

Sarimbit Model as a Cultural Expression of Betawi through *Ondel-ondel* Visual Appearance

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Abstract

Ondel-ondel is a cultural expression in the form of an iconic performing art for the identity of the Betawi people. This is still maintained with its basic structure but is getting more "beautiful" day by day. Their attached costumes follow the times; their appearance and functions change in line with their activities. Not only has it become an art form, but now it has also become a medium for conveying messages. This study examines the *Ondel-ondel's* visual appearance in 2018-2021 to ascertain the changes in appearances and the meanings of its existence and ideology in the Betawi community.

Roland Barthes' connotative semiotic approach is used to read the meanings or messages behind the changes in the appearances and the ideologies expressed by the changes. Literature, interviews, and observations as well as written data and documentation of *Ondel-ondel* and its community were employed to gather data.

The findings show a tendency for uniformity of costume elements or the appearance of male and female *Ondel-ondel* that presented a harmonious, compact, and unpretentious couples. *Ondel-ondel* is a communication medium that conveys messages as people who obey the rules and live-in harmony. This research provides insights into the meanings of the presence of *Ondel-ondel* through costume elements with the result that the community can appreciate its existence.

Keywords: *Ondel-ondel*, Visual Appearance, *Sarimbit Model*, Cultural Expression, Betawi

Introduction

Ondel-ondel is a pair of giant puppets, consisting of male and female figures, typical of the Betawi people who can be easily found in Jakarta. It originates from a sacred object for the *Betawi Pinggir* community, called *barongan* (Wahidiyat & Carrollina, 2023). Indigenous people frequently used *Ondel-ondel* as harmful bad luck repellent performed with a smoking ritual (*ukup*) to gain power from the universe. It is suspected that the *barongan* had existed and has been used since 1605 when Prince Jayakarta Wijayakarma's accompaniment celebrated the circumcision of Prince Abdul Mafakhir at Sunda Kelapa (Supriyanto & Dharsono, 2017). *Barongan* is tall and large and measures about 250 x 80 x 80 cm (Wahidiyat & Tabroni, 2020).

Barongan is considered as a guardian of the Betawi village and people. At that time, its function was as a village guard and a repellent of bad influences such as disease outbreaks, crop failure, and many other things (Paramita, 2018). The *barongan* had a scary face, allegedly red or dark in color with round eyes bulging out, long fangs and wide ears.

However, since people proclaimed it as one of the icons of Jakarta city in the 1970s (Samantha, 2013), the *barongan* had to change its appearance to be accepted by all the Betawi residents, including the Betawi city who adhered to Islamic culture. The hideous face, bulging round eyes, fanged teeth, and wide ears had to be changed into more human-like figure; even the smoking ritual (*ukup*) was eliminated. Furthermore, the *barongan* has a new function as welcoming dignitaries and decorating government buildings and Betawi art stages; then, people changed its name to *Ondel-ondel*. Since then, the appearance of *Ondel-ondel* has become more beautiful and charming. With the change in appearance, *Ondel-ondel* is looked down by the community through inappropriate treatment by its users. Even today, there are many regulations and prohibitions on *Ondel-ondel* singing (busking) on the streets.

Ondel-ondel looks more “beautiful” when the Betawi people get into the tourism sector, where they are strongly required to look as attractive as possible visually and commissioned by people to enliven certain events. To fulfill this commission, *Ondel-ondel* are given the freedom to appear in all shapes, sizes, and quantities. It is estimated that this “beautiful” *Ondel-ondel* appearance has existed since the first Jakarnaval held in 1998. *Ondel-ondel* is used to entertain the audience and complement the stage (Wahidiyat, 2019). At this time, *Ondel-ondel* can be more than a pair in a parade format, and it is not uncommon for *Ondel-ondel* to go around the village without a partner and a complete musical accompaniment team (Fig. 1).



Fig. 1: *Ondel-ondel* singing around Ciputat, Jakarta, Indonesia.
Source: Purbasari, 2019

The *Ondel-ondel* appear more and more like a human person. Female *Ondel-ondel* appear with complete make-up, from eye shadow and blush on, a bright smile with dimples, bright red lipstick, earrings, and eyelashes. Meanwhile, the male *Ondel-ondel* had a neat mustache and a broad smile. Based on the research, it can be said that the commercial model *Ondel-ondel* gives the meaning as a handsome, beautiful, friendly, and modern Betawi man with lively, contrasting, and fun color nuances (Fig. 2).



Fig. 2: Female *Ondel-ondel* commercial model, complete with blush, eyelashes, earrings, and fiery red *ginju* (lipstick).

Source: Purbasari, 2014 and 2017

Following their function, commercial *Ondel-ondel* are often used in cultural and artistic events in Jakarta in large numbers in parade formats such as 17 August's, the anniversary of the capital city of DKI Jakarta; Jakarnaval, Jakarta Cultural Carnival, Betawi Arts, and Culture Festival, and so on. *Ondel-ondel* can be present in all shapes and sizes, ranging from large, medium, and small for the sake of fulfilling the commissions.

With the Governor Regulation of DKI Jakarta Province Number 11 of 2017 concerning the Betawi Cultural Icons, including Regional Regulation of DKI Jakarta Province No. 8 of 2007 concerning Public Order and Article 39 (1) CHAPTER VIII concerning Social Order (Sembiring & Gatra, 2021), the DKI Jakarta Civil Service Police Unit (*Satuan Polisi Pamong Praja* or *Satpol PP*) is aggressively controlling the *Ondel-ondel* buskers on the street. As a result, street *Ondel-ondel* buskers are rarely seen around Jakarta anymore and can normally be found only around the outskirts of Jakarta, such as Tangerang, Bekasi, Depok, and other suburbs. With this regulation, it can be interpreted that *Ondel-ondel* in Jakarta is increasingly rare, except on certain occasions where it is clear who the commission is.

Recently, there has been a significant change of the appearance of the *Ondel-ondel* commercial model to the next model. The variety and excitement of the commercial model *Ondel-ondel* was replaced by a similar appearance between the male and female *Ondel-ondel*, which was then called the *Sarimbit* (couple) model.

