Jurnal Cyber PR, Volume 6, No. 2, Desember 2026, Hal. 316–334
ISSN (online) 2798 - 0561

Representation of Papuan Indigenous Living Space in The Documentary Film *Pesta Babi*

Mahendra Sendang Aditama*, Choirul Ulil Albab

Universitas Dian Nuswantoro
Jl. Imam Bonjol No.207, Pendrikan Kidul, Kec. Semarang Tengah, Kota Semarang, Jawa Tengah 50131 Indonesia
*Email Korespondensi:115202302632@mhs.dinus.ac.id

Submitted: 09-22-2026, Accepted: 10-19-2026, Published: 11-09-2026

Abstract - *This study aims to analyze the representation of Papuan Indigenous living space in the documentary film Pesta Babi: Kolonialisme di Zaman Kita using Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic approach and Bungin's social construction of mass media perspective. This research employs a descriptive qualitative approach, with visual and verbal signs in the documentary serving as the primary data. Data were collected through repeated viewings, scene documentation, and identification of relevant signs. The analysis examines the relationship between representamen, object, and interpretant, followed by sign classification and thematic grouping. The findings reveal three main dimensions of Indigenous living space representation: living space as an entity of Indigenous community life, threats to living space resulting from development, and Indigenous community struggles to protect living space. These dimensions are reflected in the representation of forests, sago, cultural practices, development activities, customary territory marking, collective action, and expressions of aspirations to the government. The study demonstrates that Indigenous living space is represented not merely as physical territory but also as a social and cultural reality connected to community life, identity, and continuity.*
Keywords: *Charles Sanders Peirce; Representamen; Semiotic Analysis; Signs; Social Construction*

Abstrak - Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis representasi ruang hidup masyarakat adat Papua dalam film dokumenter Pesta Babi: Kolonialisme di Zaman Kita melalui analisis semiotika Charles Sanders Peirce. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif dengan menganalisis tanda melalui hubungan representamen, object, dan interpretant. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa film merepresentasikan ruang hidup masyarakat adat Papua melalui tiga dimensi, yaitu Representasi Ruang Hidup sebagai Entitas Kehidupan Masyarakat Adat, Representasi Ancaman terhadap Ruang Hidup Akibat Pembangunan, dan Representasi Perjuangan Masyarakat Adat dalam Mempertahankan Ruang Hidup. Dimensi pertama menunjukkan ruang hidup sebagai bagian dari kehidupan melalui hubungan dengan hutan, sagu, dan praktik budaya. Dimensi kedua menunjukkan pembangunan, konsesi perusahaan, dan aktivitas industri sebagai ancaman terhadap ruang hidup. Dimensi ketiga menunjukkan perjuangan masyarakat adat melalui penegasan batas wilayah, mekanisme adat, aksi kolektif, dan penyampaian aspirasi kepada pemerintah. Secara keseluruhan, ketiga dimensi tersebut menunjukkan bahwa ruang hidup tidak hanya merupakan wilayah fisik, tetapi juga realitas sosial dan budaya yang menopang kehidupan, identitas, dan keberlangsungan masyarakat adat. Dengan demikian, film mengonstruksi ruang hidup sebagai realitas sosial dan budaya yang berkaitan dengan kehidupan, ancaman pembangunan, dan perjuangan masyarakat adat.
Kata Kunci: Charles Sanders Peirce; Konstruksi Sosial; Representamen; Semiotika; Tanda

Introduction

The documentary film Pesta Babi: Kolonialisme di Zaman Kita offers a different perspective on development in Papua by placing the experiences of Papuan Indigenous communities at the center of its narrative. Through the stories of the Marind, Yei, Awyu, and Muyu communities, the film illustrates that changes to customary territories are not merely

DOI: 10.32509/cyberpr.v6i2.7941
CC BY-NC-SA 4.0. Copyright © 2026 The Author(s).

associated with the loss of landscapes, but also affect Indigenous communities' relationships with their sources of livelihood, cultural identity, and the continuity of life across generations (Yulianto & Iskandar, 2026) In the film, land is not positioned merely as an asset to be utilized, but as an Indigenous living space that shapes how Indigenous communities conduct their everyday lives (Frank et al., 2020) This narrative choice demonstrates that the documentary does not merely record an event, but also constructs how audiences understand social reality through visual and verbal signs arranged throughout the narrative (Fatubun, 2023).

