

STRENGTHENING FOLKLORE AS A SOURCE OF IDEAS FOR SHORT MOVIE DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

Folklore as part of cultural heritage contains moral, social, and local wisdom values that have significant potential to be developed within the creative industry, particularly in short film production. However, the utilization of folklore as a source of creative ideas remains limited, thus requiring reinforcement in the adaptation process to maintain its relevance in contemporary contexts. This study aims to analyse the potential of folklore as a source of ideas and to formulate strategies for its development into contextual and engaging short films for modern audiences. The research employs a qualitative approach through literature review and narrative analysis of story structures and embedded cultural values. The study is grounded in the folklore theory of James Danandjaja (1984), which emphasizes the function of folklore as a medium for education and cultural value transmission, as well as the adaptation theory of Linda Hutcheon (2006), which views adaptation as a creative process of reinterpretation across different media. The findings indicate that folklore possesses strong dramatic structures and local values that can be developed through adjustments in plot, characterization, and visual context to suit the short film medium. Therefore, strengthening folklore as a source of ideas for short film development not only supports creative innovation in audio-visual production but also contributes to cultural preservation and the revitalization of local wisdom values.

Keywords - *folklore, adaptation, short film, local wisdom, creative development*

Introduction

The transmission of oral traditions across generations occurs through the transfer of knowledge and information via word of mouth, making it highly likely that multiple versions or variations of a story will emerge (Elvandari, 2020:15). The development of oral traditions also has its limitations, as they sometimes lack an original source and are not even recorded in written or digital form. In Bali in particular, oral traditions play a vital role in the transmission of the local community's culture and customs. Oral traditions can be found in the form of folk tales, songs, and dances. One example of an oral tradition in Bali is 'Satua Bali', which comprises Balinese folk tales passed down from one generation to the next (Suardana, 2014). This oral tradition is closely linked to culture, customs, and the character development of the younger generation. This will undoubtedly contribute to human resource development in Bali, thereby supporting the realisation of the 'Ajeg Bali' concept, which has long been championed by the Provincial Government of Bali.

Written data from the Bali Provincial Culture Office (2022) in its summary of the recording

and designation of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) indicates that the number of oral traditions in Bali is currently experiencing a crisis of decline, to the extent that it is difficult to quantify (Disbud, 2022). The crisis of identity surrounding oral traditions in Bali is reflected in their prevalence within society and in terms of transmission. Currently, it is very rare for the younger generation, in the millennial era, to be familiar with the characters in Balinese *satua*, which are also part of the oral tradition. Characters from Balinese *satua* such as Men Sugih, Men Tiwas, Bawang, Kesuna, Pan Balang Tamak, etc., are very rarely mentioned or retold in the present day. The current generation tends to be more familiar with characters from fictional stories created by Walt Disney (USA), manga (Japan) or characters originating from outside Indonesia, and certainly outside Bali. This is heavily influenced by the methods of transmitting local cultural content, which fail to reach today's younger generation; for instance, television—the most readily available medium within a household—also has limitations in fulfilling this aspect.

Yoedtadi (2018, 56–62) explains that, in accordance with Article 46 of the Broadcasting Code of Conduct and Article 68 of the Broadcasting Programme Standards, the Indonesian Broadcasting Commission (KPI) requires all television broadcasters to produce and broadcast programmes with local content amounting to 10 per cent of total broadcasting hours. The aim of this regulation is to provide space for diversity of content and to promote local potential. It is hoped that this regulation will ensure that television broadcast content is not dominated by non-local content, particularly in all regions that have local TV stations and broadcast national TV stations. Six years after the regulation was issued, not all television broadcasters have been able to produce and broadcast programmes with local content in accordance with the regulation. The obstacles frequently encountered include the readiness of local human resources and the production costs of local content programmes, which are not offset by commercial returns (Yoedtadi, 2018)..

The above discussion indicates that issues surrounding public content, such as television programmes, have an impact on identity crises, particularly in relation to the public's awareness of the existence of oral traditions as cultural assets. The system for passing on oral traditions remains a priority that must be promoted through the implementation of relevant measures, so that the strengthening of oral traditions within the fabric of community life can be maintained in a sound and sustainable manner. The transmission of traditions within society is an effort that can be undertaken to disseminate oral traditions within a broader scope, targeting a wider audience (Elvandari, 2017:9). Approaches that can be adopted in the effort to transmit traditions include enculturation and socialisation (Elvandari, 2017:12). The process of enculturation in the transmission of traditions involves learning and adapting an individual's thoughts and attitudes to the prevailing system of norms, whilst also adapting to the rules of life within a cultural environment. Elvandari (2017: 14) also explains that the approach to transmitting traditions through socialisation is a process whereby an individual integrates into society, adapting and aligning themselves with others within that community.

