

Influence of Visual Framing Code in Sundanese *Golek* Performance on Television

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ABSTRACT: *The art of “wayang golek” or “golek” is indigenous to Sundanese people. As a Sundanese traditional art, “golek” has been developed within generations of Sundanese people up to these days, based on a convention called “pakem” or “tetekon”. “Golek” is a variety of “wayang” (Indonesian shadow puppet) made of wood, similar to a doll and can be moved freely. “Wayang golek” is usually performed in an open space, throughout the night. Sundanese people commonly hold a “golek” performance for a ritual such as “ruwatan” and “sekatenan” that commemorates “Maulid Nabi Muhammad SAW”. However, since time has passed, marked by the existence of mass media in the form of television (TV) among Sundanese people, “golek” performance started to be broadcasted on TV. Since the performance of “golek” on TV has been possible, it represents a significant difference compared to traditional “golek” performance, which is marked by the visual language of television or “visual framing”, such as zoom in/out, panning, tilt up/down, close up, medium close, etc. The change in visual representation of “golek” on TV becomes sensational and entertaining, compared to traditional “golek” performances which are symbolic and ritual.*

KEY WORDS: *Change, code, visual framing, “wayang golek”, Sundanese society, television, and entertainment.*

INTRODUCTION

Wayang golek, or *golek*, is a form of traditional art indigenous to Sundanese people in West Java, Indonesia. Initially, *golek* performance is used by Sundanese people as a media in rituals for safety. Therefore, Sundanese *golek* performance is dominated by tutorial messages in the narration. *Golek* production and performance have been conducted for generations, based on a convention called *pakem* or *tetekon*. *Pakem* is understood as an “original *wayang* story”, explained further by Atik Soepandi (1984) in “*Panca Curiga*” or Five Distrustful and “*Sapta Sila*

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Kehormatan Seniman Seniwati Pedalangan Jawa Barat” or Seven Principles on Artists Honor of West Java Shadow Play Puppetry.

By obeying the rules that are agreed conventionally into the *pakem* or convention/custom, *golek* art is used by Sundanese people in rituals such as *ruatan* (celebrity), *sekatenan* (commemoration), *gerebeg Maulid Nabi Muhammad SAW* (the birth commemoration of Prophet Muhammad), wedding, national days, anniversary of cities in West Java, or to welcome diplomatic guests and as entertainment.

As times go by, the process of cultural integration with other cultures and the advancement of technology within Sundanese society have caused an impact to the shift of Sundanese people in appreciating *golek* performance. Since the existence of television and the broadcasting of *dangdut* (Malay orchestra) and pop music on television, Sundanese people prefer watching television and pop or *dangdut* shows. “Through television that was getting more popular in the 1970s, a variety of entertainment shows pushed *wayang golek* aside. Perhaps the biggest cause is the emergence of Indonesian *dangdut* music” (Amaliya, 2010).

The intrusion of other cultures through television technology within the Indonesian society seems to have caused a serious impact toward the existence of traditional arts, including the Sundanese *golek*. Although the existence of television has always become the scapegoat for the decrease of appreciation of Sundanese people towards *golek* performance, eventually *golek* was performed and broadcasted by the means of television. This process is described by Umar Kayam as follows:

Interaction of media culture between industrial and developing countries is an interesting interaction. It is when the developing countries are rolling their cultural dialects in a linear way in a phase of information media that their performance, rituals, and orals are processed toward the printing media; and when the media of reading and electronic industries from developed countries help us to make radio, television, and computer as a part of our lives (cited by Ibrahim, 1997).

Therefore, since then, television has influenced the development of folk arts from all over the archipelago. This phenomenon is at least evident by the emergence of *golek* performance on television. The model of *golek* performance via television actually shows significant differences, compared to traditional *golek* performance. The main difference represented in Sundanese *golek* via television indirectly touch the “rules of the game” or valid codes that have been applied to traditional *golek* performance. Several elements that are changed and are considered shifted on television are the representation of background of the stage, the duration of the performance, divisions of the storytelling, and the contents.

