

## ONDEL-ONDEL: LOOKING FOR A THEORETICAL EXPLANATION

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### ABSTRACT

*Ondel-ondel*, initially believed to have fearsome characteristics and magical ability to ward evil spirits off, is still performed in various areas in Jakarta on particular occasions. *Ondel-ondel* was originally an ancient artwork named *barongan*. This research aims to seek a theoretical explanation of the *ondel-ondel* phenomenon by examining the relationship between the media and local culture. Several defining features of postmodernism are incorporated to reframe *ondel-ondel* as a form of entertainment, along with the interplay between the tradition and technology-assisted media. This paper seeks to reveal the actual meaning of *ondel-ondel* for locals and non-locals during their encounters with *ondel-ondel*. The research found (1) that *ondel-ondel* is an attempt to reinvent the way people seek entertainment in the face of changes brought about by modernity and (2) that the presence of *ondel-ondel* communicated in the virtual space generates digital traces in the form of messages contributing to the creation and the re-creation of *ondel-ondel* itself.

### KEYWORDS

*Ondel-ondel*; postmodernism; Betawi

### ABSTRAK

Pada mulanya karakteristik seram dalam *ondel-ondel* yang dipercaya secara magis mengusir marabahaya dapat ditemukan di Jakarta pada waktu tertentu. Faktanya, menurut asal-usulnya, *ondel-ondel* merupakan hasil karya seni Betawi kuno bernama *barongan*. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mencari penjelasan teoretis dalam hubungan yang lebih jelas antara media dan budaya. Beberapa ciri utama postmodernisme digabungkan untuk membingkai ulang *ondel-ondel* sebagai sarana yang menghibur bersama pengaruh teknologi media. Artikel ini diharapkan dapat mengungkap makna *ondel-ondel* yang sesungguhnya untuk orang lokal ataupun nonlokal ketika menjumpai *ondel-ondel*. Kesimpulan artikel ini meliputi dua hal, yaitu (1) *ondel-ondel* merupakan upaya untuk menemukan kembali kesenangan sebagai sarana yang menghibur di tengah perubahan modern; dan (2) kehadiran *ondel-ondel* yang terkomunikasikan di ruang virtual menampilkan jejak digital berupa pesan-pesan yang berkontribusi dalam proses kreasi dan re-kreasi *ondel-ondel*.

## KATA KUNCI

Ondel-ondel; postmodernisme; Betawi.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In the capital city where rapid and chaotic growth has always been the consequence of being a global gateway (Forbes 2004), *ondel-ondel* seems to persist until now throughout globalisation. *Ondel-ondel*, as part of the Betawi culture, obviously plays a festive role in the annual carnival of Jakarta Fair to celebrate the anniversary of the capital city (Jakarta Fair n.d.). At the international level, *ondel-ondel* was also engaged in the festive parade of the 18th Asian Games held in Jakarta recently in 2018 (18th Asian Games 2018 2018). By putting aside the interpretive details of fearsome characteristics, *ondel-ondel* can generally be seen as a symbol of street artists among the current social, technological, and cultural changes in modern culture (Totanan and Paranoan 2018).

Indeed, the Betawi culture has inarguably come through a process of assimilation for a considerable amount of time throughout history. To begin with, most humanists believe that the term Betawi derives from Bekawi, a type of tree that could be easily found in the region, because there are many places derived from plantations in Jakarta (Lukmansyah, Wasino, and Ahmad 2016, 28). However, Betawi also arguably derives from Batavia, a Dutch word, referring to the region and its inhabitants (Miharja, Mulyana, and Izzan 2019, 133) long before the area gradually took shape to turn into Jakarta. Built in 1619 for the Dutch East India Company (VOC) in establishing administrative and cultural headquarters in Southeast Asia, the colonial city of Batavia was inhabited mainly by the Chinese, Indian, Indonesian, and enslaved populations with only a small group of the Dutch (Kehoe 2015).

