
Female Representation on Banknotes: A Semiotic Analysis of 2022 Indonesia Banknotes

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Abstract

Besides their economic value, banknotes have a symbolic value through an expression of cultural identity that forms a nation. Generally, the customary design of banknotes in most countries issued by financial authorities is the portrait of notable male leaders. This research examined the banknotes for the 2022 emission year issued by Bank Indonesia to emphasize the frequent representation of male and female images used in the issued currency. Using the interpretivism paradigm with semiotic methods, this research found that on the surface, Indonesian banknotes in the 2022 emission year seem to show a sense of appreciation for women and femininity in Indonesia but in essence still lack a sense of justice towards women.

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Introduction

In August 2022, the government of the Republic of Indonesia issued a new design of Indonesian banknotes, the Rupiah with some invented innovations. Besides having a sharper color, the banknotes are designed with additional security features, such as magnetic ink, a dynamic moving effect, and ultraviolet security, which are made bigger (ANTARA News Agency, 2022).

Despite the government's effort to illustrate a sense of appreciation to female leaders in the new design, it is noteworthy that female representation on the newly designed banknotes remains limited. Of the seven new designs, only one banknote portrays a female noble character. Tjut Meutia, an Acehnese heroine was chosen as the only heroine who appears in the new Indonesian banknote for the emission year 2022. It was also Tjut Meutia who appeared in the previous design of the emission year 2016. In both the 2016 and 2022 designs, Tjut Meutia's image was presented in the IDR 1,000 banknote, the smallest currency among all the banknotes (*Image of Indonesian Banknote*, n.d.).

As seen from the aspect of communication studies, money is more than just a

payment tool. Monetary signs possess a representational power rather than mere abstract value (Brandt, 2017). Brandt's finding (2017) regarding the monetary signs is also relevant to the Indonesian banknotes since Indonesian minister of finance stated that each rupiah banknote represents a story and narration about Indonesia (ANTARA News Agency, 2022).

Money marks the shared interpretative or semiotic scheme of a particular political economy (Gray, 2000). Money is generally understood as any accepted payment for goods and services and repayment of debts. Money is associated in varying degrees of closeness with religion and is partly interpreted in modern times as the psychology of habits and attitudes, hopes, fears, and expectations (Davies, 2002)

Money can take numerous forms, depending on the time and the society where it belongs. In ancient Aztecs, chocolate was used for money. Meanwhile, Nicobar Islanders used coconuts, Norwegians used butter, and the Chinese used salt (Weatherford, 1996). Money makes the exchange of things possible for people, even of different races, languages, and religions. It is no wonder that Alpha Behn (in Weatherford, 1996) wrote, "Money speaks sense in a language all nations understand".

The meaning of money is always progressive and depends on the social relations that the money mediates (Wennerlind, 2001). Bingham (2014) presented a four-cell typology of how money communicates. First, it communicates through positive movement or economic activity such as sales and purchases. Second, it communicates messages through visible inertia, which happens when the expected transfer does not happen. Third, it communicates messages through its presence as a universal legitimizer where the sense of wealth and credibility are conferred. Fourth, it serves as a metaphor where the cognitive and affective experience with money gives a piece of information about how to understand the word, not only inside the scope of economics. Bingham's research suggests that to comprehend how the economy mediates the relationship between humans, a semiotic of money is needed (Bingham, 2014).

Money is also a language rather than just a measurement tool. Gleicher's research shows that money has a role in communicating good ownership to the public and debt ownership to the corporation. In contrast, even in the economic sphere, money can be used as a medium to convey a message (Gleicher, 2013). Thus, money is not as simple as an item or verifiable record accepted as payment for goods and services.

Llewellyn's (2015) research tried to delve into what money can communicate. By using Parson's media theory that characterized the money as a specialized language, Llewellyn weighed more on using cash to project what people may do where the denomination of the money is not only to reflect the identity of the money but also as a resource for economic actions (Llewellyn, 2015).

