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# Ondel-Ondel Culture: People's Perception on the Shifting in Function and Value Degradation

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## ABSTRACT

Ondel-ondel is one of Jakarta's most prominent cultures. It is a giant doll made of woods and decorated with cotton clothes and human-like embellishments. However, there has been a shift in the way people perceive its role. Ondel-Ondel, which was initially used in significant ceremonial contexts, has evolved into a tool for busking or street entertainment, or more commonly known as Ondel-Ondel Ngamen. At the moment, Ondel-Ondel Ngamen has captured big interest of online users on YouTube. There is a variety of comments on YouTube regarding the existence and representation of Ondel-ondel Ngamen. In this study, the author aims to evaluate YouTube comments regarding people's perceptions of the Ondel-Ondel culture. The author applies a qualitative approach by providing the data from the top-three Indonesian news-related YouTube channels; CNN Indonesia, KompasTV, and Metrotvnews. The dataset is taken from any other scholarly articles that support this analysis. In this study, the author utilizes Stuart Hall's encoding-decoding and commodification theories to evaluate how people perceive Ondel-Ondel, which has undergone a shift in function and value degradation. This study's findings indicate that Ondel-Ondel is vulnerable to commodification. It is no longer regarded as a sacred aspect of rituals or noteworthy occasions.

**Keywords:** *Encoding-Decoding; Jakarta; Ondel-Ondel Ngamen; Youtube*

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## INTRODUCTION

According to Gunawijaya (2001), Betawi is a dynamic melting pot that is receptive to cultural assimilation, allowing for the possibility of building a negotiation space for interaction with other cultures, which has brought about change and progress. He believes that the discourse included local cultures such as Sunda, Java, Bali Minang, and Bugis and foreign ones such as Arabic, Chinese Hindi (India), the Netherlands, and Portugese (Gunawijaya, 2001). Intriguingly, Betawi civilization reflects its traditions through various rites, none of them represents only a single culture. Multiple cultures are always blended and adapted based on the characteristics of their own cultures (Purbasari, 2010). The ethnic and cultural diversity of the Betawi people inspired the creation of ondel-ondel, a work of art influenced by other

indigenous and non-indigenous cultures. The influence of Balinese Hinduism, Chinese, and Islamic civilizations can be seen in ondel-gigantic, ondel's human-like form (Purbasari et al., 2021).

Ondel-Ondel is a cultural performance of the Betawi community that has been passed down from generation to generation (Paramita, 2018). Another perspective is taken from (Rosita et al., 2020). Rosita et al. (2020) argue that in particular period, Ondel-ondel was believed to be a protective mascot capable of warding off evil spirits and illnesses, which were believed to be brought by the spirits. They state that it was initially shown with a frightening facial expression. Nevertheless, they also argue that the face of Ondel-ondel has changed through time, resulting in the popular visual

form of Ondel-ondel today, which has become one of Jakarta's visual identities (Rosita et al., 2020).

The history of Ondel-Ondel starts in the practices of animism and dynamism of the Betawi community. According to Atlantis Press SARL, the spirit of animism and dynamism is represented in the giant dolls' creation against the sources of evil spirits, like plague and disaster (Rosita et al., 2020). Another point of view is taken from Gumelar, Ekawati and Purnamasari (2021). In a closer context, Gumelar et al., (2021) state that in the 15th century, ondel-ondel served as ancestor spirits protecting the villagers' welfare. Most people at that time believed in supernatural power. Therefore, they created ondel-ondel as a 'conduit' for ancestor spirits, seeking protection from unwanted events. At that time, the ondel-ondel had a scary countenance, curled and long hair, and its role was more significant than it is today.

Ondel-ondel has the following constituents: 1) A crown adorned with paintings of a peacock/hong, dragon, lotus flower, pomegranate blossom, and clover. Additionally, as a sign of the Sunda Kelapa region, there is a coconut flower formed from a joint of coconut leaves on top of the head. The visage of the red male ondel-ondel doll represents strength, power, bravery, and tough personality. The white female ondel-ondel doll's face represents purity, tenderness, friendliness, and majesty. Men's ondel-ondel doll clothing is composed of a *sadariah* *ujung serong*. At the bottom, it is designed with a *jamblang* holster. On occasion, a square-patterned *cunin sarong* is draped over the shoulder. The female doll is adorned with a *kebaya encim*. At specific events, it is decorated with a scarf with flower and animal patterns (Gumelar et al., 2021).

Suyahya (2019) highlights that Ondel-ondel was previously known as Barongan. He argues that the term Barongan, which signifies a group, implies that Ondel-ondel art always appears in pairs or groups. He thinks that Ondel-ondel is classified as a silent theatre and is one of the Betawi arts. Aside from its initial role as the embodiment of ancestors, its performance consisted solely of dancing motions and contained no words uttered. Historiographically, ondel-ondel is demonstrated to the Betawi people on the on the other cities to reinforce the city's popularity, while the city's inhabitants enjoy ondel-ondel as enjoyment (Suyahya, 2019).

According to Kladen (1986), the religion of Islam was carried and spread across the island of Java over time. Kladen believes that as one of the most visited ports on the island, Sunda Kelapa, soon became a haven for the spread of Islamic teachings. He views that in the Betawi community, animistic beliefs and the ritual of

worshiping spirits and deified objects began to decline. Subsequently, he thinks the Betawi community began to adhere to Islamic principles (Kladen, 1986).