It can be safely stated that *ondel-ondel* is a cultural embodiment among many others that makes the Betawi culture authentic in the region for generations. However, it takes beyond the traditional lenses to appreciate the relevance of *ondel-ondel* in its current form without diminishing the intrinsic values brought out of the local rituals and the distinctive appearances. The importance of reframing *ondel-ondel* would offer a pathway to understand the presence of *ondel-ondel* as a cultural icon by picking apart the region's current social and economic dynamics. Therefore, such understanding would provide the relevance of *ondel-ondel* in the middle of ongoing modernization nowadays as elaborated further in this paper.

The research in this paper focuses on the problem of a lack of explanation in approaching *ondel-ondel* besides the notion of nostalgic scrutiny or the detail of peculiar craftsmanship that has often been conducted by plenty of researchers. These explanations unluckily do not possess any insights regarding the presence of *ondel-ondel* on some occasions in the present time with seemingly zero connection to the local rituals or specific attributes to scare away the evil spirits. Instead, *ondel-ondel* has steadily evolved to be a cultural icon resulting in an unwritten rule that any local events are obliged to involve *ondel-ondel* for festivity and the absence of doing so indicates cultural incompleteness. Such phenomenon is bolstered by local street artists who wander around the city showcasing *ondel-ondel* later accompanied by a number of pedestrians who spare a certain amount of money.

The purpose of this paper is to delve into *ondel-ondel* in its actual meaning by aiming to answer the questions revolving around the ways postmodernism justifies the presence of *ondel-ondel* in the present time. There are two defining features of postmodernism that are incorporated in this paper. Fundamentally, these encompass the presence of *ondel-ondel* as a consolable mode among modern changes and the interplay of media technology in shaping the socially constructed, sensory world of meanings, including *ondel-ondel* in this case. The former feature discusses the phenomenon of cultural inheritance that does

not cease to flourish along with the modern consequence of globalisation. The latter feature discusses the actuality of *ondel-ondel* in its current form in which the invention of tools for media purposes affects the users in constructing cultural inheritance and, thus, shapes the sensory meaning of *ondel-ondel*.

Overall, the flow of the research in this paper consists of several sections. The first section explores a brief history of Betawi to lay out the context. The second section explores globalisation and street artists to allow the presence of *ondel-ondel* at the core of the locals. The third section explores soft power, diplomacy, and local along with international events to shift the presence of *ondel-ondel* to a broader extent beyond the locals. The last section explores the defining features of postmodernism to finally provide the relevance to reveal *ondel-ondel* in its actual meaning.

## 2. HISTORY OF BETAWI IN BRIEF

In a quest of tracing the history of Betawi inhabiting Jakarta, the capital city of Indonesia, it is unlikely not to come across the colonisation by the Dutch that occurred after the empires had predominantly taken place. It is at the same time common to discover the pre-Jakarta region in interchangeable local and non-local terminologies, such as Sunda Kelapa, Jayakarta or Jacatra, and Batavia. Sunda Kelapa goes a long way back to the twelfth century as the main port for traders and Jayakarta pinpoints the Bantenese sultanate's superiority over the region in the early sixteenth century (Nugroho 2020, 68). In favour of taking over the region, the Bantenese sultanate defeated the Portuguese to rename Sunda Kelapa to be Jayakarta (Nugroho 2020, 68) which means victory on June 22, 1527, the commemoration date of the region until today (Supriyanto and Dharsono 2017, 72). To lay out the context of the region the Betawi people initially originate, it is noteworthy to mainly devote to the pre-Jakarta region of Batavia that followed after the utilisation of the previous local terminology.

As said earlier, several ethnicities were inhabiting the region sometime before the Dutch colonisation commenced in the sixteenth century. The Dutch, who were among the first Europeans to settle in Jayakarta, anchored their arrival in the late sixteenth century and ran into the inhabitants principally identifying themselves as belonging to the Sundanese ethnicity with a group of Chinese traders and arrack brewers (Taylor 2009, 3). The arrival of the Dutch for settlement was motivated by their technological development along with cultural and socioeconomic climate leading to shipbuilding practices in favour of trade with Asia beyond European waters (Van Duivenvoorde 2015, 8). Soon right after the VOC set its foot along with the establishment of the colonial city of Batavia in the early seventeenth century (Kehoe 2015), the Dutch solidified their power in forcing back the Portuguese as their competitor in trade between Europe and Asia for the past century (Gaastra 2007, 13).