For Papuan Indigenous communities, land is not understood merely as a place to live or a source of economic sustenance, but as part of a system of life that integrates identity, history, kinship relations, and cultural values passed down across generations. Rights to customary land are also established through genealogical and historical ties that position land as an integral part of Indigenous existence. Therefore, changes in the status or utilization of customary land cannot be viewed merely as administrative or economic matters (Frank dkk., 2020) When customary territories undergo conversion due to development interests, such changes also affect the continuity of social structures, cultural practices, and the ways in which Indigenous communities maintain their relationship with their living space. Therefore, Indigenous living space is not merely a physical territory, but also a social and cultural space that shapes the continuity of life among Papuan Indigenous communities (Kemas dkk., 2020) Based on this understanding, this article focuses on the representation of Indigenous living space as constructed through visual and verbal signs in the film Pesta Babi: Kolonialisme di Zaman Kita.

Documentary films play an important role in shaping public understanding of social reality because they not only record events but also shape perspectives through the selection of narratives, visuals, sounds, and experiences. In the context of Papua, documentaries provide a medium through which Indigenous communities can convey their lived experiences, local knowledge, and relationships with land and the environment from their own perspectives (Kemas dkk., 2020). Indigenous media can also provide opportunities for Indigenous communities to represent their own experiences, cultural perspectives, and social realities, rather than being positioned solely as subjects of external representation (Ginsburg, 1991). In documentary production, attention to culturally specific protocols and accountability is also important in determining how Indigenous experiences are represented and circulated (Montoya dkk., 2023). This approach offers an alternative narrative to representations of Papua that have largely been constructed by outsiders, while also providing space for Indigenous communities to document their experiences, strengthen collective memory, and voice the issues they face (Morales dkk., 2021). A similar concern can be seen in media coverage of Indigenous communities. (Satu, 2025) in examining media reporting on the Besipae Indigenous community, found that media representation can position Indigenous communities as objects of reporting rather than subjects, particularly when media interests become intertwined with conflicts surrounding exploitation. This is consistent with Bungin's perspective on the social construction of mass media, which views media as a space that contributes to shaping social reality through the processes of constructing and presenting reality. The reality presented by the media is not merely displayed, but is shaped through a construction process that produces particular meanings regarding the reality being presented (Bungin, 2015). This perspective is consistent with (Adoni & Mane, 1984) explanation that mass media play a role in the social

construction of reality by shaping how social conditions and events are presented and understood. In this regard, media representations can be examined not merely as reflections of existing conditions, but also as mediated constructions of social meaning. Therefore, documentary films provide a relevant medium for examining how Indigenous living space is represented through the relationship between visual and verbal signs. In this context, this article employs Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotics to interpret the construction of meaning of Indigenous living space in the film Pesta Babi: Kolonialisme di Zaman Kita.

Research on the representation of Papua in media and documentary films has developed across various areas of focus. (Fatubun, 2023) explains that documentary films serve as a medium for decolonization that enables Papuan Indigenous communities to document their lived experiences, strengthen collective memory, and convey stories from their own perspectives through the Papuan Voices initiative. (Mariani, 2025) further demonstrates that documentary film production by the Papuan Voices community constructs subaltern digital narratives that position Papuan communities as subjects of representation while challenging dominant narratives about Papua. Meanwhile, (Rosalia dkk., 2019) through a semiotic analysis of the films Lost in Papua and Sokola Rimba, found that representations of Indigenous communities in remote areas in Indonesian films tend to be constructed through stereotypes concerning backwardness, intelligence, and the behavior of minority groups. Similarly, (Indriyana & Albab, 2020) examined the representation of female rape victims in the film M.F.A. through semiotic analysis, demonstrating how film can construct particular representations of social reality. More recently, (Yulianto & Iskandar, 2026) examined the film Pesta Babi: Kolonialisme di Zaman Kita using Roland Barthes' semiotics and found that the film's title and cinematic strategies construct a critique of colonialism, agrarian conflict, and development discourse in Papua.