Though this previous research leans more towards the communication function of money related to the economic aspect, it does not necessarily mean that the economy is the only subject that money can talk about. Money can have a say also related to political topics. Razak et al. (2015), in their research, highlighted that the vision of Malaysia's political leader, Mahathir Mohammad, is depicted in Malaysian Ringgit. In their research, Ringgit contains visual codes on the banknotes that reflect the idea proposed by the former Malaysian Minister Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamed (Razak et al., 2015).

As a medium of communication, money is also dynamic. It influences and can be influenced by society. Money is not living in a vacuum state. There is a correlation between the visual structure of money, in this case, the dollar bill, and the social context of the United States community and found how social developments affected the changes in dollar bills (Taheri & Nafiseh, 2021).

The word “semiotics” comes from the Greek *semeiotikos* or an interpreter of signs, and as a discipline, it is simply the analysis of signs (Cobley & Jansz, 2012). Therefore, semiotics focuses on analyzing signs and how to interpret them. Using semiotics as a tool is beneficial not only to understand the journey between the past and the future but also to track the changing culture.

As a research method, semiotics analysis interprets the sign and hidden meaning. Semiotic analysis may be applied to various subjects related to communication and the transfer of information. For a particular purpose for the money visual design, semiotics is a highly relevant method.

The semiotics of money is an underdeveloped field of research (Bankov, 2016). The semiotics of money is rarely addressed, at least not among the most common theme as addressed in Gelgel’s research (Gelgel, 2022).

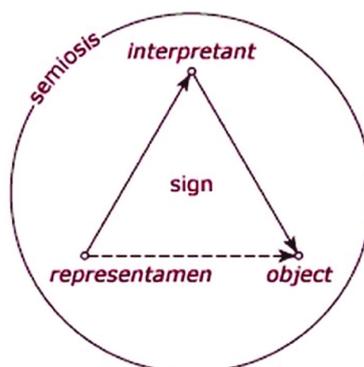
This previous research has shown that money is a communication tool that does not limit itself only to economics. However, none has talked about women’s specific role in money. It becomes interesting to look at the female representation in constructing the visual codes in the Indonesian Banknotes Emission Year.

Methodology

This research used the interpretivism paradigm, where subjective perception and interpretation construct reality (Croucher & Cronn-Mills, 2019). In the social sciences, this paradigm was developed as an antithesis to positivism in social science and had its foundation in idealistic philosophy (Nickerson, 2022). In this context, this research is working under the hermeneutics approach where subjective understanding is important, a number of items, ideas, and things can be analyzed as “texts”, and it is impossible to separate the observer from what they are viewing (Croucher & Cronn-Mills, 2019).

This research employed the semiotics methodology. Semiotics not only studies the sign and symbols per se but also the process and systems of such signs and symbols (Allen, 2017). Particularly, the semiotics employed in this research used the one developed by Pierce. Pierce divided signs into three categories, i.e., icons, indices, and symbols (Hardwick, 1977). According to Pierce, a sign signifies only being interpreted, thus making the interpretant central to the sign’s content, in that the meaning of a sign is manifest in the interpretation it generates in sign users (Short, 2007).

Figure 1 Pierce Model as a semiotic triangle



Source: (Eco, 1976)

The framework of Piercian semiotics involved three parts, i.e., the representamen or the sign, the object or what the sign symbolizes, and the interpretant or the effect of such

symbol in the mind of the interpreter (Allen, 2017). Using this framework, it is noteworthy to analyze the Indonesian banknote for the emission year 2022 by listing the image, symbol, and icons in the banknotes as the research object for further analysis. Such object are categorized as the representamen, while the interpretation of the researcher of a such object is classified as the interpretant.

The observation and analysis were performed on both the front and back side of the Indonesian banknotes, of the emission year 2022. The data were then tabulated and summarized (see Table 1 and Table 2). The process of observation and analysis serve as an attempt to deconstruct a specific meaning to reconstruct understanding (O'Leary, 2017).

Results and Discussion

Launched in August 2022, the new banknotes of the 2022 emission year consist of 7 designs, as shown in Figure 2. The banknotes contain several key images, such as the image of one national hero on the front side, and the Indonesian cultural icons, such as images of dancers, landscapes, and flora on the back side. The banknotes of 2022 emission year still retain key heroes that appear in 2016 emissions (CNBC Indonesia, 2022). The new banknotes of 2022 appear to be in a sharper color as compared to the banknotes of 2016 emission year.

