

The Power Contestation In First Day Cover Of Lubang Buaya Revolutionary Hero Monument Stamp (1967)

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Abstract – Stamps not only functioning as postal items, but also can be a document officially issued by the state at a certain time period to commemorate and document a particular historical momentum that is large in nature and is considered important for the life of a nation. *PT Pos Indonesia* simultaneously issues new stamps and first day cover (FDC). This article was aimed to study a history part through the first day cover of *Lubang Buaya* Revolutionary Hero Monument Stamp (1967) in visual and verbal markers based on symbols, writings, and images. In particular FDC stamps, a power contestation is expressed by presenting major event monument of Indonesian history and building collective memory through the visual markers it presents with emphasis on certain aspects to strengthen the New Order regime power and forget the Old Order regime.

Keywords – FDC Stamps, August, history, power contestation, Monument, Revolutionary heroes, hegemony, collective memory, ideology.

I. INTRODUCTION

A postage stamp (Latin: *franco*) is a piece of adhesive paper as proof of payment for postal services, such as letters. Stamps were originally created as an object that serves to replace the cost of postage. A stamp contains information on the price, illustrations (with a specific theme), manufacture year, watermark, and expiration date.

On May 6, 1840, the world's first postage stamps were issued in England as proof of payment of postage. The stamps have the following characteristics: featured the side profile of Queen Victoria, printed in black, was inscribed with "POSTAGE" at the top and "ONE PENNY" at the bottom. Because it was black and inscribed with "ONE PENNY", which indicated the nominal price, the stamp was later known by the public as "The Penny Black" (picture 1).



Figure 1. *The Penny Black Stamp*

United Kingdom's success in fixing postal rates by issuing postage stamps attracted the interest of other countries. Brazil was the first country to follow in the footsteps of United Kingdom, and was followed by other countries, including Switzerland, the United States, Mauritius, France and the Netherlands. The Dutch use of postage stamps was also followed by the Dutch East Indies Government, which at that time controlled the East Indies archipelago (known as Indonesia today), and on April 1, 1964 the Dutch East Indies Government issued the first stamps. The stamp is burgundy in color with face value 10 cents and features the picture of King Willem III.

During the Japanese occupation, the civilian government in Indonesia was administered by the Japanese army. In an urgent situation, at the beginning of the occupation of the Japanese Military Government, it was impossible to issue new stamps. The quickest way was to overprint the abundant remaining of Dutch East Indies postage stamps, in accordance with three Military Administration Regions territorial division. Means the emergency stamps with various overprint can be found through the territory.

In Sumatra alone, various different overprints were used. As example in Aceh, the overprint used was a pentagon star with katakana character of A (abbreviation for Aceh) in the middle (figure 2). In Lampung, the overprint used was Kanji, which means Great Japan Stamp, and was inscribed LAMPONG in green, purple, and red. In Bengkulu, Riau, and the west coast of Sumatra, overprint used was bars in various shapes.



Figure 2. Aceh Inscription

After Indonesia's independence was proclaimed by Soekarno and Hatta on August 17, 1945, the Post, Telegraph and Telephone Bureau (PTT Bureau) was taken over by the Indonesian people. In this situation, the PTT office did not issue new stamps. Therefore, the remaining postage stamps from the Dutch East Indies and the Japanese occupation period were used after being overprinted with the inscription REPOEBLIK INDONESIA, REP. INDONESIA, REP. INDONESIA PTT, and other writings (figure 3.).



Figure 3. Dutch and Japanese postage stamps in the early period of Indonesia's independence.

The efforts to print Indonesian stamps were carried out by the PTT Bureau through issuing the half-year Indonesia's Independence commemorative stamp series, on January 12, 1946, featuring two images of a bull (figure 4).



