Transformation of Ondel-ondel Function as the Icon of the Capital and Busker in Jakarta

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Abstract

Ondel-ondel as one of the Betawi arts, is an image icon of the city of Jakarta. It is a couple of giant doll characters that has distinctive shapes with bright colors and placed in several municipal government agencies as well as government-owned public spaces such as stations, city parks, meetinghouses, urban village offices and so on. This form of a pair of male and female dolls is also often used to mark the wedding ceremony of the Betawi people in Jakarta. Ondel-ondel is the representation of the Jakarta that symbolizing the identity of the Republic of Indonesian capital city. Ironically, instead of just as an icon of the capital city of Jakarta, currently Ondel-ondel has transformed its function as busking medium in urban spaces. This busker character, that according to some people, are considered as “beggars in disguise” are very different from the sanctity of Ondel-ondel in its origin. Although in the same physical form, when Ondel-ondel is placed in different spaces and activities, the meaning changes. Multi-perspectives that emerge from the transformation of the Ondel-ondel function as capital icon but also as buskers, are discussed in this paper. The purpose of this study is to examine urban phenomena and the meaning of the transformation of the Ondel-ondel character function in Jakarta. The qualitative method that used in this paper is the literature study and observation with the subject of Ondel-ondel as a city icon and also as a busker.

Keywords

Ondel-ondel, Urban, Transformation, City Icon, Busker.
Introduction

Jakarta, as the capital city of Indonesia, is a metropolitan city that has functions as a central government but also serves as a central business. The attractiveness of urban life forming Jakarta as a multi-ethnic densely populated city that rising various professions to survive in the metropolitan city. Betawi ethnicity is believed to be the ethnic origin of Jakarta. Right now, the existence of the Betawi tribe was eliminated into the suburbs, replaced by immigrants from various ethnic, especially Javanese and Sundanese. However, Betawi identity as a native ethnic Jakarta remains inherent in the hegemony of society, from clothing, food, language to art. Ondel-ondel, as Betawi art, is used as the identity of the city of Jakarta. The form of a giant doll with color ornament and composition that has deep meaning, usually used by the Betawi community as a marker on the wedding ceremony or circumcision with a couple of male and female puppets placed on the left and right of the entrance into the party.

The government of DKI Jakarta sets Ondel-ondel as the city’s identity. The use of Ondel-ondel characters in official government agencies further strengthens the Ondel-ondel identity as a city icon. Along the main Jakarta street, it is easy to find the Ondel-ondel character as a city identity, in the form of dolls, statues and murals. This Ondel-ondel character is then interesting to be used by marginalized communities as producers of capital. The transformation of the Ondel-ondel function rises multiperspectives in society that interpret it differently. It shows how the Ondel-ondel cultural production takes place in specific historical, political and economic relations that structure its textual meaning, (Barker, & Jane, 2016).

When Ondel-ondel is in the sphere of government agencies, the Ondel-ondel image represents as the identity of the city of Jakarta, with hierarchies that are glorified and respected. However, when Ondel-ondel is on the side of the road, people interpret it as a busker that disturbs urban life. This function transformation applies without changing the character of the Ondel-ondel form, is a cultural phenomenon theorized in cultural circuits involving identity, production, consumption, regulation and representation (Gay, 2013). The transformation of the function of Ondel-ondel as an icon of the city and becoming buskers, as if two different side. How the same Ondel-ondel shape and character, but placed in a different space, can bring out different identities and representations become an interesting discussion to be studied in this research.

Methods

The methodology in this study uses descriptive qualitative research methods. To analyze the transformation of the Ondel-ondel function, data was collected by observing and also studying literature related to the location of Ondel-ondel, history, character form and function transformation. In addition, the author also conducts visual studies on the Ondel-ondel characters. The data is then analyzed with the scope of the city of Jakarta.
Results and Discussion

The Ondel-ondel character is a pair of giant dolls that can be moved by a man in it. Usually, this art is presented completed with gambang kromong and tanjidor music, and this doll dances along the music. Ondel-ondel is made from woven bamboo with the height approximately 2.5 m, and the diameter is less than 80 cm. Made so that the bearer inside can move a bit freely. The Ondel-ondel hair is made from palm fiber or “duk” (according to the Betawi people) and its face is masked, with round or round eyes glaring, (Paramita, 2018).

The Ondel-ondel character currently uses bright colors used as costumes. The development of the Ondel-ondel costume varies depending on the maker. The selection of bright colors makes it easier for the community to mark the existence of Ondel-ondel, which is favored by various groups of people, ranging from children to adults, including the smiling character and face that are usually painted white or red, and painting large eyes with mustaches for men and female eye Ondel-ondel marker.