Earlier research yielded three *Ondel-ondel* models, namely the personification model, the Islamic model, and the commercial model. *Ondel-ondel* remains observable and enjoyable in Jakarta, exhibiting distinct conditions and adaptations. These alterations provide insights into the societal conditions of the Betawi community during their respective eras. The aim of this research is to examine the changes in *Ondel-ondel*'s visual appearance spanning from 1920 to 2018.

Its objectives are:

1. To analyze the images using Roland Barthes' connotative semiotics, with a historical perspective approach,
2. To explain the meanings behind the accompanying cultural, social, economic, and political events.

In this investigation, the *Barongan* model is utilized as a basis for tracking the evolution of *Ondel-ondel*, considering the impact of contextual dynamics such as social, political, and cultural factors.

This *Ondel-ondel* research, which was conducted in 2021, places a commercial model *Ondel-ondel* as the background and examines changes in appearance through visual signs (elements of costumes) and the function of *Ondel-ondel* after a commercial model to read the meaning or concept of communication or ideology of the change. Cultural expressions are those expressions that result from the creativity of individuals, group and societies, and that have cultural content (Unesco, 2023). Based on Matsumoto (2009) it can be implied that cultures influence the emotions. Cultural beliefs about emotions that support the general moderation and have implications for conception (Bond, 1993). Barthes (1983) shows this through signs, where there a sign is the form on image or word that has two aspects that are responded by the human senses called signifiers and the field of marker or concepts of an aspect and other form called signified. In the further Barthes calls this as denotation and connotation (Wijayanto & Iswari, 2021). Barthes connotation semiotics is used to interpret the meaning of *Ondel-ondel* through several topics: denotation, symbolic sign relations, paradigmatic sign relationships, syntagmatic sign relationships, connotations, stolen language, naturalization, myths, and ideologies (Sunardi, 2013). By reading the changes in the visual signs, the Betawi people can know the concepts contained in the current use of *Ondel-ondel* and understand how they should treat this art object.

Theoretical Framework

Cultural expressions encompass the diverse methods through which a specific culture reveals, communicates, and articulates its values, beliefs, traditions, and identity. These manifestations come in various forms, spanning a broad spectrum of human activities. Cultural expressions are dynamic and have the capacity to undergo evolution. They are pivotal in molding the identity of a society, nurturing a feeling of belonging, and offering a medium for individuals to connect. Culture plays a very important role as a means by which these relationships are expressed, but at the same time there must be adequate communication (Balc, 2018). In this case, cultural expressions can be translated as signs, where according to Barthes signs can be interpreted as denotation and connotation. Denotative meaning is a meaning that does not contain other meanings or values, while connotative meaning is an additional meaning or sense value contained in a word (Nofia & Bustam, 2022).

Ondel-ondel is a cultural performance of the Betawi people passed down from generation to generation (Akmaliyah, Zulfa, & Rochamawati, 2021). As a culture, *Ondel-ondel* is created from emotional relationships that crystallize into cultural expressions, that shown in the appearance (structure and costume elements). *Ondel-ondel* is a pair of large, ancient Betawi dolls which in their long journey were chosen to become icons of the city of DKI Jakarta (Purbasari et al, 2016). Before being known as *Ondel-ondel*, this large doll was called *Barongan*, meaning crowd in Betawi language and was part of the people's sacred ritual activities (Saputra, interview 2019).

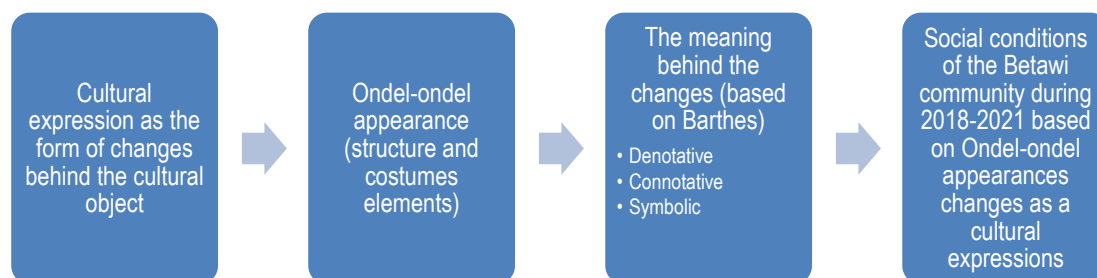


Fig. 3: Theoretical framework.

Source: Purbasari, 2023

In subsequent developments, *Ondel-ondel* was no longer associated as a sacred object but developed into a part of several forms of traditional art, or became a medium for various

practical purposes including becoming simply state property used for large and small business purposes. This determination occurred in cultural negotiations carried out by the DKI Jakarta government with several levels of Betawi society (religious figures and artistic figures) in the 70s (Yasmine Shahab, 2001 - Reinventing Betawi Traditions: The Authority's Side in the Nationalization Process of Local Traditions). Since then, *Ondel-ondel* has always been used in every Betawi folk event, except for death rituals, until today (Saputra, interview, 2022). This proves that *Ondel-ondel* has a clear significance in various dimensions of Betawi people's lives.

Research on the structure and elements of costumes on *Ondel-ondel*, identify the structure of *Ondel-ondel* as being constituted of three parts in general: Upper (head), Middle (body), and Bottom (legs). The costume elements at the upper (head): coconut flower, stag (crown), palm fiber or *ijuk* as hair, and mask for the face. The middle part (body) contains elements of costume: *toka-toka* (triangular-shaped cloth) on the neck of female *Ondel-ondel*, sash or shawl for female, *cukin* (small cloth covering the chest) or sash for male *Ondel-ondel*, *sadariah* clothes for male, and *baju kurung* or kebaya for female, belts are worn by both. And lastly, *jamblang* cloth is used as an element of the lower part as a leg covering (Wahidiyat & Tabroni, 2020). At first glance, the structure, and elements of the *Sarimbit* costume look the similar as the commercial model, however, there are some significant changes in the appearance between both. *Ondel-ondel* has lived for a long time, accompanying the life of the Betawi people, undergoing several stages of changes in appearance and function.