Figure 4. The first postage stamps printed after Indonesia's independence

II. METHODS

Researches on stamps have been done by many scholars, with various emphases and themes. Brunn (2011) in his research on Russian stamps states that there is a nation representation in stamps. He also wrote that stamps are important in promoting national identity and state goals, whereas early Russian Stamps evoked an "inward" worldview that promoted nascent nationalism, including flags, anthems and political symbols, entire examples of political iconography, to form "everyday nationalism" that transcends the state realm. In line with that, Osmond (2008) stated that postage stamps are government documents with various semiotic roles that marry utilitarian, representative, and warning functions. Osmond also added that stamps are history in miniature which offer a selective reading of the past and represent a rich primary source for historical research. Stamps are also a symbolic source of government, representing national identity and official culture. Concerning the matter of state representation in stamps, Cusack (2005) stated that the issuance of stamps greatly contributed to the 'communicative efficiency' of the national society and provided a significant contribution to the nation development. He occupied that postage stamp image promoted a certain dominant discourse of nationalism, resembled historical triumph and mythical event, and defined the national territory in map or landscape.

Osmond (2008) alluded to power relations in his research, and writes that in Western democracies, stamps are often being used as the trophy of battle that is highly contested between interest groups. Regarding this power relation, Cusack (2005) stated that, the realm of absolute monarchy around the world and the increase in territory and people around it in nineteenth century Europe, the king's head depicted on stamps must represent the nation.

Brunn (2011) also mentioned the transition of power in postage stamps, because he occupied that the content of the postage stamps during the last three years of the Soviet Union and the first three years of Russia revealed some significant changes. Early Russian stamps evoked an "inward" worldview that promoted nascent nationalism. In its later years the Soviet Union noted this evidence of changing priorities and themes with issues depicting Soviet environmental disasters or honoring those killed in the failed Russian coup attempt in August 1991.

Osmond (2008) saw that there is an aspect of propaganda in stamps, stating that the government communicates propaganda and symbolic messages in stamps through certain images and text messages.

Collective memory is also mentioned in Osmond (2008), stamps are small monuments that function as vehicles for social memory of historical artifacts that can be collected by philatelists as collections. Related to collective memory, Cusack (2005) wrote that postage stamps can be seen as minor transmitters of the dominant state ideology destined for the imagined nation communities. The state ideology is also alluded to by Cusack (2005) by stating that stamps are not a neutral or unimportant part of material culture, but are carriers of a strong image of the dominant ideology of the state, patriarchy and the international state system.

Based on descriptions above, *Research Gap* in research on stamps is still profound, because until now research on the Indonesian FDC Stamp during Indonesia's power transition era, particularly related to First Day Cover of the *Lubang Buaya*

Revolutionary Hero Monument (1967) from the point of view of the power contestation has not been studied. How the power contestation of power is represented in FDC by presenting major event monument of Indonesian history to commemorate the murders of the revolutionary heroes, and build collective memory through the visual markers it presents to strengthen power by using a qualitative method of semiotic analysis of Roland Barthes.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Hegemony in Stamps

As described earlier, Stamps, which were originally only created as objects that functioned as a substitute for the cost of postage, in later years have grown beyond its functional aspects, both as collectibles (philately) with economic value. Lutfie, a philatelist, can pay for pilgrimage cost by selling a set of Suharto series stamps (Ramdani, 2011); objects with artistic value (visual) because the stamp design must be created with aesthetic principles; a means to study history that is not found in textbooks, because if sorted according to the manufacture period, from a single stamp, traces of the history of a nation can be traced; a means to convey development jargons; or a means to convey a certain ideology, which can be seen from the themes issued as described above.

Stamps are inseparable from the hegemony of the authorities who have the authority in stamps manufacturing. Williams in Fakih (1997) specifically defined hegemony as an order in which the way of life and thoughts of the exploiting group become dominant, and a concept of reality is spread throughout the citizen in all institutions and personal manifestations which are reflected in taste, morality, customs, religious principles, and politics, as well as all social relations, especially in the intellectual and moral sense.

In fact, this hegemony has been seen since the first time stamps were introduced in the United Kingdom with the image of Queen Victoria (The Penny Black). Thus, until this date, United Kingdom still receives privilege by being the one and only country that does not need to include the country name on its postage stamps.