Although these studies have contributed to understanding the representation of Papua through documentary films, there remains an area that requires further investigation. Previous studies have mainly examined documentaries as media for decolonization, the construction of alternative narratives, the representation of minority groups, and critiques of colonialism and agrarian conflict. However, no study has specifically examined how Indigenous living space is represented in the film Pesta Babi: Kolonialisme di Zaman Kita through Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic approach. Indigenous living space is not only conveyed through verbal narratives but is also constructed through the relationship between visual and verbal signs that shapes the audience's understanding of Indigenous communities' relationships with land, culture, and the continuity of their lives.

Building on the identified research gap, this study examines the representation of Papuan Indigenous living space in the documentary film *Pesta Babi: Kolonialisme di Zaman Kita* through Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic approach. Unlike previous studies that have focused on decolonized filmmaking, alternative media narratives, minority representation, and the representation of colonialism and agrarian conflict, this study places Indigenous living space as the central focus of analysis. Specifically, this study aims to identify the visual and verbal signs representing Indigenous living space, interpret the relationship between representamen, object, and interpretant, and classify the signs according to their dominant characteristics as icons, indexes, or symbols. Furthermore, this study seeks to identify recurring meanings across

the selected scenes and organize them into broader thematic dimensions that explain how Indigenous living space is represented in the documentary.

The analysis is guided by two complementary theoretical perspectives. Peirce's semiotics is used to examine how visual and verbal signs generate meaning through their relationship with the objects they represent and the interpretants they produce. Meanwhile, Bungin's social construction of mass media perspective is used to explain how the meanings identified in individual scenes are organized into a broader representation of social reality through media. The integration of these perspectives enables the study to connect the interpretation of individual signs with the construction of Indigenous living space as a social and cultural reality.

Accordingly, this study aims to reveal three aspects of representation: Indigenous living space as an entity of community life, threats to living space resulting from development, and Indigenous community struggles to protect their living space. The findings are expected to contribute to communication studies by extending semiotic analysis of documentary films beyond the identification of individual signs toward an understanding of how interconnected signs construct representations of Indigenous communities, their relationships with customary territories, and the continuity of their social and cultural life.

Method

Research Design and Data Sources

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach to analyze the representation of Papuan Indigenous living space in the documentary film *Pesta Babi: Kolonialisme di Zaman Kita*. A qualitative approach was selected because the research focuses on interpreting meanings constructed through visual and verbal signs rather than measuring numerical relationships. The analysis is based on Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic framework, which examines the relationship between representamen, object, and interpretant. Bungin's social construction of mass media perspective is also employed to interpret how the meanings identified through semiotic analysis are organized into a broader construction of social reality through the documentary. The application of Peirce's triadic model in film analysis is also reflected in previous research, which uses the relationship between representamen, object, and interpretant to interpret meanings constructed through cinematic signs (Hamidah dkk., 2024).

The primary data consist of visual and verbal elements presented in the documentary. Visual data include scenes, gestures, expressions, objects, settings, and relevant cinematographic elements, while verbal data include dialogue, narration, and written text. Secondary data were obtained from relevant scientific articles, books, and academic publications concerning semiotics, media representation, documentary films, social construction, and Indigenous communities.

Scene Selection

The units of analysis were selected using purposive sampling. The documentary film *Pesta Babi: Kolonialisme di Zaman Kita* was repeatedly viewed in its entirety, resulting in the mapping of 52 scenes documented in a master data bank. The data bank included the timestamp, scene description, visual and verbal elements, themes, and the rationale for each scene's relevance to the research focus.

The 52 mapped scenes were subsequently reviewed based on the research objectives and the established purposive sampling criteria. These criteria included: (1) scenes depicting

the relationship between Indigenous communities and customary territories; (2) scenes presenting forests, natural resources, and cultural practices as elements of Indigenous living space; (3) scenes illustrating changes, pressures, or threats to customary territories associated with development activities; and (4) scenes depicting Indigenous community efforts to protect their living space through customary mechanisms, collective actions, or the expression of aspirations. The review also considered the presence of identifiable visual and/or verbal signs that could be examined using Peirce's semiotic framework.

