

The Representation of Kemayoran International Airport's Heyday Era Within Hergé's Tintin: Flight 714 To Sydney

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ABSTRACT

Tintin is one of the characters created by Hergé, a Belgian comic artist. In his comic series, Tintin travels to various countries on his important mission. To find how to construct an understanding to illustrators that a magnificent and monumental illustration work can be achieved with a simple visual style, provided that the illustrator makes a thorough observation of the object to be visualized, so the method used is descriptive qualitative on the panel containing the scene of Tintin at Kemayoran International Airport illustrated in his series entitled Flight 714 to Sydney. The data analyzed includes primary data, namely the Tintin comic flight 714 to Sydney and secondary data such as semiotics and literature review about Kemayoran International Airport, including its important role during its heyday. Before illustrating this airport in detail, Hergé has made the most careful observation possible to depict the importance of this place while maintaining the characteristics of his illustrations by using clear lines as its visual identity. By including this airport in his comic creation, Hergé directly equates it with famous iconic locations such as Red Square in Moscow, the Giza pyramids in Egypt, and Chateau de Cheverney in France.

Keywords: *The Adventures of Tintin, Flight 714 to Sydney, Kemayoran International Airport, Indonesian Aviation History*

INTRODUCTION

Comics are narrative illustrations consisting of panels, sometimes accompanied by visualized text or sound effects. Based on their origin, comics are divided into several types: European comics, American comics, Japanese comics (Manga), and Hong Kong/Chinese comics (Manhwa). What distinguishes these four comics is usually the visual style used, including line art, coloring, and character anatomy created by the comic artist. Comic artists from these four regions have unique visual styles that define their identity, and Hergé is one such artist.

Hergé is a Belgian comic artist who has a unique way of illustrating his work, from designing his fictional characters to depicting the story's setting in as much detail as possible. One of his famous comics is Tintin, which he created on January 10, 1929, with the title Tintin in the Land of the Soviets. Like his other fictional characters, Tintin is visualized with simple facial expressions and combines it with the Clear Lines technique. Tintin is designed as a brave journalist accompanied by his dog named Snowy. In addition, Hergé also created other characters such as Captain Haddock, Professor Calculus, Thompson and Thomson, and a serious singer named Madam Castafiore.

The first Tintin series, titled *Tintin in the Land of the Soviets*, tells the story of the journey of young reporter Tintin and his dog, Snowy, to the Soviet Union to investigate the Bolshevik regime. Hergé's debut comic highlights the evils of the regime's government and tries to reveal the truth. In the midst of his investigation, Tintin must confront the Soviet secret agent, the OGPU, who tries to kill him. In his adventures, Tintin always visits countries that have iconic buildings or landmarks, such as the Pyramids of Giza, Machu Picchu in Peru, to the Eiffel Tower in Paris. The entire Tintin adventure series consists of 24 titles, 23 titles published in comic form, and 1 title published in sketch form after Hergé's death on March 3, 1983.

Tintin, Captain Haddock, and Professor Calculus are on their way to Sydney to attend an astronautics conference. While transiting at Kemayoran Airport in Jakarta, they accidentally meet an old friend named Skut, a pilot from Estonia. When they meet, it turns out that Skut is the personal pilot of an eccentric billionaire named Lazlo Carreidas, who is also heading to the astronautics conference in Sydney. Because of Captain Haddock's kindness, Carreidas is amused and invites Tintin and his group to join him in his private plane to Sydney. On the way to Sydney, their plane is hijacked by Allan and Rastapopoulos and held hostage, with the aim of emptying Carreidas's wealth stored in his Swiss bank account. Tintin and his friends manage to escape with the help of Mik Kanrokitoff, a writer connected to Aien. Rastapopoulos and his group trigger an explosion on the volcano of Bompia Island (Sondonesia) while trying to escape. Tintin and his friends manage to escape with the help of aliens who transport them in a UFO, while Rastapopoulos and his group are stranded. All the protagonists ultimately survive, but they suffer from memory loss of their previous experiences, and continue their journey to Sydney.

The existence of Kemayoran International Airport in the Tintin Comic Flight 714 to Sydney shows its important role in the aviation world at that time. Tintin and his friends from Europe are depicted having to transit at the airport before continuing to Sydney. Their stop at this airport is likely because Kemayoran Airport is the first international airport in Indonesia. All of Tintin's scenes at this airport are very well visualized, even the Air Traffic Control visualized by Hergé with his Clear Line technique is shown in great detail. This is because Hergé made a thorough observation of his drawing objects before he displayed them in his comic creation. Hergé made these observations so he could visualize his subjects in detail and showcase their uniqueness. Hergé's approach demonstrates that illustrations with a simple visual style can still convey the magnificence of the objects they depict.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This research attempts to semiotically translate the visual language of Tintin's scene at Jakarta's Kemayoran Airport. This scene is quite interesting because it features Kemayoran Airport during Tintin's journey from Europe to Australia. The presence of Kemayoran Airport in this comic as a transit point on a long-haul flight equipped with premium public facilities indicates the airport's importance in international air traffic at that time.