Perception towards Barongan gradually changed as the Betawi people incorporated Islamic teachings as part of the Betawi community's identity. In the 1970s, Barongan's function shifted, and it became a part of the celebration of circumcision, an important moment in Islam for the maturing boy, celebrated in the Betawi community. In addition, according to an interview with Mr. Indra Sutisna conducted on May 16, 2019, "the name of Barongan began to be replaced by Ondel-ondel after a popular Batavian singer, Benjamin, sang a song titled Ondel-ondel" (Rosita et al., 2020) (p. 78).

Ondel-ondel is a creation of the Betawi culture that takes the form of enormous figurines. Its frame and mask were originally crafted from jackfruit wood, while its cranium is made of palm fibers. The facial expression of Ondel-ondel is its most distinctive feature. This facial expression has gone through the greatest amount of change. One example is the face of the male version of Ondel-ondel, which lacks the massive protruding fangs of the original face of this gigantic doll (Rosita et al., 2020).

Ondel-Ondel has undergone major changes since its inception centuries ago (Wahidiyat et al., 2022). Before the 1970s, the facial expression of Barongan, as the last name of Ondel-Ondel, was horrifying because it was used as the medium of mysticism activity (Rosita et al., 2020). According to Purbasari et al. (2021), not only does the appearance of Ondel-ondel attract the attention of the surrounding community, but its disclosure can also provoke pros and cons. Purbasari et.al (2021) view that taking refuge behind the assertion of Betawi's tradition-preservation, ondel-ondel is increasingly viewed as a street art performance today, mostly being used as a tool to beg for money. They argue that this is what causes Jakartans to have a low opinion of ondel-ondel, what was once revered and regarded as sacred becomes a lowly tool as some community forced the city's symbol to beg on the street. They also argue that Ondel-ondel underwent significant morphological and functional alterations. They believe that the fundamental form has not changed, but the costume elements have undergone subtle modifications (p. 376).

According to Chienita et al. (2019), the Betawi people believe that Ondel-ondel is now considered Betawi culture and art and must be transformed into an instrument with economic value. They think that Betawi people's awareness of Ondel-ondel's usage for busking is proportional to the number of Ondel-ondel found on the side of the road (p. 383).

The rise of these events prompted the Betawi community to pay attention to the use of ondel-ondel in singing performance (Chienita et al., 2019). Moreover, the problem rises as the ondel-ondel does not wear proper attire, appears in pairs infrequently, and does not use complete equipment such as musical instruments and traditional clothing for the players. The Betawi people are concerned of the lack of decent clothing. Decorated only with minimum clothing and insufficient equipment, Ondel-ondel is used by some people only to serve their interests. The majority of Betawi individuals view Ondel-ondel usage negatively. Ondel-ondel is typically used for busking while wearing attire such as coconut flowers, kebaya encim, sarees, or tutu dresses oblique, shawl, and checkered sarong (cukin), but not with the musicians and the instrument (Chienita et al., 2019) (p. 383).

The situation finally caught the online media's attention. The videos about the Ondel-Ondel Ngamen phenomena can be easily found on YouTube, one of the biggest video-sharing sites today. CNN Indonesia, Metrotvnews, and KompasTV are the top three online-news-media YouTube channels and popular national broadcasting stations in Indonesia that cover a huge range of news such as entertainment, sports, political, and cultural news. Based on the data taken from (FeedSpot, 2023), KompasTV has 14.9 million subscribers, CNN Indonesia has 10.2 million subscribers, and Metrotvnews has 6.8 million subscribers. The author views that those three YouTube channels have impacted the media consumption of Indonesian towards the news they offer. Each of them has covered a video that talks about Ondel-Ondel Ngamen and gains a lot of attention since the videos reached thousands of views.

The Ondel-Ondel Ngamen phenomenon has its characteristic, especially in terms of reinforcing regulation and control. The people who use Ondel-Ondel as a tool for busking continue to conserve the culture by their existence, but on the other hand, its usage simultaneously reduces the value of Ondel-Ondel culture itself (KompasTV., 2019). For example, CNN Indonesia's YouTube channel video is titled "Pengamen Ondel-Ondel Akan Ditertibkan" shows an Ondel-Ondel Ngamen actor's responses to historian commenting to the issue of controlling Ondel-Ondel Ngamen by the local government. It successfully garners people's attention in the comment box (CNN, 2020). The comments represent how people respond to and give meaning to the news content displayed in the video.

In this closer observation toward Ondel-Ondel, the author formulate a research question of how today's society interprets Ondel-Ondel Ngamen. In this

paper, the author would like to examine the variety of interpretations of the Ondel-Ondel Ngamen phenomena through media such as YouTube and news program. To explore the phenomenon of the changing function of Ondel-Ondel and its influence on the cultural values that are formed by its existence, the author will implement the Commodification theory offered by Vincent Mosco (2009) and the reception theory, decoding and encoding, from Stuart Hall (2006).