Code is a system that organizes sign. Systems are conducted by rules that are approved by all community members who use the codes. Code means a study that emphasizes social dimension of communication. That definition means that code defines the problems of the system and sign rules, of symbols that are explicitly or implicitly represented, and as a medium to communicate. It means that code becomes a system of sign organization. These systems are conducted based on the rules that are agreed upon by members of community that uses the systems. Communication is built by a part of the people through a systematic communication model, with a convention that is valid among the people. In communication, code tends to become an inseparable element, because a code is a general value system for the members of a culture or sub-culture.

Further, John Fiske (1990) explained that code consists of signs (physical signs that are different from themselves) and rules or conventions that defines how and in what context that the signs are used and how they can be combined to form more complex messages.

The code system that has been valid in Sundanese *golek* art has gone through a lot of changes since it appeared on television. The phenomenon of change in visual code of *golek* on television represents a change that is strongly influenced by technology. The impact of the change includes the movements of *golek*, or *sabetan*, which appear realistic due to the interactive style of the performance. The duration of the show is reduced to 2 till 3 hours, from the original whole-day and whole-night length. From the aspect of storytelling, the entertainment factor becomes more dominant compared to the relayed messages.

It appears that the phenomenon of *golek* show on television becomes an assumption that a change has taken place in Sundanese *golek* show. It was initially a folk art, or a folk culture, which becomes a mass culture. Dominic Strinati (2007), then, explained that mass culture as popular culture that is produced by industrial mass production techniques and is commercialized to mass consumers in order to gain profit.

TRADITIONAL SUNDANESE GOLEK PERFORMANCE

Sundanese *wayang golek* is a performance art that puts motions to the three-dimensional *golek* dolls. *Golek* dolls are played by *dalang* or a puppet master. In playing the *golek* dolls, a *dalang* is assisted by a number of *nayaga* or people who produce sounds from Sundanese traditional instrument called *gamelan*. The sound of *gamelan* in *golek* is used to create atmosphere and mood of the performance. Next to *dalang* and *nayaga*, in Sundanese traditional *golek* performance three other personnel called *sinden* are also

involved. *Sinden* or *juru kawih* has the part to sing in a traditional Sundanese *golek* performance. All factors that form a Sundanese *golek* performance are considered by Sundanese people as a Code, which is referred to as *pakem* or *tetekon*.¹

In principle, factors that are built in a Sundanese *golek* performance include: (1) Visual Code of Sundanese *Golek*; (2) Audio Code or Sounds of Sundanese *Golek*; and (3) Actor Code of Sundanese *Golek* Performance.

Visual Code of Sundanese *Golek* is represented by the following aspects: *golek* dolls or expressions, *sabetan* or *golek* movements, and stage arrangement. Audio Code or Sounds of Sundanese *Golek* is represented by noises or sounds from *gamelan* and *kecrek* (both are musical instruments), lyrics from *sinden* (the singer), and narration from *dalang* (the puppet master). Actor Code of Sundanese *Golek* Performance is represented by *dalang*, *sinden*, all *nayaga*, and the audience.



Figure 1:

Stage and Background of Sundanese Traditional *Golek* Performance

(Source: <http://xlprimahandphone.wordpress.com/tag/wayang-golek/>, 18/4/2012)

¹According to R.A. Darja, as cited by Atik Soepandi (1984), *Panca Curiga* or Five Distrustful, is comprehended as *Lima Seuseukeut* (Five S), or as the capability of a *dalang* in sensing the ethics of *Wayang Golek* Performance in West Java, which includes: *Sindir* (critics), *Silib* (information), *Siloka* (proverb), *Simbul* (symbol or picture), and *Sasmita* (signs). Meanwhile, *Sapta Sila Kehormatan Seniman Seniwati Pedalangan Jawa Barat* or Seven Principles on Artists Honor of West Java Shadow Play Puppetry is a conclusion from Seminar *Pedalangan* dated 28 February 1964 in Bandung, West Java, Indonesia, containing 10 manuals for artists of *golek* in Priangan, to maintain the norms of *wayang* arts.



