based on the procedures/codes of conduct of the meaning and function of the gong luang gamelan. Ethics or morals mean good human behavior in establishing a harmonious reciprocal relationship between fellow humans and the universe and with God (*Tri Hita Karana*). In achieving perfection and holiness, one should always maintain the purity of thoughts, words and actions (*Tri Kaya Parisidha*). In creating a *gong luang* gamelan music film, one highly respects the harmonious order of relationships with God, fellow humans and also the environment. In the order of creation, it begins with the *Mepiuning* ceremony at the Ardha Nareswari Temple to

ask for smoothness and safety in the creation process. The harmony of ethical relationships between humans is shown in the arrangement of the shooting schedule between the production team and with the sources according to auspicious days. Another harmony is in the production process where the film crew wears traditional Balinese clothing, because before production, a prayer ceremony is also held with the musicians. In terms of the environment, the process of creating this film must not overstep the gamelan because this gamelan is holy and sacred. These ethical codes were adhered to during the process of creating the gong luang music film (Interview, June 13, 2023).

In this context, the ethical dimension of creation does not end in ritual preparation or on-set conduct. It also extends into the editing room. As Utami and Arifianto (2025, pp. 130–131) argue, “post-production ... is not just a technical process, but also an ethical and emotional process.” This perspective reinforces that in *Kawiyagita Mandala*, decisions in editing, sound mixing, and visual sequencing are not merely aesthetic refinements, but ethical considerations in presenting sacred sound and ritual imagery to contemporary audiences.



Figure 4. Etiquette in the film production process, begins with prayers at the temple and wearing traditional Balinese clothing during the production of the gong luang recording (Source: Susanthi, 2023)

### 4.3 *Lango* (Aesthetics)

The process of creating a musical film with the object of the *gong luang* pays close attention to aesthetic elements, both musical and visual. Sound aesthetics

prioritizes the balance of sound in the audio recording, while visual aesthetics refers to the balance of color, contrast, and image composition. This element of *lango* is present when the *Tri Wisesa* (*Satyam/truth*) and *Siwam* (purity) are fulfilled, thus containing *Sundarama* (beauty) in both form and content. The beauty of form is the beauty of the musical elements themselves, while the beauty of content is the beauty of the values contained within them (Interview, May 7, 2023).

Aesthetics is a reflection of the phenomenon of meaning that is considered an artistic phenomenon that arises from a work of art (Aumont, Bergala, Marie, & Vernet, 1992). Film aesthetics as a study of film produces many meanings from the beginning of the scene to the end with the aim of conveying a message construction to the audience. The collection of meanings that appear both explicitly and implicitly is assumed to be an artistic message. Based on film aesthetics can be grouped into two theories: formalist film theory and realist theory. Formalist theory views film from the form of the film's composition that is built. Realist theory views film from an unreachable angle or an undistorted reality.

The aesthetic dimension (*lango*) in *Kawyagita Mandala* extends beyond visual balance and color composition. As Dewi (2020) explains, movement in film functions as a cultural code that constructs identity through kinesthetic signs. The choreography of the *atma*, the restrained bodily expression of the grieving mother, and the collective rhythm of the *gong luang* ensemble are not merely performative gestures; they constitute a semiotic articulation of Balinese spiritual ethos. Thus, movement becomes a structuring aesthetic force that bridges visual beauty and cultural meaning (Dewi, 2020).

Sergei Eisenstein's formalist aesthetics mentions 1) *Mise-en-scene*; 2) *Cinematography*; 3) *Montage*; 4) *Sound*. The *mise-en-scene* of the film *Kawyagita Mandala* is classified into 2 shooting locations, namely indoor and outdoor.