Based on this review, nine scenes were selected as the final units of analysis for in-depth examination. The selection considered the relevance of each scene to the research focus and the variation of representations presented throughout the documentary. The selected scenes cover different aspects of Indigenous living space, including relationships with forests and natural resources, cultural practices, development-related pressures, and community efforts to protect customary territories. The scenes are also distributed across the beginning, middle, and later parts of the documentary, allowing the analysis to capture representations from different portions of the film rather than focusing on a single segment.

The nine selected scenes were then analyzed using Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic framework by examining the relationship between representamen, object, and interpretant. The interpretations were compared and grouped into three main dimensions of representation: Indigenous living space as an entity of community life, threats to living space resulting from development, and Indigenous community struggles to protect their living space. The remaining mapped scenes were not selected as units for in-depth analysis because the study focused on scenes that most directly addressed the research objectives and provided relevant variations in representation.

Table 1. Selected Scenes and Their Representation Dimensions

No.	Scene and Timestamp	Dimension of Representation	Rationale for Selection
1	Forest (14:15–15:36)	Living Space as an Entity of Indigenous Community Life	Depicts the forest as an integral part of Indigenous living space and illustrates the relationship between the community and its natural environment.
2	Sago (51:00–52:36)	Living Space as an Entity of Indigenous Community Life	Represents natural resources that support the community's livelihood, illustrating the role of the environment in meeting everyday needs.
3	Pesta Babi (1:28:00–1:30:00)	Living Space as an Entity of Indigenous Community Life	Depicts cultural practices and collective community life, showing that Indigenous living space encompasses not only physical territory but also social and cultural dimensions.
4	Development Machinery and Road Construction (20:58–22:10)	Threats to Living Space Resulting from Development	Illustrates development activities and infrastructure as forms of physical change affecting territories that constitute Indigenous living space.
5	Concessions (36:01–37:38)	Threats to Living Space Resulting from Development	Addresses the issue of territorial concessions and their relevance to pressures on Indigenous land rights and the sustainability of customary territories.
6	Kwipalo Family, Customary Forest, and Excavator (37:40–39:30)	Threats to Living Space Resulting from Development	Connects the lives of an Indigenous family and their customary forest with the presence of heavy machinery, illustrating

			how territorial changes may affect Indigenous communities.
7	Red Paint Territory Markings (39:31–41:00)	Indigenous Community Struggles to Protect Living Space	Depicts territorial marking as a means of asserting customary boundaries and affirming Indigenous claims over their living space.
8	Sasi, Opposition, and Criticism (1:20:00–1:22:00)	Indigenous Community Struggles to Protect Living Space	Illustrates customary mechanisms and expressions of opposition or criticism as forms of community response to pressures on Indigenous living space.
9	Government Aspirations (1:22:40–1:24:11)	Indigenous Community Struggles to Protect Living Space	Depicts the expression of community aspirations to the government as a form of advocacy and communication to convey Indigenous interests and concerns.

Data Collection and Analytical Procedure

Data were collected through repeated viewings of the documentary, documentation of relevant scenes, and transcription of dialogue and narration related to the research focus. Each selected scene was documented with its corresponding timestamp and a description of the visual and verbal elements. The documented scenes were then analyzed using a systematic procedure consisting of eight stages.

First, scene selection was conducted based on the established purposive sampling criteria. Second, the representamen in each selected scene was identified by examining its visual and verbal elements. Third, the object referred to by each representamen was determined within the context of the scene. Fourth, the interpretant was formulated by interpreting the relationship between the representamen and its object.