Ondel-ondel placements are usually on the right and left of the entrance. Ondel-ondel as a giant doll consisting of male and female. At that time, the big doll was considered to be the embodiment of Danyang Dewa, a repellent. Ondel-ondel is categorized as a form of theater without saying that is considered a protector of village safety and everything in it, (Rosyadi & Sucipto, 2006). By laying Ondel-ondel at the entrance, it is interpreted as a guard for the smooth running of events or activities being held by the Betawi community.

Currently, Ondel-ondel is better known as the icon of Jakarta. In the Governor Regulation. DKI Jakarta No. 11 About the Betawi Culture Icon, (2017) mentioned the Ondel-ondel form as follows: The male Ondel-ondel face is red, has mustache, uses dark colored clothes with a pangsi shirt, and has a Betawi batik motif and uses a belt and Betawi batik undercloth. The hair is made of black palm fiber, with a headdress called coconut flower (manggar) with a total of 25. While the female Ondel-ondel face is white, the eyelashes are curly, the eyebrows are curved black, the lips are red, the ears are studded and crowned, using long kebaya clothing or baju kurung with flourish motifs and of Betawi batik undercloth with a scarf or sling hooked on the left shoulder towards the right waist and using a belt. In his black palm hair there are 20 headdresses.

The design of the Ondel-ondel character undergoes a variety of transformations, to become a form known today. People from outside Jakarta recognize Ondel-ondel as a special art of Jakarta, which is emblazoned on various souvenirs in the form of t-shirts, Ondel-ondel accessories, batik cloth, key chains and so on. However, the memories of Ondel-ondel are a pair of brightly colored giant dolls, who can dance to ethnic Betawi music.

Ondel-ondel in the early days was known as barongan. According to Saidi, 2011 in Supriyanto, Ondel-ondel was used to repel evil spirits, as part of the ritual procession after the harvest as an offering to Dewi Sri as the fertility giver. In 1605, a British merchant, W. Scott in Banten, observed the existence of giant puppets used in the procession of Prince Abdul Mafakhir’s circumcision ritual, as written by Ruchiat, (2011).

The Ondel-ondel character is very different from what we meet today, where the past Ondel-ondel face characters were made creepy, fanged, and grinned. The character of this reinforcements is intentionally formed because it is made as a character who is considered capable of driving away evil forces. Currently the Ondel-ondel face characters are displayed very differently from the beginning of the creation.
Bosch, (1948) in Yudoseputro, (2008) attributed the form of Ondel-ondel found in the Hotel des Indies in 1923 to the motif of a giant face mask which in Javanese-Hindu decorative art is called *Kala* or *Kirttimukha* which means change of form (metamorphosis) into a giant face. Symbols in the triangular crown decoration upward are called *slempang* and behind the head or commonly called by Betawi people as coconut flowers. These materials are now replaced with fiber, and also plastic to facilitate the Ondel-ondel production process. Before the ritual begins, offerings are usually provided.

Likewise, Ondel-ondel that was once known as the *barongan* which had been prepared, provided offerings such as beer pletok, coffee, tea, black chicken, accompanied by spells aimed at spirits who were considered waiting for the Ondel-ondel. Before being released from the storage area, if you are going for rituals, offerings are always made, Paramita, (2018). Ancient craftsmen even had to fast before making Ondel-ondel, to facilitate the production process. Now that ancient craftsmen have begun to diminish, they are replaced by modern craftsmen who can produce faster in printed form.

Most informant say that Ondel-ondel term appears around 70s when song “Ngarak Ondel-ondel” created by Joko from Surabaya was booming then it was popularized by Benyamin s. from Betawi Tengah. Betawi Tengah group has known Ondel-ondel term for this big doll because the movement called “gondel-gondel”, (Rahman, 2019). Another source said that the name Ondel-ondel that we often hear, apparently originated from the word ‘gondel-gondel’ which means to hang or jumble. The word is based on the Ondel-ondel movement which often swings when walking, (Nasiri, 2016).
Ali Sadikin, the former DKI Jakarta Governor from 1966-1977 had a major contribution in the development of the Ondel-ondel appearance. The reason, he changed the face of the previously fanged and creepy Ondel-ondel into a face that looked friendly. Rahman, (2019). With Ali Sadikin’s decision, the Ondel-ondel character has become more popular and can be enjoyed by more ethnics in Jakarta. Musical instruments included in the tanjidor paraded around are wind instruments such as pistons, trombones, tenors, clarinet, bass, there are also drum and gendering instruments. If the show is in place and does not move, it is often raised tehyan, tambourine, and drum (Rosyadi & Sucipto, 2006).