#### **4.3.1 *Mise-en-scene***

The application of *mise-en-scene* in indoor production is done in the studio to create scenes of characters who are left behind and characters who die. The first *mise-en-scene* is the film setting. The setting of this film takes place in the 2000s which takes place on the island of Bali. Both make-up and costumes adapt to the characters in the film. There are 2 characters in this film, namely a mother as a

whole person who experiences deep grief over the loss of her daughter, and a teenage girl as a spirit or *atma* who died at a young age. The mother wears a traditional Balinese costume with a black *kebaya* as a meaning of deep grief in the first act. In the final act about sincerity, the mother wears a traditional Balinese costume with a white *kebaya*. The teenage character who plays the *atma*/spirit wears 2 costumes: the first is a tight skin-colored costume holding a light bulb, as a symbol of pure *atma*, and *atma* that has united with the Creator. Meanwhile, when the *atma* is in the process of ceremony, wearing a costume wrapped in a long white cloth with a headdress and carrying a ball emitting a lot of light as a symbol of the globe. The third mise-en-scene is lighting. In indoor production, the lighting is used in three-point lighting. The director added smoke elements to create a magical and artistic impression. The director considers lighting to be more than just illumination, inviting the audience to see the action in the visuals. The fourth element is blocking/figure behavior. The character's expressions and movements are also important elements in this film. There are two movements and expressions of the characters, namely the mother who just sits and sings, playing an expression of sadness due to loss, and an expression of sincerity after the funeral ceremony. Meanwhile, the movement and expression of the *atma* or dancing spirit plays two expressions, namely birth with slow motion, while when the *atma* merges with the Creator, the *atma* dancer moves quickly and occasionally the dance is made in slow motion.

The application of mise-en-scene in outdoor production is a visual without any directorial manipulation, because it takes the funeral/*ngaben* ceremony procession in Bali. The setting in this film production is located in Sanur Bali Indonesia in the 2000s. The make-up and costumes in this production do not contain any make-up and costume manipulation. Everything is taken naturally, according to what is found on the shooting location. Most of the costumes that appear in this film use traditional Balinese clothing complete with elements of the *ngaben* ceremony such as *bade*, *banten*, and other ceremonial equipment. The third mise-en-scene element is the lighting in the *ngaben* visual using available light (sunlight) during outdoor production. The elements of expression and movement of the characters are also natural without any design from the director.

### 4.3.2 Cinematography

The cinematography of the music film introduction to the spirit of *gong luang* captures the mystique and beauty of the landscape of Bali Island with its *Ngaben* culture and gamelan *gong luang* music in one enchanting frame. Through cinematography, the film is able to take the audience on a journey of philosophical meaning from the *Ngaben* ceremony procession in Bali accompanied by *gong luang* music. This film uses several shot choices based on the visual object. In the landscape shot, the vast and majestic view of the mountains and ocean, more use wide shots with a bird's eye angle. Some objects such as the trickling water are taken in extreme big close up. In the object of playing the *gong luang* there are 2 image compositions, namely a wide angle that shows all the gamelan *gong luang* players, as well as a medium close up and close up shot for the object of the gamelan *gong luang* when it is played. In the production of the scene in the studio, several shots are used from long shots, medium close ups and close ups and extreme extreme big close ups.

### 4.3.3 Montage

In the creation of this film, several types of montage editing techniques are used, namely: Metric Montage, which is a technique of shortening shots briefly when the audience must absorb information in each shot. *Second*, Rhythmic Montage refers to the continuity that arises from visual patterns in shots. *Third*, Tonal Montage aims to build emotional characters, tone or atmosphere (mood) is used as a guide to interpret tonal montage. Next is Overtonal Montage, which is a combination of Metric Montage, Rhythmic Montage, and Tonal Montage. Interactions that combine speed, ideas, and emotions to induce the desired effect of the audience. *Lastly*, there is intellectual montage, while the previous type of montage focuses on encouraging emotional responses, intellectual montage seeks to express abstract ideas by creating relationships between opposing visual intellectual concepts.

Unlike conventional editing techniques, the power of montage lies in its involvement in the creative process of the audience's emotions and thoughts. The viewer is compelled to follow the author's independent creative path in creating the images. Therefore, with montage, the audience is expected to develop not only

emotional aspects but also intellectual ones, allowing them to visualize and draw conclusions from the film they're watching.

#### **4.3.4 Voice**

Sound is not merely supportive but can operate as a narrative and affective device through its alignment or intentional misalignment with the image. Utami and Arifianto argue that asynchronous audio-visual pairings can “challenge audience expectations” and provoke “complex ethical and moral reflections” (Utami & Arifianto, 2025). In *Kawiyagita Mandala*, the sacred sound of *gong luang* and the ambience of ritual space similarly shape viewers’ emotional reception, enabling the film to communicate loss, transition, and transcendence not only through representation but also through sensorial construction. This is especially true as it's a musical film, capturing the gamelan *gong luang* being played. Sound harmony is crucial. The sound in this film, in addition to the gamelan *gong luang*, also includes songs, narration, background sounds, and sound effects. Sound plays a crucial role in shaping the audience's emotions while watching the film. Therefore, sound plays a crucial role in the film.