The approach to the transmission of traditions, particularly the transmission of oral traditions in Bali, can certainly employ the approaches of enculturation and socialisation. In the context of the existence of oral traditions in Bali, socialisation is the approach most closely linked to the learning process, which can be carried out formally or informally in relation to the social system, involving the general public and relevant parties. The lack of socialisation of Balinese oral traditions amongst the public has led to an identity crisis regarding the recognition and understanding of oral traditions that still exist today.

In line with efforts to address the identity crisis arising in the context of the transmission of traditions—particularly those related to oral traditions—the Puri Kauhan Ubud Foundation in Bali launched the “Purwa Carita Campuhan” Short Film Festival in 2022. The Purwa Carita Campuhan Short Film Festival serves as a medium for the visualisation of Balinese oral traditions, transforming various forms of these traditions into fictional films lasting 15–20 minutes (Beno, 2023). The Puri Kauhan Ubud Foundation initiated the Purwa Carita Campuhan Short Film Festival by launching a proposal writing competition that highlights Balinese oral traditions under the overarching theme of ‘Honouring Water’. One example of the development of folk oral traditions into film, based on Balinese folklore, is the film “Boni”. The film “Boni” is an adaptation of the folk tale “Pan Balang Tamak”, which originates from the village of Nongan in Karangasem regency.

The effort to preserve Balinese oral traditions through the folk tale “Pan Balang Tamak” in the film “Boni” represents the emergence of a new medium, in the form of a fictional film, which presents a fresh challenge for the film industry in Bali. The greatest challenge lies in the ability to trace oral traditions deemed at risk of extinction; the ability to identify oral traditions considered to possess cultural value that is urgent to disseminate to the public; the ability to visualise cultural values with moral messages equivalent to the original source, and the ability to interpret the ideology of the Purwa Carita Campuhan Short Film Festival’s requirements as suitability in story development. Research related to film adaptations and oral traditions, particularly in Bali, is a field that has not yet been explored using oral traditions and film adapters from the film festival process as research subjects. Adaptation in the case study of the Purwa Carita Campuhan Film Festival can specifically be examined through the transformation of Balinese oral culture into fictional film in terms of the development of form, structure, and aesthetic essence that envelops the original form and the film produced through the adaptation process.

Methodology

This dissertation research employs a qualitative research design, as this approach is used to understand social phenomena from the participants’ perspective by collecting data, images and texts, which are then analysed inductively to uncover deeper meanings (Creswell, 2014: 12). The qualitative approach is considered the most appropriate for this dissertation research because: 1) the primary focus is on artistic analysis relating to the narrative structure of folklore and short films and the components of *mise-en-scène*; the aesthetics and ideology of the adaptation of folklore into film, which is a media phenomenon of great importance to study; 2) this research constitutes an in-depth study of texts, rather than one based on figures or statistics; and 3) the researcher serves as the primary instrument in interpreting narrative transformations, visual aesthetic meanings and ideology (Moleong, 2017: 11).

The research approach employed in this dissertation utilises two types of methodology, namely: (1) Critical Discourse Analysis (Wodak et al., 2009), which is applied to analyse and describe the textual structure of the original source text (Balinese folklore and the film script, which is the screen adaptation of the original Pan Balang Tamak folklore, to understand the process of transformation through screen adaptation, based on screen adaptation theory (Hutcheon, 2006); the narrative structure of Freytag’s Pyramid (Campbell, 2021), and the theory of film’s technical aspects (Monaco, 2000); (2) Visual Discourse Analysis (Rose, 2016), applied to analyse the meaning of visual representations through framing and symbolic value in the film ‘Boni’, with reference to visual language theory (Gibbs et al, 2005) and visual aesthetics (Danesi, 2010), whilst also elucidating the ideology behind the adaptation of the folk tale ‘Pan

Balang Tamak' in the film 'Boni', through the process of screen adaptation with reference to Ideology theory (Hall, 1997) and Semiotics (Barthes, 2012).

The Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Visual Discourse Analysis (VDA) approaches are appropriate for this study as they provide the theoretical and methodological framework for interpreting texts and visuals as cultural practices and ideologies, which are the focus of this study.