Review of Literature

Research into this has gained attention in recent times. For convenience some of the major research are presented in the table below.

Table 1: Previous research

Source: Author

| No | Literature | Year | Title | Method | Results |
|----|---|------|---|-------------|---|
| 1 | Mita Purbasari Wahidiyat & Donna Carrollina | 2023 | Study of conography and iconology on the visual appearance of Ondel-ondel | Qualitative | The result of the search for the meaning behind the visual appearance of Ondel-ondel which is form of balance of power between anger and kindness and courage and holiness. |
| 2 | Febiola Dwi Kusumadhita, Martha Tisna Ginanjari Putri, & Dhika Quarta Rosita | 2022 | Eksplorasi Nilai-Nilai Karakter Budaya Betawi Dalam Wujud Ondel-Ondel | Qualitative | The results showed that the shape of Betawi ondel-ondel has a unique structure that reflects the personality of humans who live in pairs of men and women. |
| 3 | Rizal Putranto | 2020 | Transformasi Kesenian Ondel-Ondel Betawi | Qualitative | The results of this research are that the art of Ondel-ondel used to be is a sacred art. The reason is that Ondel-ondel has it a series of deep meanings also have form and function. |
| 4 | Mita Purbasari, M Dwi Mariantio, & M Agus Burhan | 2019 | Ondel-ondel kekinian: Boneka besar Betawi di zaman modern | Qualitative | The changes of ondel-ondel's meanings and functions in building elements have been produced and contracted as its user way of thinking based on its |

| | | | | | |
|---|----------------|------|---|-------------|--|
| | | | | | form and context. The meaning interpretation of ondel-ondel craftsman and audience in particular time would be different with government's policies. |
| 5 | Sinta Paramita | 2018 | Pergeseran Makna Budaya Ondel-Ondel Pada Masyarakat Betawi Modern | Qualitative | The results of observations and discussions in this study are that the Betawi people are experiencing social and economic problems. |

Based on Table 1 above, it appears that previous research has placed more emphasis on the search for meaning and changes in meaning that occur in Ondel-ondel from time to time. Wahidiyat (2019) identifies three models of *Ondel-ondel* found in three models, each model carries its own ideology depending on the current ruler with the *barongan* model as the background of the research. *Ondel-ondel* has undergone a shift from various aspects. In the past, *Ondel-ondel* named *barongan* was a pair of giant dolls interpreted by the Betawi people as a sacred cultural performance and used for ritual offerings to the ancestral spirits. Paramita (2018) show the general changes in the past and present *Ondel-ondel* in functions, materials or objects on the body and masks, along with the development of the modernization era, *Ondel-ondel* became a livelihood for teenagers and adults. She supports further research that uses *Ondel-ondel* as a commodity to improve the standard of living of the Betawi people by changing their appearance through costume elements.

Supriyanto & Dharsono (2017) have examined the existence of *Ondel-ondel* in Jakarta as a folk performing art or presentation and its function. This has been investigated using De Witt H. Parker's aesthetic approach which focuses on its form and meaning. They have selected five works of *Ondel-ondel*, which were then analyzed based on six Parker principles, namely the principle of Unity, the principle of Theme, the principle of Variation by Theme, the principle of Development, and the principle of Hierarchy. They explain changes in function through different expressions, but for the exact needs. They point out that the appearance of the *Ondel-ondel's* various forms and meanings depend on the Betawi people's needs of use and life, at the same time as a reference for expression in behavior and identity (They do not describe the elements of the existing costumes in detail. The changes between *Ondel-ondel* with one another are also not being described. So, it is not clear what remains and what has changed because, at first glance, the appearance of *Ondel-ondel* looks the same from time to time.

Continuity and changes in *Ondel-ondel* only occur in the visual appearance or decorative elements. Borrowing Roland Barthes' term in the book *Language of Fashion* (Barthes, 2013), the decorative elements in *ondel-ondel* are hereafter called costume elements. Still referring to the term in the same book, the term model is used to divide *ondel-ondel* based on changes and developments in the elements of the costume. Beside of the word model is related to Roland Barthes' clothing system, the word model means something general or an example or type used for imitation or comparison (Flexner & Hauck, 1987)

Chienita et al. (2018) point out that commercialization of the widespread use of *Ondel-ondel* (busker or *ngamen*) makes people annoyed and concerned. This is not only because of the appearance of inappropriate clothes, but also because of their incomplete equipment and walking alone without a partner. Chienita et al. (2018) show that the completeness of *Ondel-ondel's* attributes in action greatly determines the cognitive perception of the Betawi people. However, these attributes do not explain the function and meaning of each of these attributes in more detail.

Research Methodology

Data Collection and Method

Data spanning from 2018 to 2021 was amassed through a combination of observations, interviews, and literature research. Direct interviews were undertaken with three distinct groups: cultural observers, *Ondel-ondel* creators and performers, and spectators. In-depth interviews were conducted with cultural practitioners, such as Yahya Andi Saputra from the Betawi Cultural Institute, involving participation in Betawi cultural events like Lebaran Betawi, Betawi weddings, and artistic competitions during Jakarta's anniversary celebrations in Kemayoran and Rawabelong. This research endeavor collected narratives detailing the journey of *Ondel-ondel* in the lives of the Betawi community.

Meetings with *Ondel-ondel* creators yielded insights into the process of crafting *Ondel-ondel*, encompassing the creation of masks, body frames, head frames, hands, and supplementary accessories, along with the ritual preparation for parading around the city. Interviews with street *Ondel-ondel* performers provided a glimpse into their experiences being part of *Ondel-ondel* and parading through villages. Concurrently, interviews with spectators captured responses regarding the impact of *Ondel-ondel* on their daily lives.