In the book *Comics; An Introduction*, it is explained that comics are a series of images that can be understood by the audience as a series of stories. When viewed from a visual perspective, what makes up a comic is text, sound effects, panels, gutters, and colors that form a certain tone. While in terms of objects, comics consist of characters and settings. (Earle, 2021) Characters in comics are objects depicted as human or human-like objects, such as Snoopy, a dog who can interact with humans like a human. Setting can be divided into two categories: place and time.

Strengthening the story in comics can be done through the setting approach, the more iconic the setting that is visualized in detail in the comic, the more the comic will have another meaning that requires a deeper understanding. The inclusion of Kemayoran Airport Jakarta in the Tintin Comic Flight 714 to Sydney gives the impression of the importance of this airport and Indonesia's strategic position in international flight traffic routes at that time. Even throughout the story, Hergé also includes the name of Makassar Airport, although in a very small portion.

This embodies the role of comics as a medium of information, education, and cultural exchange. As an informational medium, this story explains that in 1962, Kemayoran Airport in Jakarta was established and became the first international airport in Indonesia. As an educational medium, this story can teach its readers that infrastructure development at the right time can have a positive impact on a local and international scale. Meanwhile, as a medium of cultural exchange, this story can provide a good picture of the habits of airline passengers who stop over or transit at the airport, while also serving as a window of information for Tintin Comic readers from various corners of the world.

This undoubtedly makes Kemayoran Airport a gateway for the international community, whose presence is considered capable of driving the Indonesian economy. This standard makes Kemayoran Airport one of the airports considered strategically by Asian countries. All of the previous explanations further strengthen Hergé's reasoning for including this location as a key part of Tintin's Flight 714 to Sydney.

METHODOLOGY

This research uses a qualitative descriptive analysis approach. Data collection was conducted through direct observation of the comic and the film Flight 714 to Sydney. Additionally, other data were obtained from literature studies related to the research, particularly semiotics and Indonesian aviation history. The visual data obtained was then interpreted from various aspects, including dialogue, visuals, and their impact on the global development of comics.

DISCUSSION

In the 20th century, air transportation was very new and developed. Long before the existence of Kemayoran Airport, Tjililitan Airport was the first military airfield to facilitate civil flights in Batavia. (Kusumaningrum, 2018). In 1934, the Department of Transportation, Public Works and Water Management conducted a survey of the area that would be used as the site for the construction of a new airfield, namely the Kemayoran area. The reason was its location close to the center of Batavia City, compared to Tjililitan which requires 30-40 minutes, the latest position only requires 6 minutes from Batavia City. This location was agreed upon by the Batavia City Government, the Dutch East Indies Colonial Government, and KNILM just as it seen on the figure 1. The main construction and other facilities began from 1934-1940, during which the construction had already been operational, only the determination of international operations was set in 1940, but the development recorded positive results from its first year of existence, namely the period of July 8, 1940 - July 8, 1941



Figure 1. KNILM Airlines Logo

Before its inauguration in 1940, Kemayoran Airfield also underwent numerous impactful operations, such as during the Dutch East Indies era. In the 1930s, tensions arose due to Japan's military campaigns. This prompted the Dutch East Indies to strengthen its air defenses, one of which was to increase the number of pilots through the Voluntary Aviation Corps (VVC) (Mudlaafar., 2023). Entering World War II, after Japan conquered the Malay Peninsula and the Philippines, the Dutch East Indies became the next target. Japan succeeded in conquering airfields on the islands of Kalimantan and Sulawesi in early February 1942. As a result, southern Sumatra and Java became accessible targets for Japan, leading several attacks to target Kemayoran Airfield on February 9, 1942.



Figure 2. Kemayoran Airport

In the wake of the losses sustained in southern Sumatra, Kemayoran Airfield was repurposed as an evacuation hub and a facility for the assembly and maintenance of fighter, transport, and bomber aircraft. On February 16–17, 1942, Japanese forces pressured the Allies from Singapore toward Palembang, which eventually fell under their control. The Allied retreat led to the abandonment of several airfields, including Kemayoran, in anticipation of the Japanese arrival in Batavia on March 5–6, 1942 (Suryaningtyas, 2023). Throughout the Japanese occupation, Kemayoran Airfield served as a base for Japanese military activities and civil aviation operations managed by the state-owned airline, Dai Nippon Koku Kabushiki Kaisha or Greater Japan Airways.