To understand the Commodification Culture of Ondel-ondel, the author provides the example of Barongsai. Arif and Simatupang (2016) uses one of the cultural prides of the Chinese race, the Barongsai, as their research object. The result is, to fulfill the market's logic, players of the Barongsai culture must make some adjustments and modifications. Therefore, referring to the concept of the Commodification of Vincent Mosco, Arif & Lastoro (2016, p. 41-43) divided Barongsai's view of Commodification into three. The first one is the *Commodification of the audience*. The existence of the audience is essential for the survival of the Barongsai. Commodification in the audience component indicates the Barongsai market share has been formed and can generate profits. Based on Arif et.al (2016), the Barongsai audience can be categorized into two; the first is ethnic Chinese, where most of them still maintain the noble values of the Barongsai itself, and the second is a group of non-ethnic Chinese audience who have a great sense of interest and appreciation for this culture (Arif & Simatupang, 2016) (p. 41).

Audience commodification on Barongsai indeed is similar to today's Ondel-Ondel. The changes that occurred from time to time has led to a change in the function of Ondel-Ondel; it was initially used as a tool of reinforcement and repellent doll to become one of the most-common Betawi cultural dolls that is used to celebrate people's parties. Ondel-Ondel's appearance was also modified in such a way to make it looks more beautiful and attractive. This change adds to the variety of Ondel-Ondel connoisseurs, that are no longer enjoyed only by adults, but also children.

Next is the *Commodification of the actors*. Arif et.al (2016) found that the requirement to perform kung fu in performing Barongsai movements is no longer became the primary requirement. The performers is not limited to only ethnic Chinese. However, the Barongsai performers only have a position as workers who have a manager, a superior, where they can lose their job if they do not meet the requirements set by their manager. This situation indicates that Barongsai's performers have been modified in which their existence is entirely in the superior's hand

(Arif & Simatupang, 2016) (p. 42). The author views that the high level of unemployment in Jakarta becomes the leading cause for this type of Commodification to emerge. In addition, not a few Betawi cultural activists consider this long-standing phenomenon are caused by the local government's lack of attention in preserving an important Betawi's culture, Ondel-Ondel.

The last one is the *Commodification of cultural values*. The polarization of the ethnic Chinese community's belief towards the Barongsai performance tradition has forced capital owners and activists to find new ways of preserving the culture. They are more interested in performing Barongsai beautifully while maintaining its cultural values as they no longer debate the sacredness and professionalism of the Barongsai (Arif et.al, 2016 (p. 42-43). The type of Commodification that occurs in the Barongsai culture also happens in the Ondel-Ondel Ngamen phenomenon; the Ondel-Ondel performances turns it into a tool for busking has become one of the ways for people, who do not have a job, to make money. Bad economic conditions forces them to do this. Some actors even states, in defending their actions, this method helps to introduce and preserve the existence of Ondel-Ondel culture in the Betawi community.

To support the analysis, the author also applies the reception theory by Hall. Reception theory is the research of public message, government policy, and the media impact. This theory focuses on encoding-decoding, interpretation, and core understanding from the concept of reception analysis. In this case, the author analyzes YouTube as the platform which enables people to share their knowledge and perspective related to the uploaded video content through YouTube features such as like, dislike, and comments. The Youtube features can be considered the data and tool for researchers (Giglietto et al., 2012; (Snelson et al., 2012).

As shown in figure 1, the meaning of production can be found until the last step. This process shows that each step of encoding-decoding is connected from one to another. Also, these steps are depicted separately, which means that each process can be identified and analyzed independently. Stuart Hall (2006) states that the first meaning structure or encoding process refers to the production process of a code(s) by the media producers. Furthermore, the first step is dominated by the perspective of the producer as the message sender. The meaning is already packaged in the form of YouTube videos as a discourse in this research. In the second step, the producers' domination does not exist any longer; the text has its power from the images and languages. After all, it depends on the audience who receive the message. The next stage represents the audience as the key to receive the message or code(s) in the decoding process. However, people have different knowledge, social class, gender, and culture that may influence the interpretation (Hall, 2006).

The concept mentioned above is used as the supporting framework to analyze the Ondel-Ondel Ngamen phenomenon on YouTube. Furthermore, the author classifies the channels by YouTube's search features, and we typed "Ondel-Ondel Ngamen" as the keyword. From the author's observation, three channels uploaded relevant videos from June 2019 to February 2020. The selected channels are KompasTV, CNN Indonesia, and Metrotvnews. These channels are verified by YouTube and are popular news media platforms in which each of the Ondel-Ondel-related videos uploaded by them has at least a thousand viewers on YouTube video.

## METHOD

To examine the variety of interpretations of the Ondel-Ondel Ngamen phenomena, the author applies a qualitative approach. In doing the analysis, there were several stages the author will do in this study. Firstly, the author selects a trending subject from YouTube using the search term "Ondel-Ondel Ngamen. The author chose three videos from each YouTube Channel, such as MetroTV, CNN, and KompasTV, with one thousand views and credible information regarding Ondel-Ondel Ngamen. Then, the author employs Stuart Hall's encoding-decoding theory to illustrate the meaning-making process of Ondel-Ondel Ngamen on the videos of MetroTV, CNN, and KompasTV. Encoding theory examines the YouTube video elements, including the title, description, and feature. In addition, YouTube provides a