In addition to direct interviews and field observations, data was sourced from secondary outlets such as publications (journals, books, newspapers, the internet, magazines, and other records). *Ondel-ondel* emerges as a product of the mental constructs within the Betawi community, shaped by local contexts in accordance with the conditions of each community. This mental construction involves negotiation until the model of *Ondel-ondel* is solidified. Negotiation takes the form of dialectics, with the most rapid dialectical processes realized through the development of artistic styles (Hauser, 1982). Consequently, the evolution of *Ondel-ondel* has given rise to new models. This research employs Roland Barthes' semiotic approach (connotative semiotics), encompassing both synchronic and diachronic historical perspectives, to observe its continuity and changes over time, specifically within the time frame of 2018-2021. The connotative semiotic approach is utilized to interpret the meaning of *Ondel-ondel* across several key topics: denotation; relationships of symbolic signs, paradigmatic, and syntagmatic; connotation. The process of borrowing old forms into new forms involves taking a specific element from a previous object and developing it into a new object for a particular purpose.

Roland Barthes' semiotic approach is employed to delve into the various meanings of *Ondel-ondel* and scrutinize the historical journey of changes in costume elements. Barthes' semiotic approach consists of two levels. The first level, the signifier, represents the meaning in visible form—visual signs of *Ondel-ondel*, including costume elements, decorative motifs from head to toe, colors, and more. At this level, the costume elements from 2018-2020 are documented in a visual table. The second level of semiotics (connotation) is termed the sign. Additional meanings are further interpreted through several stages: 1) relationships of symbolic signs, paradigmatic, and syntagmatic; and 2) connotation and interactions that occur when visual signs meet emotions and cultural values—meanings derived from personal experiences. The connotation of *Ondel-ondel* transcends the visual, encompassing aspects such as the face, color, costume elements, patterns/decorative motifs, and more.

The researcher underwent several stages of analysis. Initially, a literature review was conducted to observe changes in *Ondel-ondel* costume elements, documented in the analysis of the structural scheme and costume elements. Interviews with historians and cultural practitioners were conducted to discern influencers behind these changes. Subsequently, significant events and conditions that triggered changes in *Ondel-ondel* costume elements were traced. This exploration led to the emergence of new *Ondel-ondel* models. Additionally,

important activities and individuals involved in *Ondel-ondel* were documented, connecting the changes in the costume elements of the new *Ondel-ondel* model by deciphering messages, including embedded ideologies.

Analysis

The source analysis method used in this research is source triangulation with the data analysis method carried out inductively. The results of this analysis are then integrated with Barthes' semiotic approach. Barthes' semiotic approach interprets the meaning of *Ondel-ondel* through several topics, namely 1). Denotation describes among other things, the elements of the costume, facial expressions, body shape, decorative motifs of the cloth worn, and so on. 2). Connotation, i.e., other implied meanings are interpreted further through symbolic, paradigmatic, and syntagmatic sign relations, stolen language, naturalization, myth, and ideology. The first level in Barthes' semiotics discusses all the visual signs on *Ondel-ondel* in accessories from head to toe which are then called costume elements. The second level will discuss how the continuity and changes in costume elements, which are visual signs, are further interpreted with significant events that cause these changes, ranging from social, economic, political, and cultural factors that occurred at that time. An in-depth discussion is carried out at the second level by looking at how the elements of the costume play a role in the use of *Ondel-ondel* both in the form of performing arts and as decoration, describing what forms were stolen from the previous model, the naturalization process and market ideology.

The rulers carried out cultural negotiations through the elements of the *Ondel-ondel* costume to the Betawi community by stealing the form from the previous *Ondel-ondel* model and combining it with other elements according to the needs of the time. Old elements are stolen so that the existence of *Ondel-ondel* is not entirely new and makes it alien to the community, thereby minimizing resistance to its presence. The use of the new model is repeated until it is perceived reasonable and natural, and then accepted as the truth.

These costume elements provide information to be communicated and constitute a structured system of signs that reflect the assumptions of a particular society in a certain period. Through continuity and changes in the elements of the *Ondel-ondel* costume, it can be illustrated that the Betawi rulers were carrying out symbolic communication with their people to have a familiar and comfortable identity to get a positive response for the legitimacy of their power.

The widespread use of *Ondel-ondel* to make money (busker or *ngamen*) only makes people annoyed and concerned. Not only because of the appearance of inappropriate clothes, but also because of their incomplete equipment and walking alone without a partner (Chienita et al., 2018). The results of this study indicate that the completeness of *Ondel-ondel's* attributes in action greatly determines the cognitive perception of the Betawi people. However, these attributes do not explain the function and meaning of each of these attributes in more detail.

Findings and Discussion

Reading the changes that occurred in the elements of the *Ondel-ondel* costume means seeing how the Betawi people carry and treat these big puppets in their daily lives. Based on Barthes (1983) and previous research about model of *Ondel-ondel*, the denotative analysis provides an overview of the new *Ondel-ondel* model after the commercial model.

Based on the costume elements, the appearance of *Ondel-ondel* during the commercial model period looks flagrant and lively, with coconut flowers of various styles and colors. Male and female *Ondel-ondel* can have different styles and colors, such as colorful *stangan* or crowns with different or similar motifs for a pair of *Ondel-ondel*. The male *Ondel-ondel* masks are usually red or dark, while the female

Ondel-ondel masks are white or light brown. Male *Ondel-ondel* has a friendly face with big eyes, a mustache, a smile spreading a row of clean white teeth. Meanwhile, the female *Ondel-ondel* has beautiful and flashy (*menor* means tacky in English) faces complete with make-up; eye, cheek, and lip coloring; eyelashes; dimple; ear studs or earrings. The male *Ondel-ondel* wears *sadariah* clothes decorated with *cukin* (a cloth that wraps around the neck of the male *Ondel-ondel*). The female *Ondel-ondel* wears a *baju kurung* or *kebaya* complete with *toka-toka* (a cloth covering the chest); and a sash or shawl that is not erratic in its direction. The belts worn by both *Ondel-ondel*, made of cloth, color contrasted with the clothes. Lastly, they wear *jamblang* cloth as a foot covering, often in the same plain color or contrast with the top, but sometimes batik cloth is used, depending on the event using or the commissions (Fig. 3) (Wahidiyat et al, 2022).