Finding and Discussion

Pan Balang Tamak, which served as the inspiration for the plot of the film Boni, is a Balinese folk tale that has evolved as part of the daily life of the community in Nongan Village, Rendang Sub-district, Karangasem Regency. The film Boni is a short film in the fiction genre, specifically the drama sub-genre, which focuses on the issues faced by a small family. The short film category is characterised by a running time of 18 minutes, featuring a theme related to the scarcity of the Boni fruit, a local fruit in Bali. The Boni fruit is a type of fruit that has become very scarce and is seasonal in Bali, particularly in Nongan Village, which is actually a fruit-growing centre in Bali. The scarcity of the Buni fruit is a deeply concerning issue because it is one of the fruits that must be used in the headdress (gelungan) of the Rejang Pala dancers, a dance typically performed during the Ngusaba Pala Ceremony in Nongan Village, Rendang Sub-district, Karangasem Regency, Bali.

The scarcity of buni fruit has a profound impact on a family, as depicted in a simple narrative that also highlights concern for fellow family members and the environment, with the hope of providing a solution to the problem of buni fruit scarcity. The target audience is all ages, as the story presented in the film depicts everyday life in a way that is easy to understand. The overall scenes and language used are also suitable for all age groups, though parental guidance is still required for children as there is a scene where Desak Boni steals Boni fruit. The essence of this scene of stealing Boni fruit should also be understood as part of the film's educational message to the audience.

Desak Boni fully understands and realises that stealing is not a good thing to do. Desak Boni decides that the stolen fruit is not suitable to give to her older sister and mother, and instead chooses to scatter the Boni seeds so that they may grow into Buni fruit trees. This shows that Desak Boni is a young child who has a desire to strive to achieve something, but must also think carefully about his efforts so as not to harm others; in this context, this relates to the stall owner who suffered a loss because his Buni fruit was stolen by Desak Boni. An analysis of the narrative structure in the film Boni will be presented through an examination of the film's 17 scenes, using Freytag's Pyramid as a framework, as explained below:

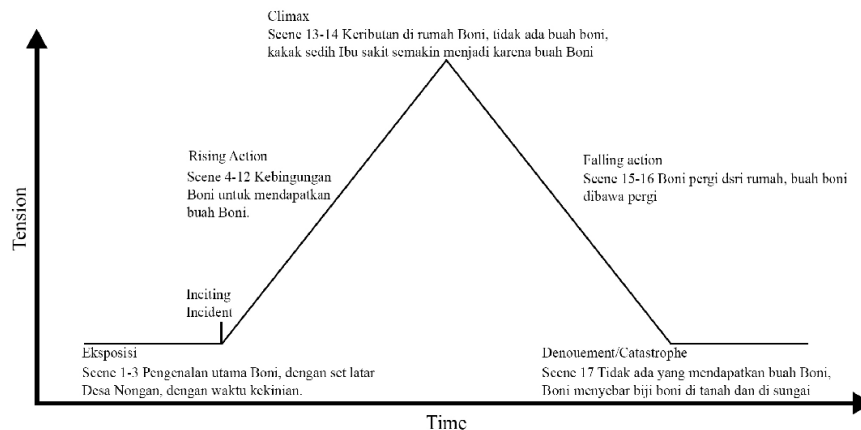


Figure 1. Freytag Pyramid of Boni the Movie
 (Source: Dwiyani, 2026)

The analysis of the narrative structure of the Pan Balang Tamak folktale and the film *Boni* covers developments in several story-forming aspects, namely:

1. Characterisation

The main character in the Pan Balang Tamak folktale is an adult man who still possesses childish traits; with his mischievous nature, he is able to deceive many people for his own gain; whereas in the film *Boni*, he is portrayed as a young child who, in fact, displays maturity. The film *Boni* offers the perspective that a young child like Boni can also make the right decision not to give the stolen *buni* fruit to either his older brother or his mother. Boni does not want any further problems to arise after giving the fruit to one of them. The character of Boni also conveys the struggle required to obtain something; although in the story Boni realises that stealing is not a good thing to do, so he returns the stolen buni fruit to nature, so that it may grow in abundance for the benefit of many people.

2. Conflict

The story of Pan Balang Tamak is a humorous tale that recounts the foolishness of the main character, who, despite benefiting from his actions, ends up angering the villagers; whereas the plot of the film allows the audience to judge the decisions made by Boni, which ultimately fail to resolve the story's conflict.