Currently Ondel-ondel has been registered as one of the eight Betawi cultural icons set in Pergub No. 11 of 2017 concerning Betawi culture icons. It was stated in the governing body that the philosophy of Ondel-ondel was a symbol of the strength to maintain security and order, to be strong, courageous, firm, honest and anti-manipulation. In Pergub No 11 of 2017 concerning the Betawi Culture icon, Ondel-ondel is mentioned to have the following functions: (1) As a complement to various traditional traditional ceremonies of the Betawi community. (2) As a decoration at ceremonial events of the Provincial Government of DKI Jakarta, festivals, foreign
artist performances, exhibitions, shopping centers, the Tourism Industry, meetinghouses and public areas that allow from aesthetic and public safety aspects. (3) Placement on the right and left side of the entrance, in the lobby as a complement to the photo (photo wall), on the staging stage or in visual form on LED/Videotron, or in other places according to aesthetics.

The uniqueness of the Ondel-ondel character is then utilized by some people to produce capital by busking. These giant dolls driven by humans inside, were changed to become street busker, with accompaniment from gambang kromong music or tanjidor music played through recorders and loudspeakers which provoked public attention along the way. The symptoms of this transformation are getting stronger and more coordinated with the increasingly large capital values.
The performance of roadside Ondel-ondel represents it as buskers, that come with plastic cans to ask for coins from the people around them. Others present in the public space at the time contribute to its making by their reactions to buskers (whether oblivion, mild annoyance, outrage, ambivalence, appreciation, reverie, or delight). The “audience” (including individuals who consciously adopt this role and those who do not actively reject it) is diverse, and their reaction to busking may be influenced by a range of factors—both transient (good mood or bad, harried or relaxed, the prevailing weather) and relatively “fixed.” Potential customers may be attracted to or deterred from entering a store because of the near presence of a busker, (Mcnamara & Quilter, 2016).

The shift of the Ondel-ondel meaning of culture has occurred in modern times is to be seen from its usefulness at first, which in ancient times Ondel-ondel was used as a repellent (disturbance of spirits that haunted) and misfortune and at the time the traditional Betawi marriage took place, Ondel-ondel also participates in the bridal procession. This shifts in the modern era, Ondel-ondel is currently used as public entertainment by traveling in a predetermined area in the hope of getting saweran, (Paramita, 2018). While the function transformation represent how the Betawi people face and address life from time to time, (Wahidiyat and Rahardja, 2016).

However, the concept of saweran on Ondel-ondel is then used by certain groups as a profession to obtain capital value. The rise of the use of Ondel-ondel as a street busker in Jakarta, has resulted in social disturbances, where the community was asked to donate through the Ondel-ondel performance. Although this donation is voluntary, the existence of Ondel-ondel on the road interferes with the activities of the highway and also does not look beautiful, when the characters used as the identity of the city of Jakarta are used as buskers, carrying used tin cans as begging tools. Ondel-ondel which runs along the streets of Jakarta, accompanied by recording tanjidor or gambang kromong music which is driven by a cart to facilitate carrying the equipment. The DKI government has not been able to control the rampant Ondel-ondel as buskers, the reason for this omission is not yet known, is it because Ondel-ondel is a city identity or because they always move, we do not know for sure.

This multiperspective phenomenon is interesting as the range of meaning between the metropolis capital city identity, and also to be exalted as a pair of guards at the entrance of the office or Betawi activity, is very different from the meanings that arise when Ondel-ondel appears as street busker, who tend to be seen as disturbing and representing lower class. It is not different time that applies here, because at the same time, the role of Ondel-ondel as a capital city identity can appear together with its role as buskers. Different roles in different activities only appear in different spaces.
Conclusion

Some Jakarta residents who heard music recording from the walking cart, finally marked Ondel-ondel as a busker. The greatness of the Ondel-ondel character when in government agencies and shopping centers, shows multiple perspectives. The identity of the Ondel-ondel distinctive form does not change. However, when produced and consumed in different ways, the representation appears changes as well. What distinguishes the Ondel-ondel identity is only if it is in a different space. The appear meanings also change. On the one hand, when Ondel-ondel was used as the city’s identity, its position was increasingly strong as Betawi art, Jakarta’s ethnic owner. Likewise, when Ondel-ondel is a busker, is it possible that this is a form to keep preserving Betawi art by means of marginal people. Important things that can be noted, art as a tradition, must always be transformed. Traditions that refuse to transform are believed to be dead.

References


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