Figure 2:
A Row of *Wayang Golek* Dolls
(Source: <http://xlprimahandphone.wordpress.com/tag/wayang-golek/>, 18/4/2012)



Figure 3:
A Number of *Nayaga* with Their Instruments
(Source: <http://xlprimahandphone.wordpress.com/tag/wayang-golek/>, 18/4/2012)

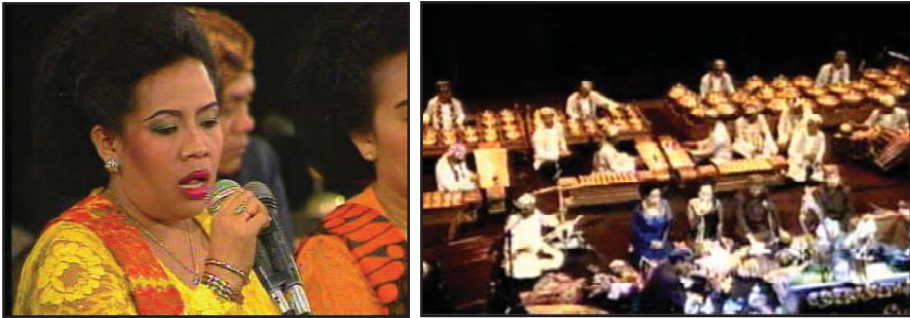


Figure 4:
Left, *Sinden* or *Juru Kawih* (Singer);
and Right, *Sinden* in Sundanese *Wayang Golek* Performance
(Source: <http://xlprimahandphone.wordpress.com/tag/wayang-golek/>, 18/4/2012)



Figure 5:
A Set of *Gamelan* in Sundanese *Wayang Golek* Performance
(Source: YHK, 2012)

Considering the varieties of factors in *golek* performance, this research focuses on elements that are directly connected to visual art. Therefore, the focus of this research is the phenomenon of change that occurs in Sundanese *golek* performance on television, which specifically relates to visual factors.



Figure 6:

Audience of Sundanese *Wayang Golek* Performance

(Source: <http://www.poskota.co.id/berita-terkini/2011/05/29/meriah-pentas-asep-sunandar-sunarya-di-bogor/>, 30/5/2012)

As explained previously, *dalang* is the main narrator, also as a *suluk* (recitation of a *wayang* narrator) who creates certain atmosphere, and as a leader of *gamelan* sounds as the background music, and, above all, he is the one who gives the spirit to the dolls. From those overall parts, a *dalang* narrates *wayang golek* performance through a sequence of acts. The arrangement of such *dalang* world is called *bedripan* or sequences of chapters. The whole act sequences in *wayang golek* are determined by the performed stories or characters.

However, in general, acts in a *wayang golek* performance is arranged according to: (1) *Jejer* or the First Act, where usually a topic is brought up which might be about a competition, a missing person, a proposed princess, etc. In principle, in this First Act, the *dalang* starts to tell a situation or condition that is considered as a problem that needs solving; (2) *Kadaton*. In this Act, the episode is usually full of stories about a king who discusses the problem with his family. However, this Act is seldom shown and is commonly replaced with a prologue; (3) *Paseban Jawi* is an important part of the performance, because in this Act, the solution of the problem is already being discussed among the people characters under the consent of the king; (4) *Jaranan* tells about the preparation for a quest to solve the problem. This Act is also seldom performed, due to the limited time