Indonesia's hegemony wars through stamps is indicated by the markers of each ruler every time change of authority occur. The authority of Dutch East Indies government was marked by the issuance of the first stamp on April 1, 1864 (King Willem III's stamp). The start of Japan ruling was shown through overprinting marker on Dutch East Indies postage stamps, which can be read as "I am in power now!" Then, into the early period of independence, Indonesia adopted the same pattern as Japan by overprinting marker the remaining Dutch East Indies and Japanese postage stamps.

Half a year of independence proclamation, Indonesia issued two postage stamps with a picture of a bull, closely related to Soekarno's political ideology and the party, namely the Indonesian Nationalist Party.

The markers of hegemony and the identity politics of rulers in postage stamps continued with the issuance of Soekarno's definitive stamps, which were printed as many as half a billion (552,747,500) (Indonesian Stamp Catalogue, 2005).

In the following period, the Suharto government gave an early mark of its power by issuing stamps with the theme of seven revolution heroes, which were issued to coincide with Heroes Day on November 10, 1966. As we all know, Suharto was the major character in the murderer tragedy of the revolution heroes. In fact, Suharto already made early mark that he had started the transition period from the Soekarno government, meaning that he had not yet held a full mandate as President (Soeharto officially became President since 1968).

During 32 years in power, Suharto used postage stamps to convey development propaganda, such as the visualization of PELITA (Five Years Development). With such a long time reign, Suharto became the most featured President of the Republic of Indonesia ever been at stamps, both in close-up poses and in various activities, such as Scouting activities.

From the description above, it can be concluded how big the role of power is in forming a piece of paper called a postage stamp, and the one in power has the authority and freedom to convey their propaganda, jargon, and ideology through stamps, hence; the political function of stamp exceeds its initial function as proof of payment for post services.

FDC Stamp Of Lubang Buaya Revolutionary Hero Monument (1967)

First day of issue or first day cover (FDC) is a cover issued by *PT Pos Indonesia* along with the issuance of "*Hari Terbit Pertama*", while the left front contains paintings and writings that are in accordance with the issuance purpose of the related stamps (Soerjono, 2008). *PT Pos* only creates FDC for non-definitive stamps, while for definitive stamps do not have FDC.

In Indonesia, FDC began to be published in 1955, or ten years after Indonesia's independence, precisely on August 17, 1955, with four stamps, each coloured purple, brown, blue and green monochrome, featured Soekarno and Hatta reading the text of the

proclamation, the red and white flag hoisting, *Gedung Proklamasi* (Pegangsaan Timur 56 Jakarta), and the text of the proclamation. *Garuda Pancasila* with inscription of "10 Tahun Indonesia Merdeka" was used as cover.

The FDC of the *Lubang Buaya* Revolutionary Hero Monument (old spelling) was published on August 17, 1967, during the transition period of power change in Indonesia from Soekarno to Suharto who was appointed as Acting President on July 1, 1966, based on MPRS Decree No. XXXIII/1967 on February 22, 1967.

