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Nationalistic History Learning: The Camera of the Brothers in the Seconds of the Indonesian Proclamation

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Abstract: History learning with a national perspective plays an important role in shaping national awareness and increasing love for the homeland among students. One of the historical events that has high national value is the Proclamation of Indonesian Independence on August 17, 1945. The Mendur Brothers, as photojournalists who documented the moments of the proclamation, made a major contribution to immortalizing this historic moment. Through a visual source-based approach, this study aims to analyze the role of Mendur Brothers' photography in history learning in schools. This research method uses a Literature Study study, namely discussions or reading materials related to a topic or findings in the research. (Wekke, 2019). In this case, the literature study utilizes articles, websites, and learning videos to be the main material regarding the role of Mendur Brothers in documenting the Proclamation event. The results of the study show that Mendur Brothers' photos not only function as authentic historical evidence, but can also increase students' understanding of the proclamation event and build national awareness. By integrating historical photography into learning, students are better able to appreciate the nation's struggle and foster an attitude of nationalism.

Keyword: Photography, Mendur Brothers, Nationality, Proclamation

INTRODUCTION

History learning that focuses on national insight has a very important role in shaping attitudes of patriotism and nationalism among the younger generation. Nationalism itself is a spirit of unity and nationality, which over time has developed into an understanding that places the unity of various elements as very important and must exist in every individual who is part of a community (Alfaqi, 2016). Patriotism is a spirit that prioritizes complete loyalty to the state, which is manifested by total devotion for the benefit of the entire nation (Samidi & Kusuma, 2020). Based on the views of the three opinions, it can be concluded that nationalism and patriotism have significant differences in terms of concept. Nationalism focuses more on citizens' efforts to build a collective identity that supports state sovereignty. On the contrary, patriotism emphasizes more on total sacrifice, whether in the form of soul, body, or property, to defend the sovereignty of the state (Samidi & Kusuma, 2020).

Learning history with a national perspective is an effort to foster the spirit of nationalism and patriotism of students, learning history with a national perspective plays an important role in fostering the spirit of nationalism and patriotism, because through understanding the struggles of predecessors, national values, and national identity, students can better appreciate and love their homeland. They not only understand the nation's journey, but are also encouraged to contribute to maintaining unity, fighting for progress, and defending the country's sovereignty. In learning history with a national perspective, there are many efforts to foster the spirit of nationalism and patriotism of students in it. One of them is by using documentary photography archives. Documentation is an activity with the aim of presenting documents that have valid evidence obtained through recording from various relevant sources (Hasan, 2022). Another definition of documentation is a method used as a reference in obtaining data from various forms such as archives, writings, images, numbers, books, and reports that can support studies. This method functions as a data collection tool that is further analyzed in depth (Saputra, 2020). One way to do documentation is through photography which can be defined as "drawing with light". The process is a photograph that records the reflection of light that hits an object and falls on a light-sensitive medium (Satri & Seabtian, 2019). Word *fotografi* comes from two words, namely *photo* and *graph* which has a different meaning, "*photo*" means light and "*graph*" which means pictures. Meanwhile, *photo* refers to the results of the images produced by the camera. Photography is a technique for taking pictures using a camera (Prasetyo & Sanjaya, 2023).

There are various types of photography, one of which is documentary photography which aims to obtain documentation of an event objectively and realistically. Documentary photography has the main purpose of visualizing circumstances and events as they are, without digital manipulation or computer processing (Abimanyu, 2024).

Documentary photography archives can be a means to foster students' sense of nationalism and patriotism in learning history with a national perspective. Documentation of historical events itself is evidence of important historical events that occur and have a great influence. In this case, the documentation discussed is the Proclamation event which was held on August 17, 1945. The event of the proclamation of Indonesian independence has a documentation archive that indirectly fosters the spirit of nationalism and patriotism of the Indonesian nation in achieving independence and prosperity for all people. Documentation of the seconds of the proclamation also indirectly fosters the spirit of nationalism and patriotism of students, the documentation of the proclamation can also be a teaching material for students to find out an overview of how the proclamation event occurred.