Since then, the birth of Betawi slowly arose out of the assimilation among a lot of ethnicities in the region, including the natives, for centuries ahead in the future. The lives of the Betawi people were shaped because their native identity had faded caused by interethnic marriage in Batavia (Lukmansyah, Wasino, and Ahmad 2016, 26). For reasons of security in easing up the monitoring in the region, the ethnicity grouping was later carried out into three groups (Lukmansyah, Wasino, and Ahmad 2016, 28) comprised of (1) Europeans and Mestizos; (2) migrant Easterners, for example, Chinese, Arabians, Parsis, Gujaratis; and (3) natives (Chaer 2015, 41–42 as cited in Lukmansyah, Wasino, and Ahmad 2016, 28). In terms of enslaved populations, it is worth mentioning that the migration does not only apply to group two, but also group three, including ethnicities in Java, for example, Sundanese and Javanese, and out of Java, for example, Balinese, Bugis, Batak, and Ambonese for the VOC to meet its labour needs (Castles 1967, 153-204; Abeyasekere 1987 as cited in Hadi and Tirtosudarmo 2016, 23).

It took approximately three hundred and a half for the natives to finally get rid of the Dutch colonisation from their land. Several decades following Independence Day in 1945, Indonesia, along with other countries in Southeast Asia known to have the majority of the population inhabiting rural areas, even went through urbanisation at a high rate in the 1980s (Institute of Population Studies Chulalongkorn University 1981, xiii). Such urbanisation implies that the migration, at least, within the country kept on happening for other ethnicities outside Jakarta, which was already multi-ethnic by nature, to merge altogether on the spot. It strikes plausible that the region has always been a melting pot for a lot of ethnicities since centuries ago up to now, precisely due to the condition of Jakarta as the capital city of Indonesia.

In Indonesia, the credence to ancestors appears to be very strong and popular among many ethnicities through the widespread use of any creature masks. It represents ancestral figures (Suyahya 2019, 525) and, therefore, is perceived as a sign of people's ancestral presence and a carrier of their story in which such masks along with ritual performances, or as sometimes referred to a theatre without speech, are meant to bring images from the past into the present (Sumardjo 1992, 76 as cited in Suyahya 2019, 525). *Ondel-ondel* is one of the examples of those rituals of the Betawi people. The original meaning of *ondel-ondel* is associated with *barongan* in the sense of togetherness because *ondel-ondel* as art always appears collectively in the group(s). The ritualistic value of *ondel-ondel* can explain the fact that this type of art already existed even before Islam entered the island of Java, thus *ondel-ondel* as art is initially influenced by the Hindu culture dedicated to the beliefs in the Gods (Bukhori and Adriani-Salim 2018, 73).

Time by time, *ondel-ondel* has evolved respectively. From the 1970s to the present, *ondel-ondel* has experienced a shift in its appearance and function. According to Governor Regulation No. 11 of 2017, *ondel-ondel* is "a symbol of strength that can maintain security and order, being strong, brave, resolute, honest and anti-manipulation" (Suyahya 2019, 524). On the other hand, *ondel-ondel* has become marginalised by the community due to the impact of globalisation and the development of technology.

### 3. CONTEMPORARY CASES

#### 3.1 The End of Nature and the End of Tradition in Globalisation

As a contemporary concept, globalisation brings forth all sorts of change that are impossible to resist in every corner of the world. There are multiple references when it comes to globalisation. Giddens particularly highlights the end of nature and the end of tradition in the way globalisation reshapes the lives of human beings.