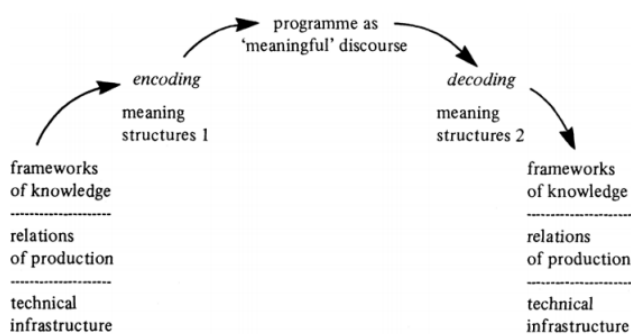


Figure 1. Hall's Encoding-Decoding Diagram



thumb-up icon which indicates that the viewers like the video and a thumb-down icon which means to show the viewers' dislike of the video. Each viewer can express a different opinion or comment about the video. In addition, the decoding theory is used to analyze the comments that appear on a single video uploaded by a channel. The author then analyzes the discourses developed from the comments as part of the meaning-making process. Secondly, the author then connects the topic and the notion of Commodification. Lastly, the author concludes the whole observation that indicates Ondel-ondel's role which has shifted in its function ; it is not seen as a sacred symbol and icon anymore, but as a mere tool of entertainment.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### CNN Indonesia YouTube Video

CNN Indonesia's YouTube channel video is used as one of the data sources in this study. On February 11, 2020, CNN Indonesia uploaded a video titled "Pengamen Ondel-Ondel Akan Ditertibkan" which translates to Ondel-Ondel street performers will be regulated. It is a video which covers the events related to Ondel-Ondel usage by street performers. To be noted, street performing or *ngamen* in Indonesia is in fact a way to beg for money from passers-by. During the investigation, the video becomes popular on YouTube searches using the term "Ondel-Ondel Ngamen." In addition, the video receives thousands of views, nearly 100 likes, and 15 dislikes.

Furthermore, CNN Indonesia put the meaning of Ondel-Ondel Ngamen in the video's title description. Here is a copy of the video's title and description:

#### ***Pengamen Ondel-Ondel Akan Ditertibkan***

*Pemerintah provinsi DKI Jakarta bersama DPRD DKI Jakarta sedang mempertimbangkan wacana revisi Perda nomor 4 tahun 2014 tentang pelestarian budaya Betawi. Salah satu dampak dari revisi tersebut adalah terancamnya keberadaan pengamen ondel-ondel karena dianggap mengeksploitasi simbol ikonik DKI Jakarta tersebut.*

Based on the video's video description above, the video highlights and treats Ondel-Ondel Ngamen as a 'cultural icon' that the people must respect and be careful of Ondel-Ondel. Using the encoding-decoding approach by Stuart Hall (2006), the opinion of the channel is an encoding process. Furthermore, we can also see that CNN Indonesia tries to highlight the essence of Ondel-Ondel as

the cultural icon of DKI Jakarta. Based on the Governor Regulation of Jakarta Number 4, 2014, Ondel-Ondel as Betawi culture is a national asset, which indicates its importance and it needs to be protected by law. The function of Ondel-Ondel is mentioned in Chapter III Point 1 of Governor Regulation of Jakarta Number 4, 2014 'menggunakan seluruh aspek kebudayaan Betawi sesuai fungsinya'. It says that there is no limitation or prohibition about the Ondel-Ondel's usage.

The next part of this article discusses how the audience react to the CNN Indonesia YouTube video. From the comments under the video uploaded, we can analyze whether the audience received the message/code sent by the channel.

### Audiences' Comments on CNN Indonesia YouTube Video

Using Stuart Hall's theory, we can understand the audience's opinion as a decoding process. The CNN Indonesia YouTube video gets 52 comments. Interestingly, various topics are risen by the comments showing big spectatorship on the video and giving diverse opinions. There are several types of comments, such as agreeing with the channel's perspective, the personal problems with the actor of Ondel-Ondel Ngamen, and criticism toward the government. Some of the comments show negative opinions regarding Ondel-Ondel Ngamen's practice as something that is not appropriate. These are the examples of the comments that linear with the channel's perspective:

IRAIRAZU 1 year ago

*Gue setuju, ini kesenian bukan buat ngamen*

Sugito Bono 1 year ago

*Aikon kok untuk ngamen ... Sayang*

ahmad syakir 1 year ago

*Setuju tertibkan aja itu acon ibu kota*

The user with the screen name Irairazu is the top commenter in the video. The comment receives some support from other users in its contents of showing disagreements against Ondel-Ondel Ngamen. His comment, if translated into English as follows: "I agree, this is a cultural art, not for busking." Similar to this comment, comments from Sugito Bono and Ahmad Syakir who also show their disagreement on the Ondel-Ondel Ngamen.

From the comments above, we can find the word 'agree' or *setuju* in Indonesian Bahasa repeatedly

used by the users. The word *setuju* is used to put their perspective in line with the channel's perspective against the Ondel-Ondel Ngamen. In addition to the comments above which show the users' disagreement on the Ondel-Ondel Ngamen, more comments below even emphasize users' aspiration that Ondel-Ondel Ngamen is not merely inappropriate, but also disturbing the surrounding.