3. The Ending

Pan Balang Tamak can be said to be a satirical folk tale that serves as a medium for criticising the King, a ruler who always prioritises his own interests without considering the problems faced by his people. The tale of Pan Balang is a humorous folk tale with a tragic ending, as Pan Balang Tamak dies after being poisoned by the King. The film *Boni* offers the perspective that even a young child like Boni can make the right decision not to give the fruit he has stolen to

either his older brother or his mother. Boni does not want any further trouble to arise after he has given the fruit to one of them. The character of Boni also conveys the struggle required to obtain something; although in the story Boni realises that stealing is not a good thing to do, so he returns the stolen fruit to nature, so that it may grow in abundance for the benefit of many people.

The following table presents the adaptation process resulting from a comparison of the narrative structures of the folk tale and the film:

Table 1.1 Comparison of the narrative structure of the folk tale Pan Balang Tamak with the narrative structure of the film Boni

Stages Narrative	Folktale of <i>Pan Balang Tamak</i>	<i>Boni</i> The Movie	The Adaptation Process
<i>Ekspositio n</i>	An introduction to the main character, Pan Balang Tamak, a middle-aged man, set against the backdrop of Niongan Village during the era of the King's reign.	The main character is Boni, a girl of about 10 years old, set in the village of Nongan in the present day.	There are differences in the characters and the time period in which the events took place
<i>Rising Action</i>	Pan Balang's cunning schemes, which always bring him profit	Boni's dilemma over finding the buni fruit that his older sister needs for her dance costume, and also for his mother, who is craving buni fruit.	The context of the situation leading to a different conflict
<i>Climax</i>	The king eventually killed Pan Balang Tamak because he was constantly causing trouble with his schemes, but the king also died after drinking the same poison as Pan Balang Tamak	Boni was at a loss as to whether to give the buni fruit he had managed to steal to his older brother or his mother. The commotion at Boni's house grew even louder because, although everyone had been expecting the buni fruit, it turned out he couldn't give any to anyone, as there was so little of it.	The climax in the original source is marked by the death of Balang Tamak, whilst in the film it is marked by a huge commotion at Boni's house
<i>Falling action</i>	Although Pan Balang Tamak has passed away, he still has the wits to deceive many people through a message to his wife.	Boni left home to follow Uncle Kompyang, taking with him the stolen buni fruit.	The original source is marked by a scheme devised by Bakang Tamak before his death; and in the film, Desak Boni leaves the house carrying her stolen buni fruit
<i>Denouement/Catastrophe</i>	The legacy of Pan Balang Tamak cannot be claimed by anyone else, and for the people of Nongan Village, Balang Tamak is the figurehead of rice field water management in Nongan Village.	Boni decided not to give the buni fruit he had found to either his mother or his older brother. Boni returned all the buni seeds he had stolen to nature,	The ending differs between the original source and the film

The adaptation of the folk tale from the village of Nongan Pan Balang Tamak into the short film *Boni* demonstrates that a process of free adaptation has taken place, as the film *Boni*

draws only on the basic ideas from the original source relating to the Ngusaba Village Ceremony in Nongan. The time setting in the film *Boni* is not explicitly indicated through modern time markers such as dates or times, but is established through the social and cultural activities of the village community. The setting and time in the film Boni are not merely a backdrop for the story; the narrative actively shapes the conflict, enriches the characters, and reinforces the theme of the imbalance of social, cultural and family burdens. Through domestic and public spaces, as well as the time leading up to the sacred ceremony, the film Boni is able to frame the social reality of Balinese society in a critical yet touching manner, particularly through the perspective of a minor character, Desak Boni. The adaptation of the Pan Balang Tamak folktale in the film 'Boni' is evident not only in the development of the narrative structure, but also in the implementation of technical aspects that explore artistic and aesthetic elements in the visual realm, comprising:

a. Props

The props in the film 'Boni' possess high symbolic and functional value, reinforcing the narrative and the cultural atmosphere of Bali, as explained below:

- Boni fruit; the main prop at the centre of the conflict, symbolising emotional needs, cultural burdens, and an existential crisis within the family; a small and ordinary fruit, yet one that becomes highly significant due to its role in traditional ceremonies.



Figure 2. Boni
 (Source, Dwiyani, 2026)

- Rejang Pala dance headdress is the prop that triggers the conflict between Desak Juwet and Uwak Kompyang, as well as the source of Desak Boni's dilemma. The Rejang Pala dance headdress also serves as a symbol of aesthetic beauty and cultural pride for Desak Juwet and the people of Nongan Village, Karangasem.



Figure 3. *Gelungan* of Rejang Pala Dancer

(Source: .Festival *Purwa Carita Campuhan*, 2025)

b. Costumes and Make-up

- Costumes

The use of costumes and make-up in the film *Boni* is rooted in Balinese tradition, whilst also serving to develop the depth of the characters and the emotional realism of the story, as explained below:



Figure 4. Desak Boni's Costume

(Source Festival *Purwa Carita Campuhan*, 2025)

. In Figure 4, Desak Boni is wearing simple clothing made of red T-shirt fabric, which reflects a modest lifestyle befitting Boni's childhood.