This is a society living after the end of nature. Few aspects of the physical world, in other words, are any longer just natural — unaffected by human intervention. It is also a society living after the end of tradition. The end of tradition doesn't mean that tradition disappears, as the Enlightenment thinkers wanted. On the contrary, in different versions it continues to flourish everywhere. But less and less — if I can put it in this fashion — is it tradition lived in the traditional way. The traditional way means defending tradition through its internal claims to truth. (Giddens 2002, 46)

In relation to the presence of *ondel-ondel* at the core of the locals, it is inevitable to embrace street artists. Additionally, it is relative to say that the people who create *ondel-ondel* are the same people who wander around the streets with the company of traditional music for pedestrians to spare a certain amount of money. One could claim that these people performing a kind of local art on the streets are beggars in a different form (Fajarwati and Fathoni 2019) among the socioeconomic dynamics in Jakarta and other places surrounding Jakarta in which the region is called the Greater Jakarta Area. The so-called socioeconomic

dynamics are indeed driven by the changes globalisation brings forth, which are primarily the end of nature and the end of tradition in the case of the presence of *ondel-ondel* in the Greater Jakarta Area.

It is cautious to claim that the Betawi people still exist today. Of course, the high rate of urbanisation, as asserted in the previous section, is related to the identity of the Betawi people. Simply put, identity matters to be manifested in how art is culturally perceived from time to time, including *ondel-ondel*. This is also coupled with the fact that globalisation constantly forces people to change their many ways of living. Nonetheless, urbanisation and globalisation do not necessarily refrain the Betawi people from creating and re-creating their Betawi identity as represented in their art to showcase their existence.

On the contrary to popular beliefs about the identity of becoming more marginalised and disappearing, it turns out that the Betawi people have been becoming more active in expressing their identity as a means of representing their existence to have a more prominent role in the history of Jakarta (Shahab 2001, 49). A couple of establishments of local authorities in the 1970s, such as (1) Dinas Pariwisata dan Kebudayaan Jakarta (Jakarta Tourism and Culture Office) to make it a tourist and culture destination with international standard (Enjoy Jakarta n.d.); and (2) Lembaga Kebudayaan Betawi or a local institution for preservation and development of the Betawi culture (Lembaga Kebudayaan Betawi n.d.), marked the entire process of showcasing the existence of the Betawi people to be officially institutionalised. It demonstrates that even in the process of showcasing the existence, the Betawi culture is open to changes to be familiar enough for the outside community. Yet, the local authorities are also aware of what makes the Betawi culture authentic, whichever degree of authenticity, is the reason why the Betawi people exist in the hope for the outside community to come to Jakarta to experience the Betawi culture.

Giddens pretty much sums up the shift in the ways a society lives in globalisation. As part of the Betawi culture, *ondel-ondel* in the pastime used to be believed to scare away the evil spirits in a variety of occasions in the following but not limited to (1) *arak-arakan*, a traditional ceremony performed after a harvest of typically rice farms or crops to show gratitude to Dewi Sri (Saidi 2011 as cited in Supriyanto and Dharsono 2017, 73), a goddess of fertility; (2) *khitanan*, a traditional ceremony performed after a circumcision (Pigeaud 1932, 306 as cited in Ruchiat 2012, 158 as cited in Supriyanto and Dharsono 2017, 73) in which *ondel-ondel* was believed to be an embodiment of *Danyang Desa*, a spirit of evil repellent; and (3) inauguration of the establishment of Museum Mandiri through a procession of planting a buffalo head (Supriyanto and Dharsono 2017, 74) to show respect to the believed spirits (Van Peursen 1976, 38 as cited in Supriyanto and Dharsono 2017, 74). Unfortunately, the presence of *ondel-ondel* on the streets nowadays cannot quite match the ideal beliefs of deity or spirit, as clearly shown in the presence of *ondel-ondel* in the pastime. The fabrication of social and economic backgrounds of the society nowadays is dynamic in a way that is different from the pastime despite the ongoing multi-ethnicity that has never come to an end in Jakarta. For a start, agricultural land and agricultural production are getting less and less while the development of infrastructure increases vigorously with a large population due to urbanisation (Indrawati 2017). While the presence of *ondel-ondel* in *khitanan* as well as the inauguration of buildings is very likely to be found, *ondel-ondel* is not mandatory to have around in the former, and the procession of planting a buffalo head is rarely heard in the latter.