and skill of the *jaranan*; (5) *Bebegalan* tells about the journey of *wayang golek* characters that has to overcome disturbances such as *begal* or being robbed by a number of *buta* or *denawa* or giants. This Act is commonly placed in the middle of the journey through a forest; (6) *Pagedongan* is an Act that contains a transition or in movies, this Act is commonly called as a cut. The Act usually only displays a *gunungan* or a “background” of *wayang* in the middle of the *gebog* or the stage, made of a banana trunk; (7) *Nagara Sejen* is an Act of a different atmosphere and location within the journey; (8) *Perang Gagal* contains of a battle between two quarrelling parties; or in the story, the troop has arrived in the destined location, so a battle commences. This Act often includes the scenes of discussions, negotiations, collaborations, and also defeat of the “good” party, depends on the story; (9) *Adegan Sambilan* is an Act that tells about a situation and condition in another place that happens at the same time. The location of the happening is quite varied, i.e. inside the kingdom, at a meditation site, etc., related to the problem of the story. It is in this Act that humorous scenes are performed, where a number of *panakawan* or funny characters appear and entertain the audience with their acts; (10) *Negara Galeuh* is a country or *negara* that commonly becomes the destination of the characters like *satria* or warriors in their quest to solve the problem. This Act also usually contains a battle between the warriors or *satria* or *pongawa* with a number of *buta* or giants; (11) *Adegan Panyelang* is an Act that tells about assistances for the heroes; and (12), finally, *Adegan Pamungkas* is a climax of a story that tells the victory on the “good” side represented by warriors or the *satria* and *pongawa* (Soepandi, 1984:70).

INFLUENCE OF VISUAL FRAMING CODE IN SUNDANESE *GOLEK* PERFORMANCE ON TELEVISION

As discussed previously, this research focuses on the phenomena of change that occurs in Sundanese *golek* performance. Specifically, this part discusses the changes that are relevant to visual factors, or visual code presentation, to be more precise. From observing several Sundanese *golek* shows on television, indication of changes includes visual codes, as follows: (1) Stage background, and (2) Scenes.

The visual code of the stage background of traditional Sundanese *golek* does not commonly use any screen, or, if any, is represented by a plain cloth. But on Sundanese *golek* in television, the stage background appears as images, created with computer technology. The background even shows concrete or iconic images such as buildings, malls, or other urban surroundings.

Next to the stage background, the phenomena of change shown by Sundanese *golek* on television is the appearance of credit title, including an opening title and a closing title, processed by computer graphic technology.



Figure 7:
A Change of the Stage Background of a Sundanese *Golek* Performance on Television
(Source: <http://xlprimahandphone.wordpress.com/tag/wayang-golek/>, 18/4/2012)

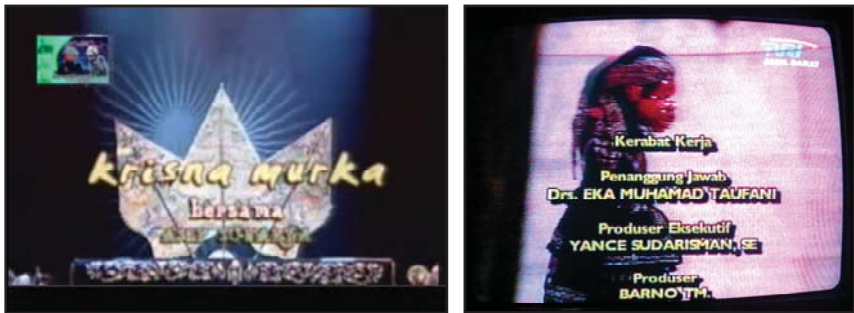


Figure 8:
A Change in the Appearance of Credit Titles in a Sundanese *Golek* Performance on Television
(Source: <http://xlprimahandphone.wordpress.com/tag/wayang-golek/>, 18/4/2012)

Another phenomena of change in Sundanese *golek* performance on television is the possibility to shift from one scene to the next using the television effects such as *dissolve*, *cut to cut*, *zoom in/out*, *panning*, *tilt up/down*. In traditional Sundanese *golek*, the shift of scenes is usually marked by erecting a *gunungan* at the *golek* stage. Another typical change in Sundanese *golek* performance on television is the appearance of an interactive broadcast model, in the form of short messages from the audience via SMS (*Short Message Service*), which appears on the television screen.