Figure 2 Indonesian Banknotes for the 2022 Emissions Year

ANTARA

UANG RUPIAH BARU TAHUN EMISI 2022

Tujuh pecahan Uang Rupiah Kertas Tahun Emisi 2022 diluncurkan pada Kamis (18/8). Uang ini dikeluarkan dan diedarkan bertepatan dengan momentum HUT ke-77 Kemerdekaan RI.

TAMPILAN			
Rp100.000 Merah	Ir. Soekarno dan Drs. Mohammad Hatta		Tari Topeng Betawi, Raja Ampat, anggrek bulan
Rp50.000 Biru	Ir. Djuanda Kartawidjaja		Tari Legong, Taman Nasional Komodo, bunga jepun Bali
Rp20.000 Hijau	Dr. G.S.S.J. Ratulangi		Tari Gong, Derawan, anggrek hitam
Rp10.000 Ungu	Frans Kaisiepo		Tari Pakarena, Taman Nasional Wakatobi, cempaka hutan kasar
Rp5.000 Coklat	Dr. Idham Chalid		Tari Gambyong, Gunung Bromo, sedap malam
Rp2.000 Abu-abu	Mohammad Hoesni Thamrin		Tari Piring, Ngarai Sianok, bunga jeumpa
Rp1.000 Hijau	Tjut Meutia		Tari Tifa, Banda Neira, anggrek larat

INOVASI

- Desain warna lebih tajam.
- Fitur *magnetic ink*.
- Efek gerak dinamis (pecahan Rp20.000 ke atas).
- Perluasan area pengaman ultraviolet.
- Ketahanan bahan uang lebih baik.

CARA TUKAR UANG

Uang lama dapat ditukarkan di bank atau kas keliling Bank Indonesia melalui aplikasi PINTAR.

Jadwal penukaran uang mulai 19 Agustus 2022.

Sri Mulyani
Menteri Keuangan

Ini babak baru bagi Republik Indonesia yang baru saja (memperingati) kemerdekaan. Dalam setiap lembar rupiah terdapat banyak cerita dan narasi mengenai kebangsaan dan Bangsa Indonesia."

DATA/FOTO: BANK INDONESIA | RISET: IQBAL | GRAFIS: ULFA/NOROPUJADI | EDITOR: RANY

Source: (ANTARA News Agency, 2022)

The national heroes appearing on the front sides of the seven designs of the 2022 Indonesian banknotes are founding fathers of Indonesia: Soekarno and Hatta in the IDR 100,000 bill, former Finance Minister Djuanda Kartawidjaja, G.S.S.J. Sam Ratulangi, a doctor that eradicated forced labor and promoted transmigration to enhance the welfare of Indonesian people and Idham Chalid, a preacher and political leader promoting the economy of Muslims community appearing in the IDR 50,000, IDR 20,000, and IDR 5,000, respectively. Frans Kaisepo, M.H. Thamrin, and Tjut Meutia are presented in the IDR 5,000, 2,000, and 1,000 bill, respectively.

The use of female and male figures in Rupiah banknotes appeared as a visible attempt to represent gender equality. In the design, when the front page displays a male hero, the back side displays a female icon and vice versa. These selected designs are prominent effort to create “harmony” and ensure gender equality and fairness.

Indonesia has issued a specific regulation about the design of banknotes, which is Law No. 7 of 2011 on Currency (Law 7/2011). Article 4 of Law 7/2011 stipulates that there are general and specific characteristics of each rupiah. Article 5 Paragraph 1 of Law 7/2011 stipulates that the general characteristics of banknotes are (1) the image of the state emblem “*Garuda Pancasila*”; (2) phrase “*Negara Kesatuan Republik Indonesia*”; (3) appellation of denomination both in number and letter as the nominal value; (4) signature of the party of Government and Bank Indonesia; (4) text: “*DENGAN RAHMAT TUHAN YANG MAHA ESA, NEGARA KESATUAN REPUBLIK INDONESIA MENGELUARKAN RUPIAH SEBAGAI ALAT PEMBAYARAN YANG SAH DENGAN NILAI ...*”; and (5) emission year and print.