Several previous studies have developed his research in terms of historical documentation archives. (Firmansyah, 2024) In his research entitled Reading the history of the development of Gambang Kromong through photographic works. This research shows that visual works such as photography are a very interesting work to study, including from a historical perspective. Despite having the freedom of multiple interpretations in reading and interpreting a photographic work, it becomes a knowledge of academic value when read from an academic perspective. Literature studies, interviews, and the experience of researchers who are engaged in the field of Gambang Kromong music are a valuable capital for reading visual works.

(Abimanyu, 2024) in his research entitled "The Role of Documentary Photography in Historical Recording." According to this study, the role of documentary photography in this case is very important to prevent the loss of historical events from civilization. Therefore, documentary photography has a crucial role in the life of our civilization. Without documentary photography, there would be no visual record of important world events. A real example of this visual documentation can be seen in historical records such as the World War, Indonesian independence, as well as the world's great discoveries that can now be accessed again thanks to visual documentation evidence. Documentary photography, as a visual recorder of history, aims

to create narratives through images or visuals that can be evocative and universally understood, helping people to remember and learn from these historical events.

(Absor, 2017) in his research entitled "*Religious Archives: The Role of Archives and Documentation in Writing the History of Islamic Civilization in Indonesia.*" In this study, archives and documentation play a crucial role as the main source in understanding the development of Islamic civilization in Indonesia. By utilizing existing archives and documents, we can more easily summarize and compile a systematics of writing about Islamic civilization in Indonesia. This article aims to examine the important role of archives and documents in writing the history of Islamic civilization in Indonesia. Archives and documentation are an inseparable foundation in writing history. As a collective memory and national identity, archives are also a very strategic legacy of organizations and high-value assets. Therefore, it is important for all of us to maintain, preserve, and utilize archives for the common good and benefit of society.

Some of the things that distinguish the previous research from this research are that this research discusses a documentation archive, precisely the results of photography on the Proclamation of Indonesian independence by the Mendur Brothers. Where the Mendur Brothers consisted of Alex Impurung Mendur and Frans Soemarta Mendur, two journalists who were very meritorious in documenting an important event in Indonesia, namely the Proclamation of Independence as Indonesia's gateway to independence. This collection of photographs from the portrait of the Mendur Brothers indirectly became a witness to how the Proclamation of Independence was implemented, how the atmosphere was at that time, and indirectly fostered a sense of patriotism and nationalism in students to be proud of an independent Indonesia and become an independent nation. On this basis, the researcher examined several problems (1) Documentation Archive as Visual Literacy in Nationalistic History Learning (2) Mendur Bersaudara and Portrait of the Proclamation of Indonesian Independence (3) Documentation Archive of Mendur Bersaudara on Proclamation Events to Foster Students' Patriotism and Nationalism in Nationalistic History Learning

RESEARCH METHODS

This research method uses a Literature Study study, which is a collection of texts or other documents that contain a topic or findings in a research (Wakke, 2019). In this case, the literature study utilizes articles, *Copyright* ©, and a learning video to be the main material about the role of the Mendur Brothers in documenting the Proclamation event which was a witness to the Proclamation event which was full of emotion as well as the portrait of the Proclamation event by the Mendur Brothers which fostered a sense of patriotism and nationalism for students. Data collection from articles to find definitions of nationalism, patriotism, the meaning of documentation, photography, and visual literacy, plus learning videos were used to search for the biography of the Mendur Brothers and their role in the documentation of the Indonesian Proclamation of Independence.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Documentation Archive as Visual Literacy in Nationalistic History Learning

According to (Sidhartani, 2016), the definition of visual literacy or *visual literacy* refers to a person's ability to understand various forms of visual communication and apply this understanding in interacting and communicating with the surrounding environment. A simple example of visual literacy is when a person is able to identify and understand the message conveyed through images or symbols, then respond accordingly to the message. This includes basic messages such as prohibition symbols, directions, and others.