Again, to suggest such cultural changes as if *ondel-ondel* has transformed to be part of a modern version of the Betawi culture means to suggest the presence of *ondel-ondel* on the streets in the same manner, which does not sound right. None of the occasions mentioned earlier suggest the act of expecting pedestrians to spare a certain amount of money. One could venture into the idea of pedestrians being scared of evil spirits so that they would do as expected to fill in the money bucket. Still, the belief of spirits, in general, is left with suspicion to be washed out along with the high rate of urbanisation. The performers of *ondel-ondel*,

or beggars in disguise, in other words, due to the simplicity of the performance, even tend to be viewed as disturbing buskers representing the lower class (Fajarwati and Fathoni 2019, 35).

### 3.2 Soft Power, Diplomacy, and Asia

Apart from the lower class setting, it requires more concepts to apprehend the presence of *ondel-ondel* in local and international events in Jakarta that globalisation cannot sufficiently do. The concepts of soft power and diplomacy come into play for the most part in regard to the annual Jakarta Fair and the 18th Asian Games.

The soft power of a country essentially relies upon three conditions (1) where it is attractive to others; (2) when it lives up to them at home and abroad; and (3) when they are seen as legitimate and having moral authority (Nye 2004, 11). These three conditions respectively generate three resources of soft power, namely culture, political values, and foreign policies (Nye 2004, 11). To shift the presence of *ondel-ondel* to a broader extent beyond the locals, the first resource of soft power is chiefly in line with the events where *ondel-ondel* resides to attract visitors or tourists.

Moreover, culture in this sense is defined as the set of values and practices that create meaning for a society manifested in high culture, for example, literature, art, and education appealing to elites and popular culture revolving around mass entertainment (Nye 2004, 11). In terms of the tricky impression of *ondel-ondel* as artwork for street artists or beggars in disguise, the presence of *ondel-ondel* falls into the latter category in the carnival of Jakarta Fair every year and the parade of the 18th Asian Games every four years. Of course, both events fall into popular culture, directed at both locals and non-locals dominated by common people. It is unknown whether these street artists or beggars in disguise are fully embraced in Jakarta Fair and the 18th Asian Games. Any street artist of *ondel-ondel*, nevertheless, cannot solely depend on occasional events if the act of expecting people to fill in the money bucket is for internal funding and especially if being a street artist of *ondel-ondel* is the only job to fulfil basic needs on a daily basis. Hence, the presence of *ondel-ondel* in the events and on the streets can be very possibly glued to figure out how far the authorities manage the cultural inheritance of their country. Even more ambitious, it can also be glued to determine the progress made on the social welfare of a country.

In spite of the significance of culture as a resource of the soft power of a country, it is important to consider new public diplomacy, which is sometimes overlapped with cultural relations, to exercise soft power in international relations. New public diplomacy lies on public diplomacy or diplomacy in general as a uniquely stately activity of various types of state actors and non-state actors against the backdrop of interconnected realities of global relationships which no longer distinguish foreign publics and domestic socialisation with more engagement with foreign audiences of civil society groups beyond the opinion gatekeepers (Melissen 2006, 12-14). Both new public diplomacy and cultural relations ramp up in engaging with foreign audiences, mutuality and the establishment of stable relationships, the long haul, and winning hearts and minds and building trust as opposed to selling messages, mere policy-driven campaigns, and short-term needs (Melissen 2006, 21).