The front side must have the image of the national heroes and/ or the image of the Indonesian President. Article 7 Law 7/2011 stipulates that the presidential decree sets the image of the heroes or president selected for the banknotes. Therefore, the involvement of regime preferences related to the icons that are being chosen is almost certain. However, the selection is limited to only the heroes or leaders that have passed away. Therefore, no image of a living president or former president of Indonesia may be put in the banknotes.

Table 1 Semiotic Analysis on the Front View of Indonesian Banknotes Emissions Year 2022

Representment	Object	Interpretant
Portrait of Man/Woman	National Heroes:	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Soekarno & Hatta 	Proclaimers of Independence, national heroes that promote the independence of Indonesia. These figures represent the effort of Indonesia to become a sovereign country.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Djuanda Kartawidjaja 	Former Prime Minister, Minister of Finance on <i>Kabinet Kerja I</i> . This figure symbolizes the vision of independence in the field of the economy.

Representation	Object	Interpretant
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> G.S.S.J. Sam Ratulangi 	Former Minahasa Governor who is known for promoting local economies, eliminating compulsory labour services in Minahasa, and being pivotal in starting new areas for transmigration and creating a foundation to aid the student's education of financial needs. This figure symbolizes the vision of independence in the field of the economy.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Frans Kaisepo 	Frans Kaisiepo is the figure who represented Papua in the Malino Conference during the discussion on the formation of the United States of Indonesia. He represents the effort of Indonesia to become a sovereign country.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Idham Chalid 	Former speaker of the People's Representative Council and chairman of the People's Consultative Assembly. He is well known for his effort to improve the economy of Muslims, among others. This figure symbolizes the vision of independence in the field of the economy.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tjut Meutia 	The heroine who led the fight against Dutch in the struggle against Dutch colonialism in Aceh. This figure symbolizes the effort of Indonesia to become a sovereign country.
Background Pattern	Indonesian textile patterns from various provinces in Indonesia	The richness of Indonesia's diversity and culture. It represents the personality of Indonesia that stems deeply from a rich, diverse culture.
Roman Number	1000, 2000, 5000, 10000, 20000, 50000, 100000	Denomination number. This number shows western influence on the use of the number and openness toward other cultures and internationality.
	XBI000000	Series number. It shows western influence on the use of the number and openness toward other cultures and internationality.
	1,2,5,10,20,50,100	The shortened number of the denomination indicates the the government intention to redenominate the currency.

Representment	Object	Interpretant
Roman Typeface	Seribu Rupiah, Lima Ribu Rupiah, etc.	These words indicate western influence on the use of the Latin alphabet and openness toward other cultures and internationality.
	Negara Kesatuan Republik Indonesia	This expression highlights western influence on the use of the Latin alphabet and openness toward other cultures and internationality. It emphasizes the importance of unity of Indonesia..
Freehand writings	The signature of the Governor of Bank Indonesia and the Minister of Finance	Authority from the state.
Stylished Flower	Anggrek Bulan, Bunga Jepun Bali, Anggrek Hitam, Cempaka Hutan Kasar, Sedap Malam, Bunga Jeumpa, Anggrek Larat	Indonesia's diversity and richness of natural resources.
Symbol of BI	Bank Indonesia	Indonesia's central bank represents the authority to issue the banknote.
National Emblem	Garuda Pancasila	It represents the Authority
Map	Indonesia Archipelago	It represents the vastness of Indonesia as a great state and may refer to <i>Ibu Pertiwi</i>
Color	Red, Blue, Green, Purple, Brown, Grey,	These colors represents Indonesia's diversity and harmony.

As shown in Table, 1 all designs of Rupiah banknotes carry the signature of the Sri Mulyani Indrawati as the finance minister.. This aspect of the money is important because the fiat money is not backed by any commodities and gains its value from the market trust in the ability of the government that issued the money. Thus, the signature of the state officials is a significant aspect of the fiat money as people gain trust in the money because they believe in the government's promise that is using the fiat money, they can exchange it for goods or services.