Visual literacy itself is rooted in the sense of sight, where in the process of seeing, humans think, learn, and try to interpret what they see, to then build the meaning of the ideas and concepts in the image. In addition, visual literacy can also be interpreted as a person's ability to

use or create the right images to express themselves. Visual literacy can be done by "reading" the images that a person sees. The results of this visual literacy can then be expressed in the form of writing. This process can also improve a person's critical thinking skills and creativity in writing (Rahmawati et al., 2021)

Through visual literacy, students can criticize, interpret, and analyze the hidden meanings in the media presented. Thus, visual literacy also plays an important role in honing children's critical thinking skills. This is in line with the skills expected of children to solve final exam questions that fall into the category *High Order Thinking Skills* (HOTS). HOTS is one of the skills demands in 21st century learning, which includes critical, creative, collaborative, and communicative thinking skills (Anggraini, 2019).

Nationalistic history learning in the form of visual literacy can provide an overview for students about historical events that occurred. Nationalistic history learning is closely related to visual literacy, especially in the context of documentation archives. History as a discipline not only focuses on textual narratives, but also makes use of a variety of visual sources, such as photographs, maps, illustrations, and historical documents, which are an important part of understanding and reconstructing past events. Thus, visual literacy plays a role in helping students or the general public to interpret, understand, and criticize various historical representations presented in visual form.

In the context of nationalistic historical learning, documentation archives serve as authentic evidence that strengthens understanding of important events that shape national identity. These archives can be in the form of photographs of the independence struggle, proclamation texts, official letters, or even video recordings that describe the socio-political conditions of a nation in the past. With good visual literacy, one can interpret the meaning behind the image, understand the historical context, and connect the information contained in the archive with the historical narrative that has been learned.

The use of documentation archives in nationalistic historical learning also serves to avoid historical distortion and misinformation. In today's digital age, where information spreads rapidly, an understanding of visual literacy is essential for individuals to be able to distinguish between original documentation and visual manipulation that can change the understanding of historical events. In addition, visual literacy encourages more active and critical learning, where students not only read historical texts, but also analyze visual sources to gain a more comprehensive understanding. Thus, the relationship between nationalistic history learning and visual literacy through documentation archives is very important.

Mendur Bersaudara and Portrait of the Proclamation of Indonesian Independence

On November 7, 1907, precisely in Kawangkoan, North Sulawesi, an Alexius Impurung Mendur was born who became the first of 11 children. Born to parents August Mendur and Ariance Mononimbar. His photography career began at the age of 15 in Batavia, where he worked with Anton Nayoan, his relative. From Nayoan, who was working in a Dutch company that sold photography equipment, Alex learned a lot about the world of photography. He then continued his career as a photographer at the famous Lyuks and Charls studio, as well as working in newspapers *Java Bode* and magazines *World News and Sport in Beld* in the 1930s. Alex worked at the Japanese news agency, Domei Tsushin, who was then trusted to be the head of the photography department (Serafica, 2020)

6 years later, Alex Mendur's younger brother was born who was the fourth child, Frans Soemarto Mendur on April 16, 1913 in Kawangkoan, North Sulawesi. In his youth, Frans left his hometown to move to Surabaya, then continued his journey to Batavia to meet his brother, Alex. After learning photography from Alex, Frans worked as a journalist in *Java Bode*. Frans is known as a journalistic photographer who managed to capture the moment of the proclamation of Indonesian independence with his brother, Alex. The photograph taken by Frans is the only one published of the historic event. In addition, Frans also managed to take

several other iconic photos that recorded the journey of the struggle of the Indonesian nation (Serafica, 2020)

In their teens, Alex and Frans migrated to Java. They started their careers in Surabaya before moving to Batavia. In Surabaya, Alex joined the organization of the Indonesian National Association (PBI) led by Dr. Soetomo. Later, Alex worked as a photojournalist at *De Java Bode*, the oldest Dutch-language newspaper published in 1852. He worked at the newspaper from 1932 to 1935. During the Japanese occupation, *De Java Bode* was not published, but republished after independence until 1958. (Azizah, 2024)