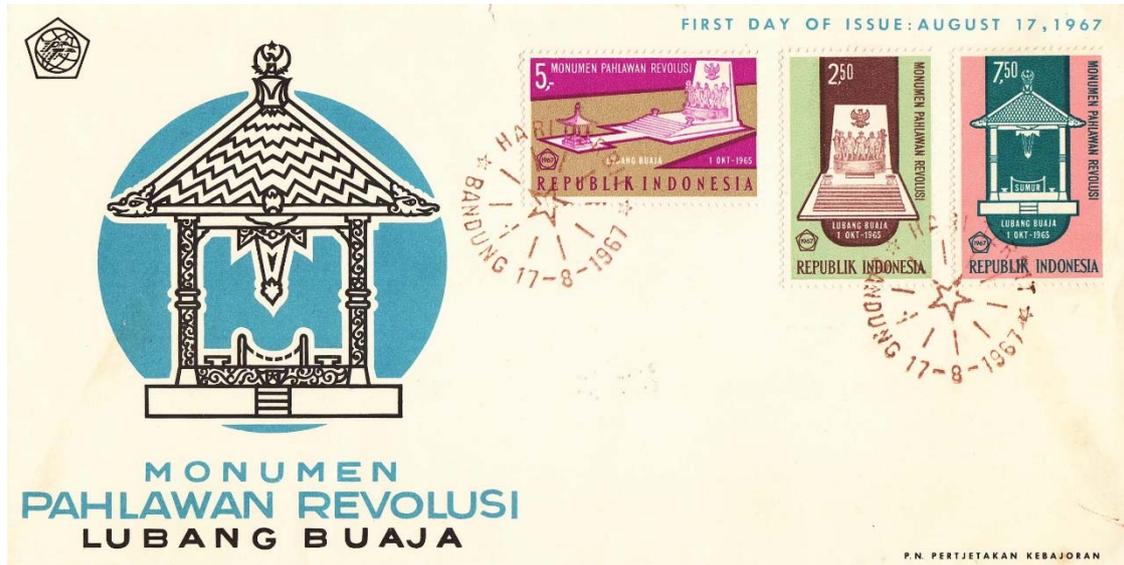


Figure 5. Monumen Pahlawan Revolusi *Lubang Buaya* FDC

The Revolutionary Hero Monument was built in mid-August 1967 and inaugurated on October 1, 1973 by President Soeharto. Currently the monument is known as the *Lubang Buaya* Museum, a silent witness to the G30S PKI incident on September 30, 1965, located on Jalan Raya Pondok Gede, East Jakarta. At this location, the bodies of seven generals and officers who were victims of PKI violence were dumped into a well located in *Lubang Buaya* Village, Cipayung District, East Jakarta, which was a training center owned by the Indonesian Communist Party at that time. At this time in that place stood *Lubang Buaya* Memorial Field. There is the Pancasila Monument, a well where their bodies was dumped, a room containing relics, a house where several victims were tortured, a command post, a public kitchen, old cars left by the revolutionary heroes, as well as dioramas depicting the chronology of the G30S PKI. *Lubang Buaya* Museum is also known as the Pancasila Sakti Museum. In front of this museum stood seven revolutionary heroes statues who was killed during the PKI rebellion in 1965 (*Sejarah Museum Lubang Buaya Jakarta – Peristiwa G30S PKI*: <https://sejarahlengkap.com/>).

It can be seen that at the time this FDC was published, the Revolutionary Heroes *Lubang Buaya* Monument was still in the early stages of construction, thus, it can be assumed that the images displayed on the FDC and its stamps were based on the design of the monument. Then why was it crucial for Suharto to appoint this unfinished monument as FDC stamp? Why was it published in August 1967, while the bloody tragedy that claimed the lives of seven generals itself was on September 30 and October 1 (1965), while usually a historical moment of a nation is always commemorated based on the date of the incident.

There was an aspect of haste to be published immediately, because the bloody tragedy in 1965 was still fresh, thus an effort to ensure the collective memory would not forget the event was carried out. On the other hand, August 17 is a major milestone in the history of Indonesia. The previous connotation built by Soekarno as the first president of Indonesia is that the proclamation of independence as a sacred event for Indonesian with Soekarno and Hatta as the main characters. As previously stated, the FDC First Stamp was published ten years after Indonesia's Independence Day on August 17, 1955. Thus, the issuance of FDC with the theme of *Lubang Buaya* Revolutionary Hero Monument at the momentum of August 17 will cause an overlap in collective memory. On the one hand it connotes Soekarno-Hatta as the originators of the independence proclamation and the Old Order regime, but on the other hand the memory is filled with tragic and traumatizing story of G30SPKI coup.