- Make-up

The make-up in the film *Boni* tends to be natural and functional, used to reinforce the characters' psychological traits and physical conditions. The focus of the make-up in this film

is not on aesthetics, but rather on emphasising the story's realism and the characters' emotional expressions.



Figure 5. Make Up Looks of Desak Boni and Her Mother

(Source: Festival *Purwa Carita Campuhan*, 2025)

Take, for example, the make-up of Ibu Desak Boni in Figure 5, which features a pale look, with light foundation for sunken eyes and pale lips. This make-up conveys a state of physical weakness, as she is experiencing pregnancy cravings. The make-up also supports the dramatic performance and serves as a symbol of the burdens women face in a patriarchal culture. The costumes and make-up in the film *Boni* do not merely serve as visual accompaniments, but act as narrative tools that convey internal conflict, social pressure and cultural dynamics in a subtle yet powerful manner.

c. Audio

The use of audio in the film *Boni* plays a key role in creating an emotional atmosphere and reinforcing the narrative message. Sounds of nature underscore the cultural and social setting, whilst traditional music is used to signal sacred or emotional moments; furthermore, the silence in certain scenes serves to give the audience space to absorb the characters' inner conflicts.

d. Editing

The editing in *Boni's* film appears simple, with a rhythm that adapts to the emotional shifts and narrative tension, influenced by the rhythm of the story's cuts, transitions, and continuity. The editing technique employed in the film involves smooth, rhythmic cuts to maintain the narrative flow. Transitions between scenes are arranged linearly with sufficient duration to build the audience's emotions, thereby supporting the realistic storytelling style and blending seamlessly with the rhythm of village life depicted in the film.

The narrative structure and technical aspects of the film "*Boni*", an adaptation of the folk tale "*Pan Balang Tamak*", come together in a simple yet deeply meaningful whole. The technical aspects serve not merely as visual and auditory aids, but as an integral part of the film's message. The film's strength lies in its simple techniques, which successfully bring internal and social conflicts to life through the perspective of a young child, without losing the deep emotional and cultural resonance.

Conclusion

The adaptation of the folk tale “Pan Balang Tamak” in the film “Boni” is not merely a process of adapting an oral narrative into the medium of cinema—a transformation of form—but also a means of articulating cultural values through visual and cinematic language. The conclusion also reinforces the position of the film adaptation as a cultural discourse that not only transforms form but also reinterprets the messages and values of local wisdom within the contemporary cinematic medium, as outlined below:

- a. Artistically, the film adaptation demonstrates achievements in the transformation of narrative structure and the implementation of technical aspects, such as characterisation, cinematography, costumes and make-up, props, sound and editing. Each element is designed with cultural context in mind, creating a visual unity that reinforces the story’s context and characters. The choice of editing techniques, transitions and editing rhythm must also be adapted to the dramatic structure of the folk tale, to demonstrate an adaptation that is sensitive to the traditional narrative rhythm. The selection of appropriate techniques must also be balanced with the ability to execute them into a film worthy of winning at a festival. In reality, however, even among the five winning entries, weaknesses in the narrative style used can still be found, making the stories seem overly forced and contrived.
- b. From an aesthetic perspective, film adaptations produce new forms of expression capable of bridging oral traditions with modern visual experiences. The resulting visual aesthetics not only represent the story but also create a distinctive symbolic and emotional atmosphere. This makes folklore more communicative and relevant to contemporary audiences, particularly the younger generation. However, when it comes to technical quality at a festival level, some of the films under review—those declared as winners—must pay more serious attention to technical aspects, so that the results achieved can be optimised and technical glitches that cause discomfort to the audience can be minimised.
- c. At the ideological level, film adaptations not only serve to convey traditional stories, but are also capable of conveying local values such as solidarity, loyalty, responsibility, and the harmonious relationship between humans and nature. In the context of their production and distribution, these films should also serve as a medium for resistance against the dominance of global narratives and the prioritisation of foreign cultures, whilst simultaneously acting as a means of affirming the living and dynamic cultural identity of Bali.

Thus, the development of folklore in film encompasses not only artistic and aesthetic values, but also ideological ones, forming a cultural practice that unites art, values and local identity within the framework of community cinema—a space that is more contemporary and adaptable to the evolution of modern cinema.

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