Fifth, the identified signs were classified as icons, indexes, or symbols based on the conceptual criteria established in Peirce's semiotic framework. An icon was identified when the relationship between the representamen and its object was based primarily on resemblance or similarity, such as visual images that resemble the forests, people, or landscapes they depict. An index was identified when the relationship was grounded in an observable factual, physical, causal, or situational connection between the sign and its object. The classification of a sign as an index therefore required contextual evidence of an actual connection or an indicative relationship, rather than merely an activity or a visual element appearing in the scene. For example, footage showing heavy machinery physically clearing a forest or constructing a road could be interpreted as an index of territorial transformation when the depicted activity directly demonstrates the physical process affecting the customary landscape. In contrast, a symbol was identified when the relationship between the representamen and its object depended primarily on social conventions, culturally established meanings, or shared interpretive rules. For instance, red paint used to mark customary territory could function symbolically when its meaning as a boundary marker depends on a socially recognized convention. The classification was determined by examining how the sign referred to its object within the documentary's specific visual, verbal, and sociocultural context. When a sign could be interpreted through more than one semiotic relationship, the analysis considered its dominant function in conveying the scene's central representational meaning and documented the contextual basis for that interpretation.

Sixth, recurring meanings across the selected scenes were identified by comparing the interpretations. Seventh, these recurring meanings were grouped into broader themes based on their conceptual similarities and relationships. Eighth, the resulting themes were synthesized into three main dimensions of Indigenous living space representation: living space as an entity

of Indigenous community life, threats to living space resulting from development, and Indigenous community struggles to protect living space.

The analysis was subsequently interpreted through Bungin's social construction of mass media perspective to examine how the signs and recurring meanings identified through Peirce's semiotics were organized into a broader construction of social reality. This procedure established a systematic connection between the signs observed in individual scenes, their semiotic interpretations, and the broader thematic representation presented in the documentary.

Results and Discussions

Representation of Living Space as an Entity of Indigenous Community Life

The documentary film *Pesta Babi: Kolonialisme di Zaman Kita* represents Indigenous living space through the interconnected relationships between communities, natural resources, and cultural practices. The selected scenes depict the forest as a source of livelihood and local knowledge, sago as ancestral heritage, and *pesta babi* as a cultural practice associated with the continuity of Indigenous life. These representations indicate that Indigenous living space is presented not merely as a geographical territory, but also as a social and cultural environment that supports everyday activities, collective identity, and the continuity of traditions. This dimension is discussed through the visual and verbal signs identified in the selected scenes and interpreted using Peirce's semiotic framework.

The Forest as an Entity of Indigenous Community Life

The forest scene focuses on the relationship between an Indigenous community member and the natural resources used in everyday life. The semiotic elements identified in this scene are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Semiotic Analysis of the Forest Scene

Scene	Analysis Element	Analysis Result
 Scene Visual(14:15-15:36)	Representamen	The actions of an Indigenous community figure walking through the forest while showing and explaining various natural elements and their uses.
	Object	The relationship between the Indigenous community and the forest as a living space that sustains life and the transmission of local knowledge.
	Interpretant	The film constructs the meaning that the forest is a living space that sustains the continuity of Indigenous communities through the close relationship between people, nature, and local knowledge.
	Type of Sign	Index
	Representational Meaning	The forest is represented as an entity inseparable from the continuity of Indigenous community life.

The forest scene represents Indigenous living space through the relationship between natural resources and the transmission of local knowledge. (Frank dkk., 2020) found that customary land tenure among the Supiori people in Papua was organized communally and connected to historical and social relationships. While both studies recognize the close relationship between Indigenous communities and their land, Frank et al. examined customary land tenure and land use, whereas this study investigates the documentary's construction of meaning. The present analysis extends this discussion by showing how the film connects the practical use of forest resources with the transmission of knowledge, positioning the forest as both a source of livelihood and a setting for cultural continuity.

Sago as Ancestral Heritage

The sago scene highlights the relationship between resource utilization and the cultural meanings attached to ancestral heritage. The semiotic analysis is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Semiotic Analysis of the Sago Scene

Scene	Analysis Element	Analysis Result
 Scene Visual (51:00-52:36)	Representamen	The practice of Indigenous community members harvesting and utilizing sago trees, accompanied by an explanation of the origins of sago as ancestral heritage.
	Object	The relationship between Indigenous communities and sago as ancestral heritage that sustains their living space and cultural identity.
	Interpretant	The film constructs the meaning that sago is not merely a source of food, but also ancestral heritage that shapes cultural identity and the continuity of Indigenous living space.
	Type of Sign	Symbol
	Representational Meaning	Sago is represented as ancestral heritage that constitutes an important part of the continuity of Indigenous living space.