Figure 9:
A Model of a Change of Scenes in a Sundanese *Golek* Performance on Television,
Using the Dissolve Technique
(Source: <http://xlprimahandphone.wordpress.com/tag/wayang-golek/>, 18/4/2012)



Figure 10:
An Interactive Broadcast Model in Sundanese *Golek* Performance on Television via SMS
(Source: <http://xlprimahandphone.wordpress.com/tag/wayang-golek/>, 18/4/2012)

ANALYSIS OF INFLUENCE OF VISUAL FRAMING IN SUNDANESE GOLEK PERFORMANCE ON TELEVISION

In order to be able to analyse the change of visual codes of *golek* performance on television, the approach is conducted through a comparative studies between the traditional Sundanese *golek* performance and the Sundanese *golek* performance on television. The parts that are analysed with this comparative study relates to the visual factors or visual codes of Sundanese *golek* performance, which includes: stage background and the scenes of Sundanese *golek* performance.

Starting from the change of visual codes of Sundanese *golek* performance on television, following is a table of the analytical process of the change of Sundanese *golek* performance on television, compared to traditional Sundanese *golek*. However, the analysis is focused on parts that are considered changed significantly, which are the visual code of the stage background and the visual code of the first scene (*jejer*). Therefore, the analytical process is only presented on the change of visual codes of the stage background and the first scene (*jejer*) of a Sundanese *golek* performance.

The stage background of traditional Sundanese *golek* does not usually exist, or only uses a piece of plain cloth. Considering that the traditional Sundanese *golek* is symbolic, the plain background or cloth as the background would give a meaning when the *golek* (the puppet) appears on stage. The nuance of the stage background in traditional Sundanese *golek* will appear automatically in the minds of the audience when the *dalang* (puppet master) narrates (*antawacana*) the scene in a location (forest, kingdom or palace, the clouds). Therefore, the nuance of the stage background in traditional Sundanese *golek* is built up by the *dalang's antawacana* during the *golek* play on the stage, according to the situation that is being told, and the audience right away think and imagine the scenes in their minds.



Different from the stage background of Sundanese *golek* performance on television, which is visualized firmly and even concretely, using naturalistic visual style, using the support of computer technology, so the audience will absorb and give meaning of the stage background according to the image that appears on the screen, which hardly needs any interpretation.

Therefore, the most significant difference that appears on the stage background of traditional *golek* performance and the stage background of *golek* performance on television is shown by the representation technique. In traditional Sundanese *golek*, the background is symbolic; and in Sundanese *golek* on television, the background is iconic, using the

support of digital technology.

However, when observed closely, the changing process does not occur only at the visual change caused by the influence of technology into the Sundanese *golek* performance, but also at the values of the messages that appear in the Sundanese *golek* performance. In traditional Sundanese *golek*, the messages that are being narrated by the *dalang* contains spiritual instructions, related to the factors of *golek* and the background created by the *antawacana* (narration) of the *dalang*. Different from the message that appears in Sundanese *golek* performance on television, that shows visualization using digital technology effects, which has caused the message from the *dalang* to be sensational and entertaining, along with the modern visual appearance of the stage background.

Table 1:
 Comparative Analysis of Visual Codes of Stage Background between Traditional Sundanese *Golek* Performance and Sundanese *Golek* Performance on Television

Stage Background			
Visual Factor	Traditional <i>Golek</i>	<i>Golek</i> on Television	Change of Visual Codes
Stage Background	 <p>The stage background of traditional <i>golek</i> usually does not exist or uses only a piece of plain cloth.</p>	 <p>The stage background changes with the appearance of images and effects created with digital technology support.</p>	The emergence of change in the form of images at the background, using digital technology support.