Heroes Who Complement Sufferers

First Day Cover of the Revolutionary Heroes *Lubang Buaya* Monument is characterized with Post and Telecommunications logo at the top left corner, the design of *Lubang Buaya* building at the bottom left using a black outline with a blue round background.

The image size of *Lubang Buaya* well is the most dominant of all existing visual displays. It shows the effort to form connotation which purpose to provide confirmation of the location where the bloody incident that claimed the lives of seven generals happened during G30SPKI movement.

At the top of the building design was Garuda Pancasila, while at the bottom was a chain surrounding the *Lubang Buaya* well. In many cultures, the concept of glory in symbolic language is always placed at the top. Thus, it can be interpreted that although under the well there were many victims, but in the end Pancasila was come out victorious, or won the battle against the PKI (rebellion).

Bold letters "*Monumen Pahlawan Revolusi*", and a black "*Lubang Buaya*" (old spelling) were inscribed at the bottom of building design. Black is always conspicuous to the eyes. The word "*Lubang Buaya*" besides being the name of a place, also connotes and gives cruelty image of large flesh-eating animal. Thus, the affirmation of black can also provide connotation of building a collective unconscious of the PKI's atrocities. Although, there was no word PKI at the FDC.

At the top right of the FDC there is the inscription "First Day of Issue: August 17, 1967" which marks the publication date of the FDC or two years after *G30SPKI* incident occurred. On the stamps there were two postmarks of "*hari penerbitan*" along with the date of issue and the words "Bandung" as the place of issuance. Since the establishment of *PT Pos Indonesia*, which was originally called *Jawatan PTT* until now, its head office is located in Bandung. A five-pointed star with light around at the middle of postage which connotes a sign of merit or the star in the first principle (Belief in the Almighty God) of Garuda, the symbol of Pancasila. Because this event is also known as Pancasila Sanctity Day, and the PKI is considered an atheist party. In the lower right corner "*Pertjetakan Kebajoran*" was inscribed, an information of printing placed. Thus, it can be assumed although Headquarter of Post Indonesia is in Bandung, the printing press was done in Jakarta.

On the upper right of the cover, three stamps are affixed, each of which costs 5 rupiah, 2 rupiah 5 cents, and 7 rupiah 5 cents. Although postage stamp seems small and trivial, but its functions as a written document officially issued by the state and circulating in the community are essential. Expressing the monetary value of Indonesia at that time which was still using the unit of cents and is no longer used and is unknown to the generation born after 80s.

The first stamp (far left) had face value of "5,-" Rupiah. Featuring Revolutionary Heroes Monument with the same text title at the top, using a landscape view, the illustration shown on the left of the stamp and a closer look in perspective was the location *Lubang Buaya* well. To the right with a further displayed perspective was standing statue of 7 revolutionary heroes with Garuda statue at the background. *Lubang Buaya* well building and 7 revolutionary hero monuments were made into a single unit with a plain coloured background to get best focus on those two objects. The *Lubang Buaya* well was made closer to the eye while the 7 revolutionary hero monuments were further away, emphasizing the location of the bloody incident, while the revolutionary heroes as complementary information, not the main subject, although the title is "*pahlawan revolusi*" monument. There is an aspect that is not present but speaks louder, namely without mentioning PKI atrocities, the sentiment is conveyed through an emphasis on the location where the incident took place. Another element in the stamp was *PT Pos* logo with "1967" inscription as the date of FDC been issued and mark of the monument construction process. Another inscription "*Lubang Buaya*" which (again) emphasizes the incident location, on the right side was magenta-coloured triangular with inscription "1 Oct-1965" as a marker of the *G30SPKI*. The ambiguity as mentioned above is the fact that FDC was published on August 17 (1967) or there is an impression of forced published not following the actual date of the incident occurred. At the bottom capital letters "*REPUBLIK INDONESIA*" was inscribed, it had the largest in size compared to other texts as a marker of the country that issued the stamp. The bottom placing had other function as a closing sentence which can be interpreted that the ruler issued this stamp on behalf of the country.