#### **4.4 Gegebuk (Technique)**

The technique for playing the *luang gong* gamelan is based on the reconstruction of musicians from the Karawitan Study Program at the Indonesian Institute of Arts (ISI Denpasar, now ISI Bali) at the Apuan Singapadu Studio in Bali. The film's production technique involves three stages: pre-production, production, and post-production. The first stage is pre-production. Several products result from this stage, including the film script, casting, location survey results, wardrobe survey results, production team, and production equipment preparation.

Pre-production is the stage of transforming a script into an audiovisual form, in this case, a film. This second stage is the execution of the pre-production phase. The entire production team goes into the field to shoot. The film's initial shooting locations were Angantaka, Studio, and Sanggar Lango Krtih. The production process at each location is presented below. Post-production is the editing stage of the footage. Shot by shot, the footage is assembled into a complete film according to the script.

Beyond understanding film as an aesthetic structure, recent scholarship in visual anthropology calls for a more radical rethinking of ethnographic cinema. In *Ethnographic Film as World-Making: Connecting Visual and Multimodal Anthropology*, Verstappen and Davies (2024) argue that ethnographic film is not merely representational but ontological: it does not simply depict cultural reality but actively enacts particular versions of it. Drawing on Science and Technology Studies (STS), they conceptualize filmmaking as world-making, a methodological assemblage through which audiovisual practices stabilize certain realities while rendering others peripheral or invisible. Film, in this sense, becomes an apparatus of mediation that produces cultural intelligibility.

While Verstappen and Davies (2024) emphasize film as world-making, Gao, Adnan, and Wang (2025) remind us that enacted worlds are not universally received. Cultural discount may occur when ontological frameworks differ between creators and audiences. Therefore, *Kawiyagita Mandala* must be understood not only as an enactment of Balinese ritual reality, but also as a culturally situated audiovisual text whose reception depends on shared symbolic systems.

This reconceptualization productively shifts analytical focus away from authenticity (“Is the ritual accurately represented?”) toward performativity (“What reality is enacted through cinematic mediation?”). However, the world-making paradigm also requires critical interrogation. If film enacts worlds, then whose world is being enacted? Who authorizes its form? Who benefits from its circulation? The performative power of film is inseparable from the asymmetries of authorship, institutional framing, access to technology, and cultural capital. The notion of world-making risks romanticizing creative agency if it does not sufficiently account for these power differentials.

Bee’s (2024) discussion in *Ethnographic Film, Fourth Cinema and Situated Critique* sharpens this tension. By situating collaborative and participatory filmmaking within activist and anthropological contexts, Bee argues that film must be understood as a situated knowledge practice. Drawing from Donna Haraway’s theory of situated knowledge, Bee insists that filmmaking cannot claim epistemological neutrality; it is always embedded in historically specific power relations. Fourth Cinema, as articulated by Barry Barclay, foregrounds audiovisual

sovereignty and challenges extractive ethnographic traditions by redistributing narrative authority. In this framework, collaboration is not merely methodological but political, it reconfigures who speaks, who frames, and who circulates cultural meaning.

Placed in dialogue, Verstappen & Davies (2024) and Bee (2024) reveal a productive tension. World-making emphasizes ontological productivity; situated critique foregrounds epistemic accountability. Together, they compel a reflexive reading of ethnographic film as both creative enactment and contested negotiation. Film is not simply a medium of knowledge production; it is a field of power where aesthetic decisions, ritual authority, and cultural representation intersect.

Applied to *Kawiyagita Mandala*, this critical integration complicates any reading of the film as neutral documentation of gong luang ritual. On one level, the film clearly enacts a ritual ontology: through mise-en-scène, cinematography, montage, and sound, it constructs a sensorial experience of sacred transition from grief to transcendence. The juxtaposition of documentary ngaben footage with studio-constructed metaphysical imagery reorganizes ritual temporality and rearticulates the relationship between sekala (visible realm) and niskala (invisible realm). In this sense, the film performs world-making by translating Balinese cosmology into cinematic structure.