Frans followed in the footsteps of his older brother, Alex, by joining the *From Java Goat* in 1935. He learned photography from Alex and began honing his skills by sending his photographs to *From Java Goat* and weekly magazines *World News*. Frans was finally accepted as an assistant photojournalist. During the Japanese occupation, he worked in *Asia Raja*, a newspaper used for the benefit of Japanese propaganda, and participated in a roundtable conference held on March 12, 1945 at the Miyako Hotel, Batavia. In addition, Frans also works in *Jawa Shimbun Sha*, which was part of Sarekat Publisher Newspaper at that time (Azizah, 2024)

Starting on August 16, 1945, the Mendur brothers struggled to capture the moment of the proclamation which would be held at Soekarno's house the next day. The news about the proclamation of Indonesian Independence which would be held at Soekarno's residence on August 17, 1945 was received by Frans Soemarto Mendur through his colleague, a Japanese journalist. Although initially hesitant, Frans and Alex then decided to leave for President Soekarno's house on Jalan Pegangsaan Timur Number 56, Jakarta (now Proclamation Street) on the morning of August 17, 1945. They went secretly, carrying their "weapon", a Leica camera that had become a loyal friend of the Mendur brothers in their daily lives as photojournalists. Unfortunately, the Leica camera model used is not explained in detail (Riyanto & Pertiwi, 2023)

By 10.00 WIB, Soekarno-Hatta and other national figures came out of the house. Shortly after that, a piece of paper was taken out of the proclamer's pocket, then the paper was read where the text was the text of the proclamation of Indonesian independence. Frans, who was also swept away in the emotional moment, almost forgot to take a photo. In this historic moment, only Alex and Frans Mendur managed to capture the moments of the proclamation of independence of the Republic of Indonesia. Frans managed to take three important photos, namely when Soekarno read the text of the proclamation, the raising of the red and white flag by Colonel Latief Hendradiningrat of the Defenders of the Fatherland (PETA), and the atmosphere of the Red and White flag raising ceremony (Riyanto & Pertiwi, 2023)

Alex then returned to his office after his assignment in Pegangsaan was finished, after which he immediately washed his film rolls. Unfortunately, all of the photos were confiscated and destroyed by the Japanese army. Unlike Alex, Frans Mendur did not directly process his film rolls. Frans is said to have hidden the film rolls by burying them in the backyard of the Asia Raya office. The film roll belonging to Frans that was successfully saved could only be processed six months after the reading of the proclamation text. The results of Frans's shot were finally published on the first page of the February 20, 1946 edition of the *Merdeka Daily*. The historic photo prints that Frans took are the ones that have endured to this day. School students who are studying history can witness the historic moments when Karno read the text of the proclamation, accompanied by Hatta, as well as the raising of the Red and White Saka, through Frans' camera shots (Riyanto & Pertiwi, 2023)

After eight months of daily work *Independent*, the Mendur brothers decide to leave their jobs and pursue their long-dormant dreams. They then joined with the Umbas brothers (Justus and Frans "Nyong" Umbas), Alex Mamusung, and Oscar Ganda to establish IPPHOS, Indonesia's first independent photo news agency, on October 2, 1946. The mention of "independent" refers to the fact that most of IPPHOS's operational costs are borne by its

founders. Although IPPHOS supports the Republic, its founders agreed to ensure that the news agency remains independent and not tied to any Ministry (Khalika, 2018)

To increase office income, Justus and Frans "Nyong" Umbas even had to sell vegetables. In addition, Alex and his colleagues also worked with high-ranking officials, such as Sultan Hamengku Buwono IX, to obtain the rights to make, reproduce, and sell their photos. IPPHOS offers a wide range of photo shoot services to meet financial needs, such as family documentation, weddings, parties, and business inaugurations. They also served photo shoots for celebrations held by pro-Republican citizens in Central Java as well as the Dutch community in Jakarta (Khalika, 2018)

In 1951, the Indonesian government awarded Alex Mamusung a meritorious service award for his coverage of a four-day battle between RIS troops and KNIL soldiers and the Dutch Army. In terms of business, Frans "Nyong" Umbas managed to develop several trade concessions that provided profits. IPPHOS once supplied various newspapers as well as Ilford photographic equipment that they obtained from the Netherlands. The founders of IPPHOS also had close ties with the country's leaders. However, the prestige of IPPHOS declined as the New Order came to power, which erased everything related to Sukarno. Censorship and intimidation finally dampened the activities of the Mendur brothers and their colleagues. After 50 years of operation, IPPHOS finally closed (Khalika, 2018).