In sharp contrast with the tension of gentle convergence where new public diplomacy is slowly but surely stepping its foot on cultural relations in facilitating networks between non-governmental parties at home and abroad (Melissen 2006, 22), the presence of *ondel-ondel* on the streets comes across as a question targeting the authorities to work on the improvement of the livelihood in the Greater Jakarta Area by at least building more collaborations with street artists or beggars in disguise for festive function. Holding down such collaborations for the impetus of a unique state activity apparently invites a point of contemplation

over welcoming non-locals while not totally taking care of the neglected locals. Accordingly, the poverty rate in the Greater Jakarta Area encompassing Jakarta, Bogor, Tangerang, South Tangerang, and Bekasi has been stagnant since the early 2000s, undeterred by rapid development in the highest urban concentration in the country (Suryahadi and Marlina 2018, ii). Exercising *ondel-ondel* as one of the resources of soft power in events at this point is sadly visible to be a short-term fix for the annual Jakarta Fair dubbed to be the biggest, the longest, and most complete fair in Southeast Asia (Jakarta Fair n.d.) and the 18th Asian Games that can be traced back to the year 1913 for the first-ever Multisport Games in Asia in Manila, Philippines known as Oriental Games (Olympic Council of Asia n.d.). In the case of the latter, the collaboration done for the presence of *ondel-ondel* is in part due to that host diplomats are constrained with the qualities of 'the other' in the complex arena of international relations, instead of 'the self', handicapped to represent their own people (Cornago 2013, 30–48).

Now it is appropriate to dig deeper into the concern on Asia and Asian since these terms are what unite people in the interconnected realities of global relationships, decidedly in events that are specifically planned to be Asian in a number of places in Asia. Ranging from the vast linguistic diversity in the struggle of one voice to the very lasting impact of European colonialism on the construction of national identity (Khanna 2019), such events are deemed necessary to strengthen Asian existence in Asia. While it is too pompous to blindly portray *ondel-ondel* as Asian forcefully demanding it to be present in just any Asian events, history sticks to prove that the Betawi people are multi-ethnic with enormous Asian fortitude throughout the colonisation. Intriguingly, *ondel-ondel* does not come out with any specified language at all as heard from the usual traditional music of the Betawi people, which positions itself to be relatable enough for any mother tongue in Asia. *Ondel-ondel* also does not ask visitors or tourists to respond with any difficult movement or dance for the joy of celebration. They are able to comfortably sightsee *ondel-ondel* from afar and take snapshots for memory collection or effortlessly join the crowd to be near *ondel-ondel* and collectively walk around the venue for a real sensation of culture. All of these corroborate that *ondel-ondel* serves to sustain the Asian existence and should be strongly encouraged in Asia.

#### 4. FINDINGS OF ONDEL-ONDEL THROUGH POSTMODERNISM

As a matter of fact, the presence of *ondel-ondel* can somewhat stretch in various settings while somehow keeping what remains to be its historical roots in the era of globalisation with soft power and diplomacy of the international arena, particularly Asia. At first glance, it is slightly palpable to dissect the presence of *ondel-ondel* in ways of postmodernism are comprehended among contemporary Western society. However, the impact of globalisation and the development of technology is bound to expand and break through national boundaries that a postmodern culture gives the path to provide the relevance of *ondel-ondel* beyond any kind of cultural resurrection or symbolic interpretation.

In the light of the relationship between media and also culture, a couple of defining features of postmodernism are incorporated to answer the questions revolving around the ways postmodernism justifies the presence of *ondel-ondel* in the present time. These defining features encompass the theoretical notion in the field of communication that "postmodern describes a period when the promise of modernism no longer seems justified" and "we have become tools of our tools" (Griffin 2012, 319). The former discussion of the first defining feature of postmodernism explains the phenomenon of cultural inheritance along with the modern consequence of globalisation. The latter discussion of the second defining feature explains the actuality of *ondel-ondel* and its sensory meaning out of the development of technology for media purposes.

#### 4.1 A Period when the Promise of Modernism No Longer seems Justified

Undoubtedly, the presence of *ondel-ondel* can be a symbol of strength under the law regardless of its circumstances to represent the lower class or represent 'the self' in various settings. Yet, it is still a question as to what truly makes *ondel-ondel* present among modern changes after centuries of existence. However, the corrosion of the beliefs in the Gods or spirits is easily spotted here and there. In a way, *ondel-ondel* is part of the Betawi culture to inherit from generation to generation with its relevance to be adjusted over time, leaving a missing link of what constitutes *ondel-ondel* as a whole created and re-created.