Kevin Adi, 1 year ago:

*Sebenarnya mau bakal ngamen mah silahkan aja bodoamat juga gua, cumaaannn mereka mintanya terkadang maksa. Maksa banget bahkan.*

Hikigaya Shu, 1 year ago:

*Kalau mereka tampil ditaman dan cuma taruh kotak agar masyarakat yang "ikhlas" dapat memberikan. Justru ini sangat bagus menurut saya. Kalau maksa beda ceritanya ya.*

agalugul 30, 1 year ago:

*Ondel-Ondel dulu bikin takut, sekarang malah bikin macet..*

lastnight nolimit, 1 year ago:

*Jaman dlu boleh lah, klw sekarang cuma biikin macet*

syahrojiwahid, 1 year ago:

*esensi tempatnya dimana dulu tempatnya?? ingat ini KOTA BESAR bung. banyak pengguna jalan yg pny hak memakai jalan, kadang maksa mintanya dan bikin macet pula.... jakarta bukan punya betawi ajeh, banyak suku lain yg ikut melestarikan kota ini dan jg budaya nya..*

The user with the screen named Kevin Adi shows his annoyance toward the Ondel-Ondel Ngamen. In the first sentence, the word *bodoamat* is used by the commenter. *Bodoamat*, if translated into English, is similar to 'do not care' or harshly 'do not give a shit' implies that personally, the user doesn't care about the Ondel-Ondel Ngamen activity. Then, we can find a verb in Indonesian Bahasa is repeatedly used by the user. It says *maksa*, which in English is 'forcing' or 'pushing'. The word *maksa* is used to tell the user's annoyance toward the actors of Ondel-Ondel Ngamen attitude. In this context, forcing people to give the performers some money Furthermore, a user with the screen name Hikigaya Shu is also shown to have a similar opinion with Kevin Adi's comment. The user even emphasizes that it wouldn't be a problem if they were busking sincerely, which showed from its statement. It implies

he did not mind, even encouraged them if the performers put box beside them, instead of forcing people to give them money; *Kalau mereka... cuma taruh kotak... agar masyarakat yang "ikhlas" dapat memberikan... sangat bagus menurut saya.*

Other than the forcing when busking, some users suppose that the Ondel-Ondel Ngamen activities inflict a traffic jam. It is shown with the adjective in Indonesian Bahasa for a traffic jam, *macet*. The words is being used by three users with screen names: agalugul, last night nolimit, and syahrojiwahid. The user with the screen name syahrojiwahid even adds *jakarta bukan punya betawi ajeh*, which is best translated to English, 'Jakarta does not only belong to the Betawi people'. By looking at the statement, the user is trying to emphasize that Jakarta belongs to the public, people from various communities.

Disagreements on Ondel-Ondel commodification are shown from the first and second comments' classification above. According to Vincent Mosco (2009), the commodification of cultural values happens when the people who own the culture no longer have the same value perspective as their ancestors; it could be changed or even decreased. A similar situation happens to Ondel-Ondel. The value is modified; the functions are more varied, but at the same time, the cultural value is reducing. The rise of unemployment in Jakarta forces them to modify their cultural value, while there are still Betawi people who disagree with the value changing. Despite the existence of some people who are against the commodification, some people support Ondel-Ondel Ngamen. In addition, they connect the government's decisions or political actions, sometimes unrelated to the practice of Ondel-Ondel Ngamen, to the regulation that prohibits Ondel-Ondel as a busking tool.

Hawkish & Dovish, 1 year ago:

*anies gak sesuai janji kampanye ngga pro rakyat kecil.*

Risky Manumpil, 1 year ago:

*Akibat Gubernur gagal mengatasi banjir, yah mening mengatasi Pengamen biar gampang*

Yance Dotox, 1 year ago:

*Mendingan ngamen ondel-ondel hasilnya jelas drpd korupsi*

In the video description, it is written that the DKI Jakarta government was considering revising one of the local regulations about the preservation of Betawi culture, which can risk the life of Ondel-Ondel Ngamen's actors. The comments above show agreements to the

descriptions by directly contradicting the DKI Jakarta government response toward Ondel-Ondel Ngamen. The user with screen name Hawkish & Dovish even states *ngga pro rakyat kecil*, which in English is most likely similar to ‘(the government is) not taking sides for the interests of the lower class people’. Risky Manumpil’s comment also sounds the same. It offends the government by stating *gagal mengatasi banjir* or, in English, ‘(the government) failed to cope with the flood’. Another offending comment delivered by the user with the screen name Yance Dotox; it offends the government by rhetorically mentioning *korupsi* or corruption.

### KompasTV Youtube Video

Second, this research utilizes YouTube videos from the KompasTV channel as data sources. On March 24, 2021, KompasTV Indonesia uploaded a video titled “Ondel-Ondel Dilarang Untuk Mengamen, Ini Tanggapan Pemain Ondel-Ondel Keliling”. When this study was conducted on March 27, 2021, the video has one thousand views, 82 loves, and 13 dislikes. Similar to the previous data, the meaning of Ondel-Ondel ngamen is included in the video’s title and description on KompasTV. Here is a copy of the video title and video description:

***Ondel-Ondel Dilarang Untuk Mengamen, Ini Tanggapan Pemain Ondel-Ondel Keliling:***

*JAKARTA, KOMPAS.TV Pemprov DKI Jakarta melarang penggunaan ondel-ondel untuk mengamen, mengemis, atau bahkan meminta uang kepada warga. Wakil Gubernur DKI Jakarta Riza Patria mengatakan, ondel-ondel merupakan budaya asli Jakarta yang harus digunakan dengan cara yang lebih baik. “Memang ini suatu proses yang tidak mudah. Di satu sisi kita ingin melestarikan budaya bangsa, termasuk budaya betawi ondel-ondel. Tapi di sisi lain, juga kita ingin melakukan dengan cara-cara yang baik dan lebih bijak ya”, ungkap Riza saat diwawancara wartawan (24/3). Ardian, seorang pemain ondel-ondel keliling ini mengaku, ia menekuni profesi ini untuk menghidupi keluarga. “Karena ngelihat teman-teman, penghasilan lumayan, bisa buat sehari-hari keluarga, bisa buat yang punya anak. Saya coba ikuti, alhamdulillah”, ungkap Ardian. “Kalau lagi corona gini alhamdulillah bisa 300 ribu. Sebelum corona bisa 700, tapi itu rame-rame orang. Lagi sendiri, untuk mencari makan”, paparnya. Meski demikian, Ardian merasa cukup keberatan apabila larangan tersebut disahkan oleh Pemprov DKI. Pasalnya, bermain ondel-*

*ondel keliling adalah satu-satunya sumber penghasilannya. “Ya mau nggak mau, dicoba kalau itu benar dilarang, baru kita berhenti. Belum tahu lah, kalau itu mah. Kerja juga kemarin diberhentiin gara-gara corona”, pungkasnya. Pemprov DKI Jakarta diminta untuk mencari solusi terbaik dalam melestarikan ondel-ondel dengan cara yang lebih baik. Tak hanya melarang ondel-ondel untuk keliling, Pemprov DKI juga diminta untuk mencari solusi bagi mereka yang sehari-hari berprofesi sebagai pemain ondel-ondel keliling.*

In using the encoding process from Stuart Hall (2006), the channel tries to show the contradiction between the Ondel-Ondel Ngamen actor and the local government. The actor of Ondel-Ondel Ngamen believes that this activity is one of the methods to introduce and serves as conservative acts toward Ondel-Ondel, especially targeted to the younger generation. On the other hand, the government disallows Ondel-Ondel Ngamen activities because they can decrease the cultural value of Ondel-Ondel as the DKI Jakarta’s cultural icon. Furthermore, KompasTV gives an opinion on the description that the government should find the solution to the Ondel-Ondel Ngamen actor. One of the main reasons of the increasing number of Ondel-Ondel Ngamen is the pandemic condition which forced the actors to change the function of Ondel-Ondel to make money (Commodification of cultural values).

In the next part, the author will discuss how the audience react to the KompasTV YouTube video. From comments appearing on the video uploaded, we can analyze whether the audience received the message/code sent by the channel.

### Audience’s’ Comments on KompasTV YouTube Video

Similar to the previous video, the author employs Stuart Hall’s (2006) decoding process. After the video was uploaded and the data has been encoded, the decoding procedure is the subsequent step. Decoding is just as important as encoding for video analysis. People’s opinions and interpretations will vary based on status, age, experience, race, etc. On March 27, 2021, this KompasTV YouTube video has 95 comments . We divided the comments into three categories: those which align to the video’s perspective, those which reveal personal issues with Ondel-Ondel Ngamen’s actors, and those which disagree with the government policy. The following comments share the same viewpoint as

the video. According to (Soikun & Ag. Ibrahim, 2021) visual semiotics, it can form a hidden meaning. It can be said that what people see from the value shifting of Ondel-Ondel in Jakarta; which previously was a sacred tradition and now has become a show for busking, has a hidden meaning of value degradation. In other words, Ondel-Ondel is no longer sacred and people do not like what they see from Ondel-Ondel today.

Arbaa Hari Rhamadani, 2 days ago:

*Setuju bos... Ondel2 itu budaya gak boleh di pake ngamen..*

Agung Triatmoko, 2 days ago (edited):

*Klo bisa mbok jangan ngamen jalan..itu bukan pekerjaan.*

M Firdaus, 2 days ago:

*Malu malu ondel2 aset budaya nasional asal betawi, dijadikan unruk mengamen maksa lg minta2 nya.*

Choky Utama, 2 days ago:

*sy masih keturunan Betawi bekasi. kadang suka malu dewek...ampir saban ari..liat ngamen yg kreatifitas nya ga bermutu... sy ada usaha toko di pinggir jalan tiap ari..4 sampai 5 kali ada bae yg keliling.. klo di urut sejarah nya..budaya ini dulunya ondel ondel hiburan di tempat pesta hajat ,hiburan dalam satu even even tertentu*

The users with the screen name Arbaa Hari Ramadhani and Agung Triatmoko use a noun, *budaya*, which translates to ‘culture’ in English. According to the comments, the word *budaya* is repeatedly used alongside ‘Ondel-Ondel’. This implies that the users view Ondel-Ondel as a part of cultures (a unique tradition), which should not be used as a busking tool. Agung Triatmoko, one of the user’s screen names, also shows a disagreement of Ondel-Ondel’s usage for busking. Furthermore, the user with the screen name Choky Utama shows his reaction toward Ondel-Ondel Ngamen from its statement, ... *liat ngamen yang kreatifitas nya ga bermutu*. If translated into English, the statement is ‘Ondel-Ondel Ngamen is an inappropriate cultural show.’ Then, at the end of the comment, stated, ... *budaya ini dulunya ondel ondel hiburan di tempat pesta hajat ...*, this statement is best translated as ‘In the past, Ondel-Ondel was used for big celebrations’. According to the statement of its comment, Choky Utama regrets that the phenomenon of using Ondel-Ondel as a tool for busking exists.