Therefore, the message relayed by the *dalang* in a *golek* performance on television tends to be more secular and merely entertaining. The influence of iconic visualization nuance caused by digital technology effect indirectly leads the narration of the *dalang* with visual meaning that appears on the background. In Sundanese *golek* performance on television, the visualization nuance of the background is influenced by images from contemporary nuances that suggest urban lifestyles such as housing, rows of shops, malls, and other urban settings.

The impact of such background visualization turns out to be directing the *dalang* to relay social messages, but with humorous and entertaining approaches. It is natural that the impact of the model of Sundanese *golek* performance on television tends to be entertaining, since it is the characteristic of television as a media that emphasizes the economic aspects in the form of “viewing rating”, determined by the support of sponsors in each television program.

Next to the stage background, another element that has gone through a significant change in Sundanese *golek* performance on television is at the part of scenes on Sundanese *golek* performance on television. As mentioned previously, a Sundanese *golek* performance consists of 12 Acts that are already arranged from the first to the closing scenes. However, from all 12 Acts, the scene that has gone through a significant change in Sundanese *golek* performance on television is shown by the first scene (*jejer*).

This first scene that is represented in traditional Sundanese *golek* commonly starts with putting up a *gunungan* (a puppet that depicts a mountain and animals) as a mark that the show has been started. After the *gunungan* is erected, the *dalang* sings *murwa*, a song that depicts a scene in a kingdom and simultaneously, a number of *golek* characters appear on stage. After *murwa*, the *dalang* sings *nyandra*, a prose that describes a certain condition, in order to inform the audience. After *nyandra*, the *gending* music played by the *nayaga* gives a sign to the *dalang* to start singing *kakawen* or *suluk*, which is a prose full of proverbs, advices, or information for the audience. After the *kakawen* procession, the first act or *jejer* is completed and continued to the next act, *kedaton*.

Different from the first act or *jejer* that starts with the appearance of *gunungan*, the Sundanese *golek* performance on television starts with the appearance of a “framing” visual effect, the movement of camera *tilt up/down*, *zoom in/out*, *panning*, *close up*, etc. with the purpose of providing an impression about the stage situation. Afterward, the television screen shows the title of the performance in the form of an “opening title” that is processed digitally. After the title, the image transitions to a scene with the title, usually in the form of the story’s synopsis that will be played. This is unusual, since it is commonly sung out by the *dalang*. Afterward, the performance presents the scenes in the same sequence as traditional Sundanese *golek* performance: *murwa*, *nyandra* and *kakawen* or *suluk* (recitation of a *wayang* narrator).

In order to acquire an accurate description about the change in the first act, following is a table that compares between traditional Sundanese *golek* performance and Sundanese *golek* performance on television.

Table 2:
 Comparative Analysis of Visual Codes Scene between Traditional Sundanese *Golek* Performance and
 Sundanese *Golek* Performance on Television

FIRST SCENE OF VISUAL CODE (JEJER) IN TRADITIONAL SUNDANESE GOLEK PERFORMANCE	
	
	
<p>1. Beginning the show begins with the emergence of rebound <i>gamelan</i> sound.</p> <p>2. Then, mastermind stick <i>gunungan</i> as an early sign the show begins.</p>	<p>3. Furthermore, mastermind singing <i>murwa</i> for situation depicts a scenes depicting the wealth of the kingdom, majesties the king, the duke of magic, dignity, and justice or the opposite situation – a simultaneously bring figures <i>golek</i> on stage.</p>
	<p>4. Having brought forth <i>murwa</i>, puppeteer brought <i>nyandra</i> lyrics, such as prose lyrics that describe the state of a scene as a briefing to the audience.</p> <p>5. After bringing the lyrics <i>nyandra</i>, then <i>gending</i> musical accompaniment would signal the puppeteers to bring <i>kakawen</i> or mysticism, which contains the lyric goes, advice, or information to the audience.</p>
	<p>6. Upon completion <i>kakawen</i>, the first scene or row over the continued into the next scene <i>kedaton</i> scene, namely scenes that address and discuss problems as prologue.</p>

FIRST SCENE OF VISUAL CODE (JEJER) IN SUNDANESE GOLEK PERFORMANCE ON TELEVISION



1. Early performances begins with the emergence of rebound the sound of the *gamelan* simultaneously emergence views *golek* stage.