The sago scene adds a cultural dimension to the representation of Indigenous living space. Unlike the forest scene, which emphasizes the use of natural resources and local knowledge, the sago scene foregrounds the meaning of ancestral heritage. This distinction illustrates how a natural resource can be represented not only through its practical use but also through culturally transmitted meanings. The contribution of this comparison is to demonstrate that ecological resources and cultural identity are interconnected dimensions of Indigenous living space, rather than separate elements.

Pesta Babi as Cultural Continuity

The pesta babi scene presents a collective cultural practice connected to the community's living environment. The semiotic analysis of this scene is presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Semiotic Analysis of the Pesta Babi Scene

Scene	Analysis Element	Analysis Result
 Scene Visual (1:28:00-1:30:00)	Representamen	A series of activities carried out by Indigenous community members in preparing for and conducting pesta babi, which are connected to the existence of the forest as a living space.
	Object	The continuity of the pesta babi tradition, which depends on the existence of Indigenous living space.
	Interpretant	The film constructs the meaning that the continuity of Indigenous traditions can only be maintained when the living space remains preserved as a source of life for humans and animals that are part of the cultural practice.
	Type of Sign	Symbol
	Representational Meaning	Pesta babi is represented as a cultural tradition that depends on the continuity of Indigenous living space.

The pesta babi scene extends the representation of Indigenous living space from natural resources and inherited knowledge to collective cultural practice. (Fatubun, 2023) discussed Indigenous filmmaking as a means of documenting Papuan communities' lived experiences and communicating their perspectives. Both studies recognize the role of film in presenting Indigenous experiences, but their analytical focuses differ: Fatubun examined Indigenous filmmaking as a decolonizing practice, whereas this study investigates how a particular documentary connects cultural practice with living space. The present analysis adds a scene-based explanation of how collective tradition is represented as part of the social and environmental relationships that sustain Indigenous cultural continuity.

Taken together, the forest, sago, and pesta babi scenes construct Indigenous living space through three interconnected dimensions: the use of natural resources, the transmission of ancestral knowledge, and the continuity of collective cultural practices. Their relationship shows that the documentary represents living space as more than a geographical area; it is a social and cultural environment through which community life and identity are sustained. This finding provides a basis for examining how development-related activities are subsequently represented as pressures on that environment.

Representation of Threats to Living Space Resulting from Development

The documentary represents development-related threats to Indigenous living space through scenes depicting infrastructure construction, corporate concessions, and the expansion of industrial activities into or near customary territories. These scenes are accompanied by narratives and testimonies concerning changes to land use and the effects of development on Indigenous communities. Rather than treating these elements as isolated events, the film places them within a broader narrative about the changing relationship between Indigenous communities and their customary territories. This dimension examines how visual and verbal signs construct development as a source of pressure on Indigenous living space, while distinguishing the events depicted in the film from the meanings produced through their presentation.

Development as the Beginning of Threats to Living Space

This scene focuses on infrastructure construction and heavy machinery as visual representations of physical changes to customary territory. The semiotic analysis is presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Semiotic Analysis of the Development and Road Construction Scene

Scene	Analysis Element	Analysis Result
 Scene Visual (20:58-22:10)	Representamen	A series of visuals depicting heavy machinery, road construction, and narratives concerning large-scale development projects entering the Marind customary territory.
	Object	The entry of large-scale development into customary territory through infrastructure projects and forest clearing.
	Interpretant	The film constructs the meaning that development marks the beginning of changes to Indigenous living space as customary territory is gradually converted into development areas.
	Type of Sign	Index
	Representational Meaning	Development is represented as the beginning of threats to the living space of Papuan Indigenous communities.