Upon the rejection of a good deal of many modernistic ideologies, for example, the industrial revolution, nationalistic imperialism, the rationality of the Enlightenment, faith in science, and any sense that the world is on an upward trajectory, Griffin ponders over Baudrillard's essay on nihilism that the absence of meaning clues some sort of devoid hope in with neither optimistic nor pessimistic tone as follows.

I have the impression with postmodernism that there is an attempt to rediscover a certain pleasure in the irony of things. Right now one can tumble into total hopelessness—all the definitions, everything, it's all been done. What can one do? What can one become? And postmodernity is the attempt...to reach a point where one can live with what is left. It is more a survival amongst the remnants than anything else. (Griffin 2012, 319)

In reality, the creation and the re-creation of *ondel-ondel* is an attempt to rediscover pleasure as a consolable mode among modern changes. *Ondel-ondel* has always been well-known to be part of Betawi culture. Its presence is an undeniable force in itself for people in the country to involve it in a possible way of the present time and remind themselves of their existence survive.

Putting aside the hustle and the bustle of the lower class and 'the self' for a while, the presence of *ondel-ondel* in historical sites of the city should not be a surprise to give the pleasure when modernity no longer seems relevant. Such static placement of *ondel-ondel* is composed in historical sites of the city, for example, Kota Tua Jakarta or Old Town of Jakarta and Textile Museum, to present the existence of Betawi. Among a number of tourist sites, the historicity of the Old Town as the trade hub in the continent of Asia centuries ago (Dinas Komunikasi, Informatika dan Statistik Pemprov DKI Jakarta 2017) gently rests on the notion of postmodernity by virtue of the appearance of the past in its current form (Entas and Mudana 2018) while maintaining the participation of local communities for its development of tourism (Muntu, Wiranatha, and Arida 2018), although it has failed to receive World Heritage status from the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (Wijaya n.d.). As for Textile Museum established in 1976 to look after traditional textiles against modern textiles, the persistence of alterations was real with regard to the preceding functions of the museum having been a residence for three consecutive foreigners from the 19th century to the mid 20th century, a national military headquarter for the People's Security Body or Badan Keamanan Rakyat (BKR) during the period of struggle for independence, and a residence for Lie Sion Pin before it was acquired by the government of social affairs to hand to the local government of Jakarta (Asosiasi Museum Indonesia n.d.).

Besides historical sites of the city, *ondel-ondel* is also present in the other kinds of tourist sites, such as Beautiful Indonesia Miniature Park or Taman Mini Indonesia Indah (TMII) and Ancol Dreamland or Taman Impian Jaya Ancol. The imitative nuance in the architecture of the park enables each province of Indonesia, including the Special Capital District of Jakarta or Daerah Khusus Ibukota (DKI) Jakarta, to introduce their culture and natural resources, promote their unique potential to attract tourists and investors, and develop the recreative, informative, communicative, and attractive aspects to be productive and beneficial as the inspiration for the civilisation of the country (Taman Mini Indonesia Indah n.d.). Meanwhile, the festivity of



Ancol is in sync with the festive appearance of *ondel-ondel* to draw tourists or visitors' attention during their recreation in the largest theme park in the city (Taman Impian Jaya Ancol n.d.).

#### 4.2 We have become Tools of Our Tools

Another defining feature of postmodernism is that there is a connection between the inventor of tools and the tools invented. In the case of *ondel-ondel*, it is no exception for the Betawi culture to be captured and communicated through media technology in abundant ways depending on how the users capture them and how the users receive them want to interpret. Griffin ideally delineates the interplay of media technology in the field of communication as follows.

Canadian Marshall McLuhan surveyed the history of media technology and observed that *we shape our tools and they in turn shape us*. According to McLuhan, when we continually use a communication technology it alters our symbolic environment—the socially constructed, sensory world of meanings that shapes our perceptions, experiences, attitudes, and behaviour. If we concentrate on analysing or resisting the content of media messages, we miss the fact that the medium itself is the message. (Griffin 2012, 319)

The space that the media technology virtually produces where the socially constructed, sensory world of meanings is communicated is in accordance with the way *ondel-ondel* is present far from the way *ondel-ondel* was present in the past time. Concurrently, the way *ondel-ondel* is present in the existent place and how *ondel-ondel* is present in the virtual space contribute to the actual meaning of *ondel-ondel*. Hence, defying the communication made out of the existent place of *ondel-ondel* and the virtual space of *ondel-ondel* betrays the development of media technology.