2. Then, mastermind stick *gunungan* as a sign the beginning of the performance.



3. After plugging *gunungan*, the mastermind emerging scene transitional form visualization of the title theme performances will staged its caption mastermind were brought.



4. After the appearance of title form opening. The next title scene will switch again on the scene occurrence synopsis which explains quick story show will be played mastermind.



5. The next scene will switch back to the stage performances and displays the order as the order in traditional *golek* performances, form impressions mastermind who was brought *murwa*, *nyandra*, and *kakawen* or *suluk*.



DIFFERENCE OF PERFORMANCE			
1. The emergence of visual effects framing in the form of motion TV cameras: tilt up/down, this zoom/out, panning, close up, and others.	3. The emergence of the title show form "opening title" on the screen TV.	4. Text appear on the screen form TV content information where about the content stories to be played mastermind.	5. During the scene row is filled by story mastermind form <i>murwa, nyandra</i> , and <i>kakawen</i> , the display alternated with scenes raises the transition taking the form of visualization objects is above stage through visual effects framing.
2. TV cameras around the room stage from all directions, so the whole object in the stage can witnessed.			

So, the first scene of the comparison between traditional Sundanese *golek* performance with a *golek* performance on television obtained significant differences that indicate changes in Sundanese *golek* performance on television. The changes are represented in the first scene in Sundanese *golek* performance on television which includes: (1) the emergence of visual effects such as framing cameras movement i.e. tilt up/down, zoom in/out, panning, close up, and others; (2) the emergence of Sundanese *golek* models with various looks view represented by the TV cameras; (3) the emergence of the title show on the TV screen in the form of opening title processed digital technology; (4) the emergence of text-based synopses on the TV screen processed digital technology; and (5) the emergence of the dominance of the visual transition effects such as dissolve and cut to cut the show in every scene.

The comparison between the visual codes of traditional Sundanese *golek* and Sundanese *golek* on television apparently shows significant differences, due to the role of television as a media. The Sundanese *golek* performance on television shows changes that are caused by:

First, the collaboration between *dalang* and television crew (producer, cameraman, and image editor) in Sundanese *golek* performance on television.

Second, the influence of digital technology application used on television, which also influences the Sundanese *golek* performance on television.

The impacts of these two causes have led to the change of visual codes of Sundanese *golek* performance on television, which is heavily influenced by the television crew and the working methods of television media tools.

CONCLUSION

Golek performance is a Sundanese art that has been formed by *pakem*, or norms, but since the presence of television media, *golek* performance has been going through a decrease of appreciation by Sundanese people. Eventually, *golek* performance is presented by television media. However, since its appearance on television, Sundanese *golek* has gone through a change that no longer refers to the valid norms. From the comparative study, significant changes are discovered in the visual aspect of the Sundanese *golek*, between the traditional one and the one that is broadcasted on television.

The different visual codes that appear in both methods are the stage background, models of scenes, and models of broadcasted visual effects. In principle, the changes are caused by the influence of collaboration between the *golek* performers and the television crew (producer, cameramen, and image editor), and the influence from the use of digital technology in television. Due to the coding system of *golek* performance on television, contemporary visual codes in *golek* performance on television emerge as follows: visual code of broadcasted stage background, visual code of broadcasted scenes, and broadcasted visual effect code.

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**Asep Sunandar Sunarya as One of the Famous Dalang
in Sundanese Wayang Golek Art**
(Source: www.google.com, 9/2/2013)

Therefore, the message relayed by the *dalang* in a *golek* performance on television tends to be more secular and merely entertaining.