Figure 3. Air Traffic Control Kemayoran Airport

Entering the defense of independence, the Japanese Emperor Hirohito made a statement of surrender to the Allies on August 15, 1945, through Admiral Mountbatten formed the RAPWI humanitarian agency to free prisoners of war and civilian internees, then carried out Operation Mastiff which sent rescue teams by parachute to the prisoner camp. On September 8, the Mosquito Force Team was deployed at Kemayoran airfield (Figure 2). Its task was to establish RAPWI posts in West Java-Central Java and gather information on the conditions of prisoners and the political situation in Java. The Allies in Southeast Asia led by the British realized the need for RAF strength in Indonesia. Their targets were 3 cities, namely Jakarta, Semarang and Surabaya because they were considered strategic. Their method was the RAF placed Jakarta with Wing No. 904 in Kemayoran, in collaboration with the Dutch and escorted by Wing 1308 and regimental units for security. The Allied forces in Southeast Asia, led by the British, recognized the necessity of establishing a Royal Air Force (RAF) presence in Indonesia and equipped it with an Air Traffic Control (Figure 3). They targeted three cities—Jakarta, Semarang, and Surabaya—due to their strategic importance. Consequently, the RAF stationed No. 904 Wing at Kemayoran, operating in collaboration with the Dutch and escorted by 1308 Wing and various regiment units for security and stabilization.

On the other hand, the new Indonesian government attempted to build political relations with the Allies (Yanyan Mochamad Yani, 2017), by offering assistance in the repatriation of Japanese soldiers and the Indonesian Military Association (APWI). The meeting between Indonesia and the Allies resulted in an agreement that the Indonesian Military Association (TRI) would assist in the repatriation process by establishing an agency called POPDA.

Entering the Old Order era, the Ministry of Transportation built the Djakarta International Airport (DIA) project in Cengkareng as a new international airport. This was done because technological developments in large aircraft such as the Boeing 747, Airbus, and other supersonic aircraft made Kemayoran Airport no longer meet the requirements. After operations ceased on March 31, 1985, management of the area was transferred from PT Angkasa Pura I to the Ministry of State Secretariat. The government then established the Kemayoran Complex Management Agency (BPKK) to manage the area (Subekti, 2016).

Initially, the 454-hectare former airport site was planned to become Jakarta's second growth center. However, in 1989, the plan was changed to a new small township with a "city within a city" concept, functioning as a modern area with independent economic activities. The project was named Kota Baru Bandar Kemayoran. (Hum, 2023)



Figure 4. Tintin Arrival at Kemayoran Airport

This historical fact and the airport's importance are what led Hergé to include it in Flight 714 to Sydney. This airport served as a transit point for Tintin and his traveling companions on their journey from Europe to Australia. This is particularly interesting, given that at the time, six international airports had already been built in Southeast Asia. Hergé could have chosen another airport besides Kemayoran (Figure 4), but he considered this airport's value superior.



Figure 5. Kemayoran Airport Air Traffic Control in the Tintin Comics

Hergé is known for his unique use of the Clear Line Technique (Rahadian, 2021) in all his comics such as Tintin, The Adventures of Quick and Flupke, and The Adventures of Yo, Susi, and Yokko. This technique is famous for its single line drawing that gives the impression of being clean, bold, simple, and neat. Each of Hergé's characters always has a simple face, with two circles for eyes, a nose that is usually curved, and a mouth shaped like a line. Hergé uses this technique so that his readers can easily recognize his characters and also allows his readers to associate them with his characters. That's why Hergé barely hadn't a difficulty visualizing a specific landmark including how He's visualizing Kemayoran Airport Air Traffic Control (Figure 5)



Figure 6. Tintin in Jakarta

Hergé not only used the Clear Line Technique in comics, but also in his other works. When he used the technique in the 1920s while he was an editor at *Le Petit Vingtième* and an illustrator for advertisements and posters, many clients were amazed by his work (Press, 2022). Between 1927 and 1937, Hergé even created numerous works such as letter designs, posters, logos, and advertising media for several large companies. Each work always begins with a simple observation of the details of the object to be created (Tintinimagination, 2025)



Figure 7. Makassar Airport Mentioning

When Hergé created comics, he always observed before drawing them by gathering information about the locations that would be used as the setting for his stories. He collected photographs and articles from print media, such as newspapers or magazines. This technique is also characteristic of this technique. He also did this when he wanted to create the *Flight 714* comic to Sydney until he finally got a detailed picture, one of which was a picture of Kemayoran Airport. Airport facilities such as the Air Traffic Control Building, waiting room, bar, and lounge were depicted precisely.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The placement of Kemayoran Airport on Flight 714 to Sydney not only proves the fact that the airport has a history and important role in international air traffic. More than that, Herge wanted to prove that a Clear Line as a simple line, without shading, can depict something important and valuable. This indirectly provides a refutation of the mindset of illustrators who are still trapped in the idea that good illustrations are illustrations that use complex and realistic drawing techniques. Herge's presence as one of the fathers of illustrators who carried the Clear Line technique provides a new perspective and hope to illustrators who want to work to choose this technique in each of their works.

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