Yet this enactment is not innocent. The ritual world that emerges onscreen is shaped by directorial choices, editing logic, institutional affiliations, and aesthetic framing. The sacred sound of gong luang is recorded, amplified, mixed, and redistributed within contemporary audiovisual circuits. The cremation procession—traditionally bound to local communal space—is recontextualized into cinematic temporality and potentially global spectatorship. Thus, the film participates in both preservation and transformation, both safeguarding and re-mediating sacred knowledge.

From Bee's perspective, the film's collaborative dimensions, interviews with ritual authorities, adherence to ceremonial codes, pre-production prayers, and negotiated access, do not eliminate asymmetry but reposition it. The film becomes a site of negotiation between ritual guardianship and cinematic authorship. Authority is neither fully centralized nor fully dispersed; it is relational and

contingent. Therefore, *Kawiyagita Mandala* should not be understood simply as an aesthetic object or as ethnographic illustration. It operates within a double bind: (1) It enacts ritual ontology (world-making) and (2) It navigates authorship, institutional power, and cultural mediation (situated critique).

In this double position, the film is simultaneously representation and intervention, documentation and transformation. It reconfigures ritual presence within mediated space while remaining embedded in lived cultural practice. The philosophical dimensions of *tattwa*, the ethical obligations of *susila*, the aesthetic fulfillment of *lango*, and the technical reconstruction of *gegebug* are not merely thematic components; they are structuring forces that shape how ritual meaning is produced and circulated.

Such a critical framing resists reducing ethnographic musical cinema to cultural illustration or heritage display. Instead, it demands that *Kawiyagita Mandala* be examined as a multimodal, collaborative, and politically situated practice that participates in the ongoing re-articulation of Balinese ritual worlds within contemporary audiovisual modernity. The film does not merely show culture, it reorganizes how culture can be sensed, interpreted, and remembered.

From a technological standpoint, the reconstruction of gong luang performance through studio production and post-production editing reflects the broader shift in filmmaking paradigms described by Chanpum (2023). Even without fully immersive virtual production systems, the integration of controlled lighting, compositing, and iterative editing demonstrates how contemporary audiovisual workflows increasingly blur the separation between physical ritual space and mediated cinematic space (Chanpum, 2023). The film's technical process therefore contributes not only to aesthetic refinement but also to the mediated re-articulation of sacred performance within digital modernity.

The integration of digital workflows further reinforces the idea that film operates within mediated infrastructures. As Susanthi et al. (2023) highlight, audiovisual production in virtual environments reshapes spatial coordination and collaborative dynamics. In *Kawiyagita Mandala*, technological mediation—through camera systems, editing software, and sound engineering—participates in reorganizing ritual temporality. The sacred presence of gong luang is not simply

recorded but technologically re-situated within contemporary audiovisual circulation (Susanthi et al., 2023).

## 5. Conclusion

*Kawiyagita Mandala* is not merely a musical ethnographic film about gong luang, but a multimodal enactment of Balinese ritual ontology. By integrating musical and extra-musical elements, those are *tattwa* (philosophy), *susila* (ethics), *lango* (aesthetics), and *gegebug* (technique), the film translates the sacred cosmology of *pitra yadnya* into cinematic form through mise-en-scène, cinematography, montage, and sound. Ritual footage, symbolic studio imagery, and the sonic presence of gong luang do not simply document ceremony; they reorganize it into an experiential audiovisual structure.

Drawing on Verstappen & Davies (2024), the film can be understood as world-making: it enacts rather than merely represents cultural reality. Yet, as Bee (2024) reminds us, filmmaking is also a situated knowledge practice, embedded in relations of authorship, ritual authority, and institutional mediation. Thus, the ritual world presented onscreen is not neutral but negotiated.

In this double position, *Kawiyagita Mandala* functions simultaneously as representation and intervention. It preserves and transforms sacred knowledge, re-situating gong luang within contemporary audiovisual space. Rather than serving as cultural illustration, the film becomes a collaborative and politically situated practice that actively participates in the ongoing re-articulation of Balinese ritual meaning.

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