The comments mentioned above are categorized

as the people who agree with Ondel-Ondel Ngamen prohibition, which indirectly means they are against Ondel-Ondel commodification. In the next part, there are some of the comments that express the users’ personal problem with the Ondel-Ondel Ngamen:

Yoga yoga, 16 hours ago:

*Gua setuju sih dilarang,bikin macet dan terlihat meresahkan masyarakat*

Peace Love, 17 hours ago:

*Salahnya menggunakan budaya tuk mengamen dan pengamen ondel2 suka maksa minta uang dang kadang suka maki2 kalo uang yg kita kasih tidak sesuai menurut pengamen ondel2*

Agung Nugroho, 4 hours ago:

*Orang bilang org Jakarta tak berbudaya... Salah... Budaya nya org Jakarta itu minta<sup>2</sup> dengan bawa<sup>2</sup> ondel-ondel.. budaya maksa minta di apresiasi pake duit receh.. wkwkwk... Paham kan? KEBIASAAN BURUK ITU YG INGIN DIRUBAH SAMA PEMERINTAH! Sampe sini paham yaaaa*

Same with the previous audience’s reactions toward Ondel-Ondel Ngamen; the word *maksa* or ‘forcing’ in English is used repeatedly by the user to describe the practice of Ondel-Ondel Ngamen. Furthermore, the user with the screen name Peace Love17 add adds *salahnya menggunakan budaya tuk mengamen ...*, if translated into English as follows: ‘(it is) the consequence of using Ondel-Ondel for busking.’ The user is trying to emphasize that Ondel-Ondel as the cultural icon should not be used freely by the people, as it degrades the value of Ondel-Ondel. According to Vincent Mosco (2009), the commodification of culture happens when there is a polarization of the culture. In this case, the polarization of Ondel-Ondel performance has turned into a tool for making money. Moreover, the comments below even shows users’ aspiration by criticizing the government’s policy.

Anggun Anggun, 15 hours ago:

*Pemrop nya mau ngasih mereka makan ga bisa aja dilarang didata dong berapa banyak komunitas ini..terus kehidupannya sehari hari pemrof ..mau ngasih makan mereka ga jangan asal larang dong..pikinin.makan mereka..terus harus berbuat apa..*

Machf Udin, 16 hours ago:

*Ondel ondel dilarang !!!!!!!!!. Salahnya apa?*



*Doakan cari uang untuk keluarga. aneh aja kerjaan g ada usaha g boleh. makanya uang jgn di korupsi. bantulah masarakat kecil. tega banget sih.*

Yoga yoga 16, hours ago:

*Tolong dicarikan solusinya bagaimanapun mereka generasi bangsa yg coba cari mkn secara halal...*

Salamat Ipin, 16 hours ago (edited):

*Boleh" aja di larang, tp pemprov DKI hrs punya solusinya, gimana spy pemain ondel" biar bisa msh mencari nafkah. yg setuju like*

izzam ms 11, hours ago:

*Kalau dilarang harus ada solusinya, Tidak dilarang memanjakan pengangguran. 1 hari bisa 10 kali lewat depan toko.*

From the comments above, the audience put their main concern on economic issues, which is explained by their complaints about what to “eat” later. They stress that the government should provide the alternative economic slolutions if the government bans the practice of the Ondel-Ondel Ngamen. This can be seen from the statements issued by them, such as the statement of one of the users with the screen name Anggun. She keeps mentioning the word “eat” and says that the government cannot simply ban people from carrying out business activities which mostly becomes their main source of income as to get something to eat. Machf Udin, one of the user’s screen names, also disagrees with the Government’s policy by stating a similar statement about the moral value of making Ondel-ondel as a business activity to earn money to serve food on their tables. Udin also added criticizes the government along with defending the Ondel-Ondel Ngamen practice that the government should spend money to help the poor, not use it for corruption. The third user with the screen names Yoga. Yoga also gives his opinion; he hopes that the Government can bring solutions for the poor people to help them who are desperate for money in order to get food in *halal*, permissible by Islamic teachings, ways.

### **Metrotvnews Youtube Video**

Lastly, this research uses the YouTube channel video of Metrotv as data sources. On February 18<sup>th</sup>, 2020, Metrotv uploaded a video titled “Orang Betawi Tidak Terima Ondel-ondel Buat Ngamen”. When this research was conducted, the video gets thousand views, 40 likes, and 7 dislikes on March 28<sup>th</sup>, 2021. Also, Metrotv put the meaning of Ondel-Ondel Ngamen in the video’s title and description. Here is a copy of the video’s title and

description:

#### **Orang Betawi Tidak Terima Ondel-ondel:**

*Ondel-ondel yang merupakan ikon budaya Betawi tak seharusnya digunakan untuk mengamen di jalanan. Ondel-ondel harus dihadirkan di tempat yang bermakna dan dinikmati secara hikmat.*