Fig. 4: Commercial *Ondel-ondel* looks friendly, flagrant, and lively.
Source: Purbasari, 2015

The coconut flower encircling the head of the *Sarimbit Ondel-ondel* looks very dense and full. It looks like a male Indian headdress or an expanded peacock's tail and gives the impression of luxury, weight, and authority. *Ondel-ondel's stangan* or crowns often have flora, fauna, and geometric patterns and sometimes form horn shape patterns on male *Ondel-ondel*. However, female *Ondel-ondel's* crowns are more varied than the male. Female *Ondel-ondel* wears a general *Ondel-ondel* crown, but sometimes she wears a crown that looks like black hair with a headdress in the form of a chained pendant right in the middle of the forehead, like an Indian doll. The mask (face) of the male *Ondel-ondel* remains red or dark, symbolizing courage, firmness, and authority with big eyes, a sharp nose, a neat bushy mustache, and a friendly smile. These represent the appearance of today's Betawi men who are responsible, brave, assertive, and pleasant. Female *Ondel-ondel* masks are white or light brown, symbolizing tenderness and purity and the skin color that women dream of today. The appearance of female's masks or *Ondel-ondel* faces no longer looks flagrant with eyes, cheek, and lip coloring that lights up but looks cleaner and natural (flawless). It symbolizes simplicity and is as pure as it is. The clothes of the *sadariah* model and the *kebaya* or *baju kurung* are still the choices for males and females *Ondel-ondel* clothes. These two types of clothing remind us of the appearance of the *abang* dan *none* Betawi (brother and sister of Betawi), who are representatives of the hopeful stature of Betawi youths. As in the previous *Ondel-ondel* model, the *toka-toka* in the *Sarimbit* model is used as a promotional medium with the studio's name that made this giant doll written on it. There are times when *toka-toka* are not used, depending on the needs or the type of

clothing worn by female *Ondel-ondel*. If the female *Ondel-ondel* wears a *kebaya*, the *toka-toka* is not used. Aside from that, *cukin* is often used by male *Ondel-ondel* as a substitute for a sling. The *cukin*'s motifs and colors used are matching or same as the pair's combination clothes. Likewise, the colors and motifs of scarves, belts, and *jambulang* cloth use the same motifs and colors. This pair of large puppets look the same, harmonious, and compact, symbolizing harmony (Fig. 4).



Fig. 5: *Ondel-ondel* in parade at Monas.
Source: Walid, 2019

With the Regional Regulation and Regulation of the Governor of DKI Jakarta Province, which regulates Betawi cultural icons and public order, *Ondel-ondel* are no longer allowed to take to the streets to perform. *Ondel-ondel* parades are only allowed in folk events, such as accompanying the bride and groom, parades, and so on (Interview, Saputra, 17 August 2021). This action is in line with the restrictions on the movement around the *Ondel-ondel*. The appearance of the costume elements on the *Ondel-ondel* is made in such a way that it looks the same or uniform to give the impression of being organized, not carelessly, and looking more presentable. This appearance also makes it easier for others to recognize the *Ondel-ondel* pair and their ownership.

Although the appearance of *Ondel-ondel Sarimbit* is made to look uniform and harmonious, costume elements (shape, size, and placement) also violate the existing rules. The uniformity of the elements of this costume makes the *Ondel-ondel* look disproportionate and changed in character. The *Ondel-ondel Sarimbit* model is also widely used in parades, competitions, and campaigns. Male *Ondel-ondel* has a look that tends to be the same as their partners. The impression of being frightening, firm, and authoritative like a champion (*jawara*) has changed to being friendly and fashionable like a metrosexual man. The appearance of a pair of *Ondel-ondel Sarimbit* models looks different from the previous models. The symbolic relationship between these signs in this model is composed in such a way to give an impression of dynamic order to respond to the rules applied in Jakarta. The paradigmatic *Ondel-ondel* relationship of the *Sarimbit* model is the relationship between continuity and changes in costume elements in this model with the previous (commercial) model. The costume elements that experience continuity and change are coconut flower, *stangan*, mask, *cukin*, sash, belt, and *jambulang* cloth. The *Ondel-ondel* syntagmatic relationship of the *Sarimbit* model arises because of the need to use a uniform model in different ideologies and forms.

Ondel-ondel Sarimbit model was born in the Betawi community based on the longing for a new meaning that represents an orderly and neat society, above all local government regulations regarding icons and order in Jakarta. The *Ondel-ondel Sarimbit* model carries the message of increasing awareness of the people of Jakarta

on local government regulations. The connotation is that the *Ondel-ondel*, which has become a symbol of the Betawi people since long ago, seems to have been "uniformed." This myth looks natural and contains the ideology of increasing public awareness through uniformity *Ondel-ondel* without leaving tradition.

The Changes

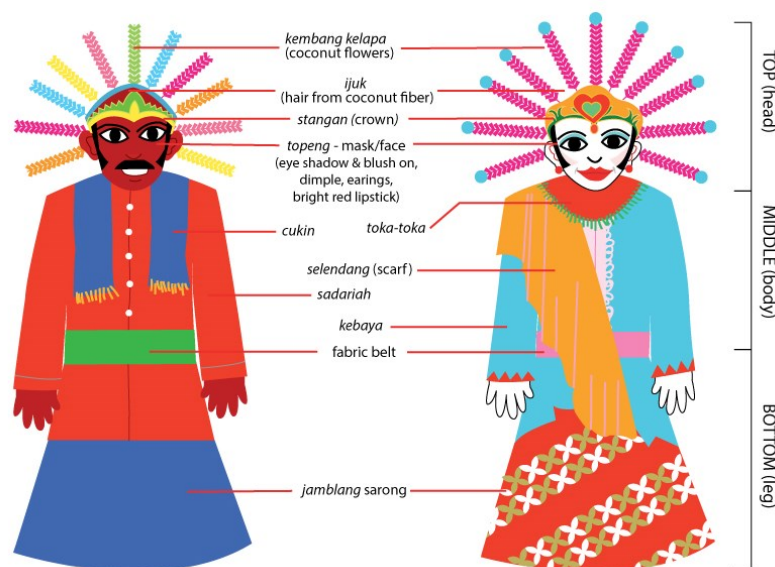


Fig. 6: Structure and costume elements of Commercial Ondel-ondel
Source: Wahidiyat et.al, 2022

The basic shape of the *Ondel-ondel Sarimbit* model still looks the same as the previous commercial model. Having significant body postures like a giant with a size close to 250 x 80 x 80 cm, gives the impression of being majestic, invincible, and distinguishes themselves from humans. The structure of *Ondel-ondel Sarimbit* is divided into three significant parts, namely:

1. Top (head) with the same costume elements: coconut flower, *stangan* (crown), mask (face).
2. Middle (body) has *toka-toka*, clothes, *cukin* and shawl or sash, belt, and
3. The bottom (leg) is *jamblang* cloth (leg cloth). Changes in costume elements in the *Ondel-ondel Sarimbit* model are found in coconut flowers, masks, clothes, scarves, *cukin*, and *jamblang* cloth.