The second stamp (middle) had face value of "2.5,-" or 2 Rupiah 5 cents. The value of this stamp is the cheapest among the three stamps displayed. Whereas the illustration shown was of 7 revolutionary heroes standing with a Garuda statue as the background. Rationally this stamp should be the most expensive stamp, because these heroes are the subject of the historical event and the reason why this monument and FDC were created. Although the illustration was displayed using low angle; thus, the perspective was reduced to the top and a dashing impression was formed, the connotation of these heroes became the least important aspect, but must be presented as the reason for creating this FDC. Because the heroes look unclear and very small to see. The main object was made to stand out with the dominant white with dark brown background and light green. The text title was same as the first stamp, namely Revolutionary Heroes Monument was placed on the right. Another inscription of "*Lubang Buaya 1 Okt-1965*" which (again) emphasizes the place where the incident took place was placed at the bottom of the illustration as a marker of the *G30S PKI* serving as a repetition of the inscription on the previous stamp. The overall appearance of the second stamp is portrait which further emphasizes the dashing impression because it directs the eyes towards the top. Another element was "1967" inscription as the date of FDC been issued and mark of the monument construction process. Just like on the first stamp, at the bottom capital letters "*REPUBLIK INDONESIA*" was inscribed, it had the largest in size compared to other texts as a marker of the country that issued the stamp.

The third stamp (far right) had face value of "7.5,-" or 7 Rupiah 5 cents. The value of this stamp is the most expensive among the three stamps displayed. The illustration was a building which below was *Lubang Buaya* well as shown in the far left of FDC. This most expensive price gives the connotation that of all the elements that have been discussed previously, the incident location was the actual main actor that this FDC wants to highlight. Apart from the difference in illustrations and colours, which were Tosca Green and Light Magenta, other aspects of this stamp were repetition of the second stamp.

Overall, it can be seen that several elements were repeatedly displayed on the cover and the stamps, and given special emphasis on certain aspects, such as text, colours, and illustrations. Emphasis and repetition of certain aspects is very connotative to emphasize the message to be represented, and has the potential to form a collective memory that can become an ideology in the collective unconscious. If the connotation continues it will become a myth, and if the myth continues it will become an ideology (Barthes in Hoed, 2011). While the ideology itself is a false consciousness (Budiman, 2010).

In this case, the message maker who forms the collective memory through the FDC of *Lubang Buaya* Revolutionary Hero Monument is the ruler. In accordance with Young (2008), public memory of this period is being imprinted in a fertile breeding ground. Number of pictures and memorial space. Depending on where the memorial was built and by whom, these sites are built to be reminder of the past according to various myths, ideals, and national political needs.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

A graphic design including FDC Revolutionary Heroes *Lubang Buaya* Monument Stamp (1957) was never created to be neutral, because the authorities had an interest in the message conveyed. By means emphasizing certain elements, whether illustrations, colours, inscription, capital letters, bold characters, and others with the intention of conveying a message or communicating certain aspects specifically with a particular purpose to the audience.

The most dominant aspect of the overall appearance of FDC, namely the *Lubang Buaya* Revolutionary Monument or the incident scene. Meanwhile, the Revolutionary Heroes themselves appear to be complementary to the sufferers, which serves as the only reason for the publication of FDC. Thus, the collective memory that will be built is the place where September 30 and October 1, 1965, incidents occurred not to commemorate the fallen heroes. The impression of the colours used on those three stamps is sad, gloomy, and dark; thus, strengthens the message surrounding the event.

The issuance of the FDC of *Lubang Buaya* Revolutionary Hero Monument (1967) on August 17 was a systematic effort by Suharto to ensure collective memory would forget Old Order regime, which was the main actor in the Proclamation of Independence.

History records that Suharto with the New Order regime became the longest President after Soekarno. Thus, the communication media produced during his reign were numerous and massive. One of which is FDC Stamps. Therefore, the collective memory of the generation born after 1965s ideologically believed in the truth of Suharto's version of history.

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