Documentation Archive of Mendur Berbrothers on the Proclamation Event to Foster Students' Patriotism and Nationalism in Nationalistic History Learning

Documentation archives have a very important role in understanding history, especially in the context of the Indonesian Proclamation of Independence. One valuable example of an archive is the Mendur Brothers' documentation collection, which consists of photographs taken by the brothers and sisters, Alex and Frans Mendur. They are witnesses who have succeeded in capturing important moments in the history of Indonesian independence, including the seconds of the Proclamation on August 17, 1945 in Jakarta. The photographs they produced became authentic evidence that gave a real picture of the historical atmosphere at that time.

In February 1946, Merdeka magazine published photographs related to the proclamation of Indonesian independence. In addition, this magazine also publishes photos about the struggle to defend Indonesia's independence. These photos not only document the struggle of the people, but also contain a message that Indonesian photojournalists or photographers want to convey. In every shot, the photographer always wants to convey a message. Photos are not inanimate objects, but contain hidden meanings that need to be revealed. In this case, the journalistic photographs published during the period of the revolution to defend Indonesia's independence contained a narrative of patriotism (Wardhana, 2024).

In learning history, the use of documentation archives such as photos of the Mendur Brothers has great value in fostering a sense of patriotism and nationalism among students. By seeing firsthand visual evidence of important events, students can understand how the heroes struggled to seize independence. This documentation not only provides an overview of how events unfolded, but also evokes students' emotions and awareness of the sacrifices that have been made by their predecessors.

The use of documentation archives in learning history with a national perspective provides a more real and contextual approach. Students not only learn from the texts in the textbook, but also gain visual experiences that support their understanding. By looking at the expressions of the characters, the atmosphere around the location, and the interactions that occur, they can more easily appreciate national values and appreciate the struggles of the heroes.

In addition, the use of historical documentation like this also helps students to develop critical thinking skills. They are invited to analyze historical sources, understand the meaning behind the photographs, and relate them to a broader context. Thus, they are not only able to

memorize events, but also to understand the causes and effects of these events in the development of the Indonesian nation.

By seeing the Proclamation event through the documentation archive of the Mendur Brothers, students are expected to be able to foster a sense of pride in their nation and country. Patriotism born from a strong understanding of history will encourage them to love and appreciate the independence that has been fought for. In addition, the developing nationalism will form a young generation that has concern for the future of the nation and the spirit to continue to maintain and defend Indonesia's sovereignty.

Overall, the relationship between the documentation archive of the Mendur Brothers and the Proclamation event is very close in an effort to foster the spirit of patriotism and nationalism among students. By integrating authentic historical evidence in learning history with a national perspective, the younger generation can better understand, appreciate, and emulate the spirit of struggle of the nation's founders. This is an important step in forming a strong national character rooted in historical values and national identity.

CONCLUSION

The documentation archive of the Mendur Brothers has an important role in understanding and living the events of the Proclamation of Indonesian Independence. The authentic photos that they immortalized became real historical evidence that could be used in learning history with a national perspective. By looking at the visual documentation, students can better understand the struggles of the heroes, feel the emotions contained in historical events, and foster a sense of patriotism and nationalism. In addition, the use of these archives helps students develop critical thinking skills in analyzing history in more depth. By integrating historical documentation in the learning process, it is hoped that the younger generation will increasingly appreciate and maintain national values and have the spirit to maintain the integrity and sovereignty of Indonesia.

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