The connection of symbolic signs within the commercial model elucidates the ondel-ondel model's function and origin. The commercial ondel-ondel model aims to contribute to the success of commercialization endeavors across various sectors in Jakarta. Its origin is traced back to the preceding model, which has undergone continuity and changes driven by commercialization in diverse fields. The commercial ondel-ondel model manifests as a representation in the form of both large and small dolls, characterized by attire and facial features that still echo the previous ondel-ondel model but with a more contemporary and stylish appearance. This commercial model experiences liberation in its presentation, encompassing aspects such as size, color, accessories, and more. The commercial ondel-ondel is deliberately crafted as a symbol of Jakarta's commercial development (Wahidiyat, 2019).

Continuity and change of costume elements in *Ondel-ondel Sarimbit* lie in the same coconut flower between male and female with complete and solid composition, black handles decorated with chains and pendants, female *Ondel-ondel*

facial make-up that looks pure and natural. In addition, other elements that can be observed changes are the combination of motifs and colors of clothes, *toka-toka*, *cukin*, scarves, and matching *jambalang* fabrics. The structure and elements of the costume can be described as follows:

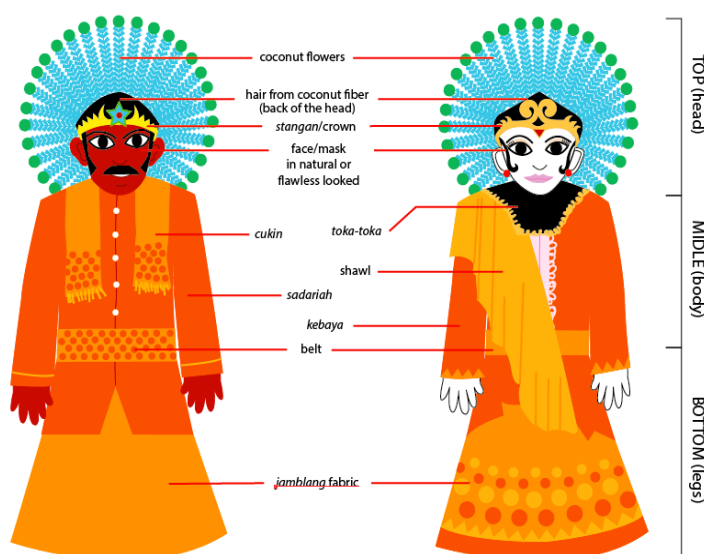


Fig. 7: The structure and elements of the costumes on *Ondel-ondel Sarimbit*.

Source: Purbasari, 2021

The costume elements that have changed from a commercial model to a *Sarimbit* are as follows.

- 1). **Coconut flower:** the same motif and color as its partner, looks very densely packed around the head.
- 2). **Stangan or crown:** male and female motifs are different with abstract floral motifs and curves. The black color seems to dominate as the basis for the *stangan*, which are then used as the hair on female *Ondel-ondel*, plus a chained pendant decoration.
- 3). **Mask:** looks more and more like human appearance. Male *Ondel-ondel* has a friendly face with a smile showing a row of neatly arranged teeth. The color of the mask is predominantly red and brown, although some use blue and green. Female *Ondel-ondel*'s faces are given dimples, earrings, sometimes ear decorations in the form of round flowers. Make-up is made thin, flat, and natural (flawless). Fiber is the material of choice because it saves costs and time.
- 4). **Toka-toka or breastplate:** very diverse forms; triangle, circle, pentagon, and hexagon; depending on the maker's creativity. The sides of the *toka-toka* are decorated with lace and the center is decorated with contrasting color writings. *Toka-toka* became a medium of promotion for studio owners.
- 5). **Sadariah and kebaya** dominate the *Ondel-ondel* clothing model. They are using the same bright colors between male and female *Ondel-ondel*, with motifs.
- 6). **Shawls and cukin** are patterned and colored depending on the combination of *Ondel-ondel* clothes.
- 7). **The belt** is used as a binder and connects clothes with the bottom cloth. The colors and motifs depend on the combination of colors and motifs used in clothes, scarves, and *cukin*.
- 8). **Jambalang sarong:** the bottom cloth of the leg covering. The motifs and colors used are also determined by combining motifs and colors of clothes, scarves, *cukin*, and belts.

In the Sarimbit model, the relationship among symbolic signs elucidates the purpose and origin of the Ondel-ondel model. The Sarimbit Ondel-ondel model aims to contribute to the success of initiatives aimed at organizing and adhering to regulations within the Jakarta Regional Government. After gaining the freedom to present Ondel-ondel creatively in Jakarta, a period ensued where the Betawi community could witness Ondel-ondel performances ubiquitously, encompassing both elaborate and minimalist formats. This freedom extends to the creation and parading of Ondel-ondel, allowing them to traverse Jakarta freely, albeit causing disruptions to the security and order of the Betawi community. The Sarimbit Ondel-ondel is systematically crafted, presenting a uniform appearance, serving as a symbol of order and rule compliance in the city of Jakarta.

The *Ondel-ondel* accompaniment music team usually consists of 6 - 8 musical instruments (*tabuhan*) played by 6 - 7 people [*gendang tepak*, *kecrek*, *ningnong (kenong)*, small gong (*kempul*), and big gong], and 1 string instrument (*tehyang*) (T, 2020). The street *Ondel-ondel* music accompaniment team did not have unique clothes for the parade. They generally wear modest clothes in contrast to the parade, which has a sponsor to fund the event written on it. The clothes are made uniform with the other music team members, plain in color, sometimes in the same color as the theme of the event but can also use contrasting colors with the color of *Ondel-ondel* clothes.