It is important to note that the only heroine in the Indonesian banknote for the 2022 emission year is Tjut Meutia. She is known as the general (*panglima*) of an army fighting the Dutch colonial government in Aceh (Ismail, 2018). Such role is important to note that the role of *panglima* is usually held by a man. However, during desperate times and needs, even a woman can step in to become a leader. This is a statement that a woman is equal to a man in their ability to receive such a huge responsibility. Such an icon gains significance as Tjut Meutia originated from Aceh, which is well known for its deep root in Shariah. This is in contrast to what happened during the presidential election in 1999, when Megawati Soekarnoputri was mostly rejected by several factions in the People's Consultative Assembly (Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat/MPR) because of the religious claim (Hukumonline.com, 2004).

In this context, it is important to consider that Rupiah has gone against the patriarchal social construction, where only man is deemed strong, active, and rational (Wulandari, 2015). The representation of Tjut Meutia in the bank note, which has contradicted patriarchal social construction, can be read as Indonesia being a progressive country, and the government that issued this banknote takes seriously the issue of woman empowerment.

While Tjut Meutia is a stark symbol of heroism and woman’s pivotal role in Indonesia’s fight against colonialism in pursuit of independence, a more sublime symbol is worth noting. As can be seen in Table 2, stylish flowers can be found in the back of each banknote, including the IDR 1,000 and IDR 100,000. The selected flowers range from *Anggrek Bulan*, *Bunga Jepun Bali*, *Anggrek Hitam*, *Cempaka Hutan Kasar*, *Sedap Malam*, *Bunga Jeumpa*, and *Anggrek Larat*, which are all unique flowers of Indonesia.

Table 2. Semiotic Analysis on the Back View of Indonesian Banknotes for the Emissions Year 2022

Representment	Object	Interpretant
National Dance	Indonesia traditional dances i.e. Tari Tifa, Tari Piring, Tari Gambyong, Tari Pakarena, Tari Gong, Tari Legong, Tari Topeng Betawi	Diversity, plurality, and signify the Indonesian personality that is rich in culture. Conservatism. Spirit to keep the tradition.
National Landmarks	Banda Neira, Ngarai Sianok, Gunung Bromo, Taman Nasional Wakatobi, Derawan, Taman Nasional Komodo, Raja Ampat	The diverse and richness of Indonesia, that encompass all natural beauties. National treasure, conservatism. Spirit to keep the tradition.
Roman Typeface	Bank Indonesia <i>Dengan rahmat Tuhan yang Maha Esa, Negara Kesatuan Republik Indonesia mengeluarkan Rupiah sebagai alat pembayaran yang sah dengan nilai</i>	Indonesia’s central bank represents the authority to issue the banknote. Indonesian roots acknowledge God in all walks of life. The use of the Latin alphabet indicates western influence and openness toward other cultures and internationality. The promise and assurance indicate respect to the rule of law to provide safety and security.
	Emisi 2022	The use of the Latin alphabet represents western influence and openness toward other cultures and internationality.
Roman Number	1000, 2000, 5000, 10000, 20000, 50000, 100000	Denomination number insinuates western influence on the use of the number and openness toward other cultures and internationality.

Representment	Object	Interpretant
	XBI000000	Series number pinpoints western influence on the use of the number and openness toward other cultures and internationality.
	1,2,5,10,20,50,100	Shortened the number of the denomination, showing the government intention to redenominate the currency.
Stylished Flowers	Anggrek Bulan, Bunga Jepun Bali, Anggrek Hitam, Cempaka Hutan Kasar, Sedap Malam, Bunga Jeumpa, Anggrek Larat	Diversity, plurality, and signify the Indonesian personality that is rich in culture. Allegory to long standing of the agricultural strength of Indonesia.
Background Pattern	Indonesian textile patterns from various provinces in Indonesia	The richness of Indonesia's diversity and culture represents the personality of Indonesia that stems from a rich, diverse culture.
Color	Red, Blue, Green, Purple, Brown, Grey,	Indonesia's diversity and harmony

Different flowers generally represent separate meanings and flower symbolism characterized by their essence and its shape (Cirlot, 1971). There are three orchids i.e., *Anggrek Bulan*, *Anggrek Hitam*, and *Anggrek Larat* in the newly designed banknotes. The word Orchid is derived from the Greeks word *orkhis*. In classical Greek mythology, Orchis, the son of a satyr and a nymph, was turned into a flower after his death. People have associated the plant with virility, fertility, sex determination, and model for sexual reproduction (CRRC, 2006). This meaning of orchid is close to the role of a mother by which a baby is born.