Furthermore, the presence of *ondel-ondel* communicated in the virtual space exhibits digital prints of messages from time to time, contributing to the creation and re-creation of *ondel-ondel* in the near future. At the very least, if not the same content of media messages of *ondel-ondel* to be prolonged, the medium of media technology in which *ondel-ondel* is virtually present shapes all human perceptions, experiences, attitudes, and behaviour of what *ondel-ondel* actually means to be considered and to probably dictate what *ondel-ondel* will actually mean so long the medium firmly lingers to be widely used by the mass in the interconnected realities of global relationships. For example, the presence of *ondel-ondel* worthy of a few seconds amid numerous national and multinational affiliations gathered in the area of National Monument at the beginning of the officially published video less than a hundred days prior to the 18th Asian Games recently held in Jakarta in 2018 (18th Asian Games 2018 2018). The presence of *ondel-ondel*, not being the focus of the object, was partially displayed side by side with the youth representatives right after the banners of the international event pushing for its slogan Energy of Asia up in the air (18th Asian Games 2018 2018). Thus, *ondel-ondel* becomes more than a matter of the existence of the Betawi culture, but also the identity of the Betawi people in the way it was presented. It is intelligibly interpreted that the youth of the Betawi people gives birth to the energy of the continent for the future in the name of more generations to come.

The regional sports event held in 2018 was not accurately the first time for the host country to ignite the unity of Asia throughout history. The moment the regional sport event had eventually been authorised to kick off as Asian Games, it was respectively held in Delhi, India in 1951, Manila, Philippines in 1954, Tokyo, Japan in 1958, Jakarta, Indonesia in 1962, and so on (Tangkudung, Tangkudung, Puspitorini, et al. 2019, 1-13). Ever since the Asian Games was held in Delhi, India, in 1951, Indonesia has at no time been absent to participate regularly and to evidently foster the relationship as a bold sign of commitment in the

region (Tangkudung, Tangkudung, Puspitorini, et al. 2019, 13). After more than a half-century, the event was back to be held for the second time in Indonesia, two big cities namely Jakarta and Palembang in particular (Tangkudung, Tangkudung, Puspitorini, et al. 2019, 13), with the ceremonial moments of both the opening and the closing vigorously memorialised in the former as the capital city of Indonesia where *ondel-ondel* originates.

## 5. CONCLUSION

There is no way for *ondel-ondel* to be detached from the capital city of Indonesia and the area encircling it. As part of the Betawi culture, *ondel-ondel* has been dwelling for centuries with the robust influence of the Hindu culture as its source of originality. However, later it slowly became authentic to be Betawi along the way on account of an exceptionally long process of assimilation.

Historically, *ondel-ondel* represents ancestral figures to be a carrier of the story for the younger generations (Suyahya 2019, 525). Then, the presence of *ondel-ondel* emerges to represent the lower class of the people as the impact of globalisation progresses while nature and tradition digress correspondingly (Giddens 2002, 46). On the fancier side of the international arena in Asia, the presence of *ondel-ondel* parades through the monumental area of the city (18th Asian Games 2018 2018) representing 'the self' for the sake of identity of the Betawi people, the youth in particular, to ignite the energy of the 18th Asian Games in 2018.

What is more is that all of these representations are theoretically dissected further through postmodernism to bring out the actual meaning of *ondel-ondel*. It is found that (1) *ondel-ondel* is an attempt to rediscover the pleasure as a consolable mode among modern changes; and (2) the presence of *ondel-ondel* communicated in the virtual space exhibits digital prints of messages which contribute to the creation and the re-creation of *ondel-ondel*.

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