Fig. 8: Musical accompaniment of non-ordered *Ondel-ondel* (busking) and orders.
Source: Winanto, 2020 and Unique Video Channel, 2019

The *Ondel-ondel* procession of the *Sarimbit* model looks lively, orderly, and organized, accompanied by various strains of music, ranging from Betawi songs to foreign pop songs. The *Ondel-ondel* dance movements also look very agile. They are not only moving left and right or facing each other, but also prancing around according to the rhythm and *Ondel-ondel*'s will of the heart. *Ondel-ondel* hand movements also look graceful, not only swinging but also circling while chatting and affectionately caressing their partner's cheeks. Due to the prohibition on *Ondel-ondel* being used for busking, *Ondel-ondel* performances may be packaged in such a way as to make them look more organized and neater.

The *Ondel-ondel* of the *Sarimbit* model is formed from several factors. The festivities of street *Ondel-ondel* busking performances has caused several negative things to happen. For example, degrading the position of *Ondel-ondel* in their community, disturbing residents because they often hit motorized vehicles while performing on the street, blocking pedestrians passing by, and often crossing the street road without checking left and right. Those examples have the potential to endanger safety. Not to mention the actions of some *Ondel-ondel* buskers who forced them to ask for money for traveling wages, thus disturbing the residents.

The rental of *Ondel-ondel* performance equipment is not cheap. Based on interviews with Danang and Mira, an *Ondel-ondel* busker around East Ciputat, they

must pay around Rp. 90.000 (Rupiah) for one unit of *Ondel-ondel* and one music cart. The income of *Ondel-ondel* buskers is not certain, around Rp. 100.000 – 150.000,- , so it means that their profit is around Rp. 10.000 – 60.000, - which must be divided by the number of members who take part. Not surprisingly, this factor is one of the causes of street *Ondel-ondel* appearing minimalist without a partner and complete accompaniment music to reap greater profits. This phenomenon makes the appearance of the *Ondel-ondel* procession no longer like a beautiful performing art which make the people themselves ultimately underestimate it.

This experience is different from the opinion of Baharudin and his friends, *Ondel-ondel* buskers around Depok. According to them, what they did was to preserve Betawi culture. It is not a problem traveling around without a complete composition, the important thing is that it exists and that the Betawi people see and know the existence of *Ondel-ondel* art. These young people have their own pride when performing the procession even though they do not have a good knowledge of the *Ondel-ondel* itself. The use of the same combination of motifs and colors in the elements of *Ondel-ondel* costumes has been influenced by the rise of boy bands and girl bands from abroad, especially Korea, which is very popular, dominates the entertainment stage, and has become an idol. ‘Stray Kids’ band personnel from South Korea wore uniforms with a combination of brown and black plaid motifs in different wear styles. This combination of motifs and colors gives a harmonious, compact, dynamic, and well-organized appearance. Saputra (2021) said the same thing in an interview that young people now dominate the generation of *Ondel-ondel* makers, so they follow current trends and popular idols.

Jakarta continues to improve itself in several ways, including the *Ondel-ondel* procession, which often hides behind the word cultural preservation but takes place without proper rules. Governor Regulation (Pergub) of DKI Jakarta Province Number 11 of 2017 concerning Betawi Cultural Icons, including Regional Regulation (Perda) of DKI Jakarta Province No. 8 of 2007 concerning Public Order, and Article 39 (1) CHAPTER VIII concerning Social Order (Sembiring & Gatra, 2021), giving the DKI Jakarta Civil Service Police Unit (Satpol PP) the power to aggressively control the *Ondel-ondel* buskers presence. As mentioned, these *Ondel-ondel* buskers slowly diminish around Jakarta and forced out to parades on the suburbs of Jakarta, such as Tangerang, Bekasi, Depok. In general, it can be interpreted that the existence of this regulation had cause the presence of *Ondel-ondel* in Jakarta to decrease, besides in certain commissioned events.

At this time, *Ondel-ondel* performances appear at popular events such as the DKI Jakarta Anniversary at Monumen Nasional (Monas) as and its surroundings, weddings, circumcision, Betawi Eid, and at events such as Car Free Day around Dukuh Atas and Monas, *Kampanye Nikah Murah* (Cheap Marriage Campaign) organized by DKI Jakarta Provincial Government, Anniversary of Police Hospital in Taman Mini Indonesia Indah (TMII), *Ondel-ondel* Parade in TMII, and Socialization of Masks at the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic.

In contrast to the appearance of the commercial model *Ondel-ondel*, which looks lively, cheerful with costume elements that vary in shape and color from head to toe, the *Ondel-ondel Sarimbit* seems to have many similarities between male and female *Ondel-ondel*. The *Ondel-ondel* parade in a wedding ceremony in the Rawamangun area and circumcision in Depok, featured *Ondel-ondel* couples in matching and matching clothes. The same goes for the musical accompaniment team, which is colored in the same color as the *Ondel-ondel*. In addition, to provide excitement in an event, the *Ondel-ondel Sarimbit* model also provides an overview of cohesiveness, harmony, and congeniality. The *Ondel-ondel* procession also looks more organized and neater (Fig. 7).



Fig. 9: *Ondel-ondel* at bridal parade in Rawamangun and circumcision in Depok.
Source: Kidsm, 2018 and Unique Video Channel, 2020

Motor Vehicle Free Day, known as Car Free Day, held in Jakarta every Sunday, is a place for an *Ondel-ondel* parade. Dozens of *Ondel-ondel* are mobilized to provide spectacle, entertainment, and excitement to the people of Jakarta in the form of parades. These *Ondel-ondel* are prohibited from charging the audience. *Ondel-ondel* couples, between male and female *Ondel-ondel*, use uniforms that have the same costume elements.