The frangipani flower, *Bunga Jepun Bali*, and the Magnolia, *Cempaka Hutan Kasar* and *Bunga Jeumpa*, are closer to a religious purpose. Balinese used the frangipani flower as part of the offering to Gods (Kusuma, 2018). The magnolias are considered sacred because it is often used as an offering to Gods (Ramadhani, 2022). The lily, *Bunga Sedap Malam*, is a symbol of purity, yet it is also close to the spiritual aspect as people believe the scent of this flower is inviting spirits (Debora, 2022).

However, a flower is not only about beauty, diversity, or spirituality. The flower is also an allegorical representation of agricultural aspect (Cirlot, 1971). Agriculture has become a longstanding tradition and Indonesia's advantage since a long time ago. Several traditional kingdoms in Indonesia gain power through agriculture, such as Demak, Pajang, and Islamic Mataram Kingdom (Poesponegoro, 2008).

Agriculture commodities were also the driving factors that urged the presence of colonialization in the archipelago. Mollucas (*Maluku*), famous for their cloves, were targeted by the Portuguese, Spaniards, and Dutch (Kadir, 2014). Therefore, agriculture is not only part of Indonesia's strength as a nation but also signifies a saddened past of history. Both colonial government and local feudal lords turned *rakyat* into a forced cultivation system by requiring them to plant certain mandatory commodities.

Through all that toil, agriculture is inseparable from the woman role. Even though men may be deemed to have a stronger physic, women do most of the part, planting, weeding the plant, and even harvesting (Suradisastra, 1998). Therefore, agricultural is a proof where there is no gap between man and woman, even woman have a more crucial role rather than man.

Agriculture also closes to the resemblance of *Dewi Sri*, the goddess of fertility in Javanese tradition. The goddess is worshiped as she may bless the yield of the harvest moon. This goddess is not only part of Indonesian context, since Greek mythology also has Demeter, a woman who is worshipped as the goddess that takes the great care about all matters related to agrarian. Therefore, the flower can be understood as the way the government celebrates, honors, and respects not only woman but also womanhood that provides life. Without womanhood, there will be no existence of Indonesia.

Another noteworthy icon in the front view of the banknotes is the Indonesian Archipelago and the phrase *Negara Kesatuan Republik Indonesia. Ibu Pertiwi* personifies Indonesia as the allegory. In Vedic tradition, Pertiwi is the wife of Wisnu who brings forth all the plants (Macdonell, 1897). Representation by a female figure also gives a stark difference from the Dutch, who colonialized Indonesia that called their state the fatherland (Lu, 2022) instead of the motherland.

Textile pattern is also significant in representing the vital role of womanhood, not only in cultural but also in economic aspects. Fabrics, in this matter, is close to woman's participation in enhancing the family economy. The work related to *tenun* is proof of woman's involvement in informal sectors that can be found in every area across Indonesia (Habullah, 2018).

However, the selection of this icon may give another interpretation that despite the vital role of a woman that the Indonesian banknotes are trying to adhere to, the trace of a gap is still tact. First, it is visible from the allocation of hero or heroine. Second, it is related to the real and abstract figures that are used. Third, it is seen from the positioning of the male or female icons.

First, the allocation of hero or heroine also may be understood as signifying inequality. Only one heroine is selected out of 7 banknotes that feature national heroes. This brings a question of whether Indonesia lacked a noteworthy heroine to be presented in its banknotes, although selecting Tjut Meutia, the only woman icon in the smallest denomination also serves as a strategy in showing the pivotal role of a woman in using Rupiah. Without IDR 1,000 as the smallest denomination, there will be no IDR 100,000 as it will only 99,000. Therefore, every denomination is indirectly imbued with the IDR 1,000 that has the Tjut Meutia portrait in it. However, giving women first does not necessarily put them in the lowest denomination.