In using the encoding process by Stuart Hall (2006), same with the CNN Indonesia YouTube channel that the the channel tries to highlight Ondel-Ondel as ‘cultural icon’ using the sentence ‘*ikon budaya Betawi tak seharusnya digunakan untuk mengamen*’. If translated into English as follows: ‘The cultural icon of Betawi should not be used for busking.’ What separates the perspective of Metrotv with other channels is Metrotv does not discuss about the government aspect. As we know from the previous channels, both channels highlight, and mention governor regulation and policy related to Ondel-Ondel Ngamen. However, Metrotv focuses on the Betawi community that condemns the activity of Ondel-Ondel Ngamen. Metrotv also puts the opinion on the word ‘*Ondel-ondel harus dihadirkan di tempat yang bermakna dan dinikmati secara hikmat*’. If translated into English as follows: ‘Ondel-Ondel (as a sacred) culture should be performed in a proper and meaningful place.’ It’s different with the Ondel-Ondel Ngamen in which money is prioritized.

The next part of this article discusses how the audience react to the Metrotv YouTube video. From the comments under the video uploaded, we can analyze whether the audiences received the message/code sent by the channel.

### **Audiences’ Comments on Metrotv YouTube Video**

In this section, moving to the next step of Stuart Hall’s (2006) theory, the decoding-process step. As already been explained previously, decoding is the step when we break down the comments selected in the video. This Ondel-Ondel Ngamen phenomenon video uploaded by Metrotvnews has 42 comments on March 27<sup>th</sup>, 2021, and the comments have been classified into two categories. The first is the comments that are in-line with the video’s perspective, and the other one is the comments that show personal issues the users have had with Ondel-Ondel Ngamen. The following are some comments that have an aligning perspective with the video.

Abang Jawa, 1 year ago:

*Bagi saya kalo yg namanya simbol dari pada suku betawi atau yg namanya sejarah itu memang harus*

*di jaga jgn di salah gunakan kalo di gunakan untuk ngamen ini menjatuhkan martabat suku betawi sendiri tolong di berikan penjelasan sama yg menggunakan kalo di biarkan pada akhirnya sejarah itu sendiri ga ada artinya*

BikinTau 1, year ago:

*Iya setuju pak mohon di tertibkan*

Herpin Jenaka, 1 month ago:

*Gw sebagai org betawi gak setuju ondel2 buat ngamen .lebih baik ondel2 hanya di buat kusus acara pernikahan aja. Jaman udh maju masi ngamen aja*

The user with the screen name Abang Jawa passionately uses a noun, *Sejarah* and *Suku Betawi*, which means 'history' and 'Betawi race' if translated into English. The relation between those terms is referring to the different implementation of Ondel-Ondel in the past and the current situation, which Ondel-Ondel is used as a busking tool nowadays. The user with the screen name Herpin Jenaka shows his disagreement toward the Ondel-Ondel Ngamen. He states that Ondel-Ondel should just be used for wedding parties by stating it in Indonesian Bahasa, *lebih baik ondel2 hanya di buat kusus acara pernikahan aja*. Lastly, BikinTau username shows his support toward the control of Ondel-Ondel Ngamen by commenting In Indonesian Bahasa, *mohon di tertibkan* which shows his aspiration for the performers to be better regulated (by the government). In conclusion, the above comments are conveyed as one way to show people who do not support the commodification of Ondel-Ondel.

Meanwhile, the following comments are showing personal experiences, mainly unpleasant, with the Ondel-Ondel Ngamen.

Rina Nur, 1 year ago:

*La d setip jlanan bnyk tu ondel2 ngamen*

Angga Miun, 1 year ago:

*Lagi jg sangat ganggu ngamen di jalan pengeras suara nya bising.*

ananda lululy, 1 year ago:

*Ujung2nya duit duit duit*

These three comments show their condemnation of Ondel-Ondel's use for busking. Moreover, it mostly stems from their personal experiences. The account with the screen name Angga Miun says that Ondel-Ondel Ngamen is very annoying because of the noise coming from loudspeakers, the accompanied tool while doing the

practice of the Ondel-Ondel Ngamen. The noisy sound becomes a personal issue for the user and bothers him, leading to his confrontation to its practice. A user with the nickname Ananda Lululy says that Ondel-Ondel Ngamen only focuses on asking for money, most likely by forcing. This becomes his personal issue for the user and potentially has a direct impact on money losses, therefore he associates Ondel-Ondel ngamen, at the end of the day, only cares about money.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, all three data sources, KompasTV, CNN Indonesia, and Metrotvnews, have comparable viewerships, as evidenced by the contradiction of Ondel-Ondel Commodification, personal concerns with the actors of Ondel-Ondel Ngamen, and criticism of the government's prohibition policy for Ondel-Ondel Ngamen. Very few users comment on the initial use of the Ondel-Ondel when it was initially created, as a sacred cultural icon; it was first used to disregard the evil spirit which means chasing ghosts away. Even though numerous comments demonstrate an interest in Ondel-Ondel as a Betawi cultural treasure that should be preserved, the specific debates over Ondel-Ondel's mode of use are inconsequential. However, commenters similarly decipher the code shared by the channel proprietors. It is important to note that many users who support the government's policy on Ondel-Ondel's regulations do so for two main reasons: cultural significance and personal concerns. It indicates that the receivers can interpret the encoder's message without restriction. The results indicate that Ondel-Ondel is susceptible to commodification. It is no longer considered a sacred aspect of rituals for significant occasions.

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