Fig. 10: *Ondel-ondel* in the Car Free Day event, at Monumen Nasional or Monas.
Source: Walid, 2019

Ondel-ondel Sarimbit model carries a message of order, harmony, and cohesiveness in the life of the Betawi people. The connotation of all this is that *Ondel-ondel* are obedient, compact, peace-bearers. Currently, *Ondel-ondel* has a uniformed appearance, is fashionable, has a friendly face, and looks more like a human.

The *Ondel-ondel* parade is only carried out by commissions in the format of competitions, parades, weddings, circumcision, and folk events, and other local government activities to meet the demands of the applicable local government regulations.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, the *Ondel-ondel* procession was very limited and only used as communication media in the campaign to wear masks correctly and adequately by the DKI Jakarta Regional Government (Figure 9). Here the *Ondel-ondel* costume element is added with a mask to communicate the importance of wearing masks in current conditions.





Fig. 11: *Odel-odel* socialization of Mandatory Masks in Matraman and Diponegoro.

Source: Akbar and Rombe, 2020

Barthes' statement about myth transforming history into Nature (Barthes, 1983) implies that myth naturalizes history. This myth then becomes an ideology that is actualized in the community to be considered reasonable, legitimate, or even trustworthy. Through this naturalization, the face of the commercial model *Odel-odel* is transformed into a *Sarimbit* model, which is accessible in shape but the same. The crucial elements in the commercial model *Odel-odel* bodies stolen from the previous model are coconut flower, *stangan* or crown, mask, *toka-toka*, shawl, *cukin*, clothes (*sadariah* and *kebaya*), belt, and *jamblang* cloth. All elements are combined into one to form an *Odel-odel Sarimbit* model through a distortion process. *Odel-odel Sarimbit* model is part of a myth that becomes an ideology, which is then actualized to the community repeatedly in the form of populist activities. Over time, the Betawi people then considered the presence of the *Odel-odel Sarimbit* model as something natural, legal, and even genuine.

The negotiation process related to the emergence of the *Odel-odel Sarimbit* model involves not only two but also many parties. To implement the regional regulations, *Odel-odel* artisans must change the appearance of *Odel-odel* so that it still looks classy following market demand and complies with the regulations in force in Jakarta. The continuity and changes that occur in the elements of the *Odel-odel* costume are packaged in such a way as to create a market ideology. In ideology, the holders of power try not only to convey direct messages related to the current situation in Jakarta, but also to instill what is ideal based on their wishes so that they can regulate people's behavior through elements of *Odel-odel* costumes. Market ideology gives artisans the freedom to be creative if they obey the applicable rules. Market orders forced artisans to create *Odel-odel* with a different appearance and appearance by giving the impression of being harmonious, compact, understated, and authoritative. However, the local government entrusts a special message through its power to form an ideal standard of appearance that is increasingly neat and uniform, which is also expected to bring order to society.

Table 2: The changes of Ondel-Ondel appearance Source: Author

| Ondel-ondel Model | Costume Elements | Symbol | Denotative | Connotative | Ideology |
|---|----------------------------|--|---|--|---|
| Commercial | | | | | |
|  | Coconut flowers | The Commercial model Ondel-ondel is made freely to serve as a symbol of Jakarta's commercial development. | Color full coconut flowers | Betawi are open and accepting of the diversity and differences in their society. | Market Ideology: a vortex of creative freedom or high public creativity to produce the diversity <i>Ondel-ondel</i> , in size, shape, and colors. |
| | <i>Stangan</i> (crown) | | Head decoration | Power | |
| | <i>Ijuk as a hair</i> | | Hairs | Protector | |
| | <i>Topeng</i> (mask) | | Face | Male and female | |
| | <i>Toka-Toka</i> | | Triangle breastplate | Prosperity and fertility | |
| | <i>Sadariah and Kebaya</i> | | Male's and female's <i>Ondel-ondel</i> dress. | Betawi people | |
| | <i>Cukin</i> and shawl | | Fabric on the neck and on the left shoulder. | Pious and graceful | |
| | Belt from fabric | | Fastening clothes with sarong | Connecting the upper and lower worlds | |
| | <i>Jamblang</i> | | Sarong | | |
| Sarimbit | | | | | |
|  | Coconut flowers | The Ondel-Ondel model sarimbit is formed in an orderly manner and looks like a uniform symbol of order and compliance with the rules in Jakarta. | Coconut flower in the same color and form. | Betawi is a society that obeys and accepts harmony and solid. | Market ideology: a vortex of order and compliance with the rules in DKI Jakarta, which maintains the security and tranquillity of the Betawi's lives. |
| | <i>Stangan</i> (crown) | | Head decoration | Power | |
| | <i>Ijuk as a hair</i> | | Hair | Protector | |
| | <i>Topeng</i> (mask) | | Face | Male and female | |
| | <i>Toka-Toka</i> | | Triangle breastplate | Prosperity and fertility | |

| | | | | | |
|--|----------------------------|--|---|--|--|
| | <i>Sadariah and Kebaya</i> | | Male's and female's <i>Ondel-ondel</i> dress. | Betawi people | |
| | <i>Cukin and shawl</i> | | Fabric on the neck and on the left shoulder. | Pious, graceful, solid, and harmonious | |
| | Belt from fabric | | Fastening clothes with sarong | Connecting the upper and lower worlds | |
| | <i>Jamblang</i> | | Sarong | | |

Conclusions

This paper has found, through the continuity and changes of costume elements in *Ondel-ondel*, that there is one commercial model *Ondel-ondel* model. This is based on the *Sarimbit* model. However, it is still, with the same basic structure. The most significant changes to the *Ondel-ondel Sarimbit* model are the uniformity of costume elements between male and female and the distortion in the basic shape of the coconut flower, which looks full and majestic on the head. However, the sustainability of the *Ondel-ondel Sarbjit* model is still full of commissions, in line with the commercial model.

In the *Ondel-ondel Sarimbit* model, the holders of power and fashion trends "force" the craftsmen to shape the costume elements into what is happening today. The elements of these costumes are introduced to the community through *Ondel-ondel* in all folk activities so that the Betawi people become accustomed and consider it legitimate and correct. *Ondel-ondel* has been used as a good campaign media to convey direct messages (explicit) while making the ruling ideology a success through performances for self-existence through cultural, social, economic, and religious means.

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