Second, even though every hero and heroine is accompanied by dancers of the opposite sex, the dancers have no clear identity. There is no clear view whether such a person is real or only the imagination of the banknote's designer. Even if they are real, perhaps, only certain people, including the designer, knew whose portrait was used as the female dancers. This contrasts with the hero or heroine that is presented on the front page that has a clear identity and track record.

Third, as most of the female icon is presented as anonymous dancers, their presence is also presented in the back of the banknotes. Regardless of the stipulation of Article 7/2011 that mandated the front page to be inserted with the picture of national heroes or presidents, it may be understood to signify that women's role is in the back and unknown

to others. This gives a rather disadvantage to women's representation as adding to the rich understanding from the other symbol that appreciates woman and womanhood, and it can be interpreted as other meaning. Women may have given many contributions, but at the end of the day, only the patriarch takes credit for whatever contribution the woman has made, as women's position is only in the back. As women's hard work is known by the male figures that sit in the front.

The selection of Tjut Meutia also may be understood in other perspective. Even if it can be seen as an effort to show that a woman can do what a man can do, it gives a different understanding when this context is put not only about who is the icon, but also where the icon is positioned.

Tjut Meutia is not an abstract figure, since she is real, and we know her by her face and name that describes her in the front page of IDR 1,000. This contrasts with six other women, the dancers that are put in the back page of the IDR 2,000, 5,000, 10,000, 20,000, 50,000, and 100,000. Those ladies did the role that deemed as something that conventionally belongs to the role of a woman. By doing this, no matter how beautifully or perfectly they dance, their presence is a mere company and cannot be positioned at the front view as they are not considered as national hero.

Such design positionings creates a meaning that only a woman that is able to take the role of men like what Tjut Meutia did as *panglima* that can be considered as hero and as the result be appreciated and put in the front page. In this context, it is clear that Rupiah still signals a gap that in order to gain a respectable position and appreciation, a woman must become a better version of men. Instead of fulfilling the intention of closing the gap between a man and a woman, this idea will create a bigger problem of a new issue of unequal treatment between man and woman. Sometimes, treated differently doesn't necessarily means to be unfair.

Peters, in Lauer (2008), considered money as more than just a medium of exchange but also a medium of representation (Lauer, 2008). Money can serve as a mass communication tool, as seen in how the early U.S. banknotes conveyed an iconography of nationalism (Lauer, 2008). As Lauer has shown in his research, the U.S. Dollar is a clear example of how money is used to convey a specific message or the state's positioning on several issues and circulating banknotes could serve an educative purpose (Lauer, 2008). The motto "In God, We Trust" was officially incorporated into the dollar design at the height of the Cold War to contrast the atheistic view that somehow put vis a vis with the American view (Lauer, 2008).

Therefore, though the Rupiah of 2022 emission year is trying to show that women is appreciated, it needs a more strategic symbol that cannot be framed as putting women in the cage prepared by the patriarchal tradition. Money is a strategic tool to convey an important message sublimely into the unconsciousness mind of people. Thus, the government has to be more selective in delivering the right message by coosing the right icon to create the reasonable and fair interpretation.

Conclusion

On the surface, Indonesian banknotes of the 2022 emission year appeared to have shown appreciation for women and womanhood in Indonesia. The selected icons seem to be a close to resemblance of women's portrayal or the roles of women, not only in the cultural aspect but also in economy and politics.

However, the semiotics analysis has shown that Indonesian banknotes lack a sense of equality. Giving five female icons in the back and five male figures in the front maybe just in the Aristotelian concept of distributive justice. However, there is a need to explain the sense of justice and equality from the qualitative perspective.

This result highlights that the problem of women representation happens not only in digital culture but also in a more conventional tool such as money (Sokowati, 2022). This condition raises a question whether women will be appreciated and positioned at the front if they take the role of men like what Tjut Meutia did as *panglima*. Or, whether women, in whatever capacity and role they may do, could be regarded as important without having to take the role associated with men. In short, whether women can be respected and appreciated without having to be like a man is a problem that must be addressed.

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