The road-construction scene presents development-related change through visible infrastructure activities situated within a narrative about projects entering Marind customary territory. (Sawir dkk., 2026) examined customary practices and Indigenous knowledge in ecological governance, whereas this study focuses on the representation of development activities in a documentary. The present analysis adds a media-representational perspective by showing how images of heavy machinery and road construction, combined with narration, frame infrastructure development as pressure on customary territory. This interpretation

concerns the documentary's representation and does not independently establish the legal status or actual effects of the project.

Takeover of Customary Territories through Corporate Concessions

This scene combines images of forest conversion with a verbal account of corporate concessions for sugarcane and bioethanol industries. The semiotic elements are summarized in Table 6.

Table 6. Semiotic Analysis of the Corporate Concessions Scene

Scene	Analysis Element	Analysis Result
 Scene Visual (36:01-37:38)	Representamen	Visuals of forest areas being converted, accompanied by a narrative concerning the granting of concessions to companies for sugarcane and bioethanol industries.
	Object	The takeover of customary territories through the granting of corporate concessions.
	Interpretant	The film constructs the meaning that development changes both the function and control of Indigenous living space through concession mechanisms.
	Type of Sign	Index
	Representational Meaning	The takeover of customary territories is represented as a form of threat to Indigenous living space.

The concessions scene introduces an institutional and economic dimension of development-related pressure. Unlike the road-construction scene, which foregrounds visible infrastructure activities, this scene combines images of forest conversion with a verbal account of concessions for sugarcane and bioethanol industries. (Sawir dkk., 2026) examined customary practices in relation to ecological governance and environmental policy, whereas this study analyzes how concession arrangements and landscape conversion are represented in the film. The contribution lies in distinguishing visible changes to the landscape from the verbal explanation of concessions and examining how the two are combined to construct a narrative of pressure on Indigenous living space. The scene alone does not establish the legal consequences of the concessions.

Threats from Industrial Activities to Indigenous Living Space

This scene focuses on the proximity of heavy machinery to the customary forest identified by the Kwipalo family. The semiotic analysis is presented in Table 7.

Table 7. Semiotic Analysis of the Kwipalo Family, Customary Forest, and Excavator Scene

Scene	Analysis Element	Analysis Result
	Representamen	Visuals of the Kwipalo family showing the boundaries of the customary forest, accompanied by

 Scene Visual (37:40-39:30)		the sound of heavy machinery and the appearance of an excavator moving increasingly closer to the forest area.
	Object	The direct threat to Indigenous living space resulting from the expansion of corporate activities.
	Interpretant	The film constructs the meaning that threats to Indigenous living space have become tangible because corporate activities have entered the territory of the Indigenous community.
	Type of Sign	Index
	Representational Meaning	The proximity of corporate activities is represented as a tangible threat to Indigenous living space.

The Kwipalo family scene gives development-related pressure a specific spatial dimension by placing the family's identification of customary forest boundaries alongside the sound and image of an approaching excavator. (Fatubun, 2023) discussed Indigenous filmmaking as a means of documenting Papuan communities' lived experiences, while the present study examines the construction of meaning within a particular scene. This study extends that discussion by showing how testimony, territorial boundaries, and the proximity of machinery combine to represent development-related threats as immediate to a specific living space. The analysis concerns the film's framing and does not independently establish the extent of environmental damage or legal encroachment.

Representation of Indigenous Community Struggles to Protect Living Space

In response to the development-related pressures presented in the documentary, Papuan Indigenous communities are represented through various efforts to protect their living space. The selected scenes depict the affirmation of customary territory boundaries, the use of customary mechanisms and collective action, and the expression of aspirations to the government. These representations show different forms of community response, ranging from actions undertaken within customary territories to efforts directed toward government authorities. This dimension analyzes how the film uses visual and verbal signs to represent Indigenous communities as active subjects involved in protecting their territories, rights, and continuity of life.

Affirming Customary Territory Boundaries through Indigenous Symbols

This scene examines the use of red paint to mark customary territorial boundaries. The semiotic analysis focuses on the relationship between the visible markings and their meaning within the customary context, as summarized in Table 8.

Table 8. Semiotic Analysis of the Red Paint Territory Marking Scene

Scene	Analysis Element	Analysis Result
 Scene Visual (39:31-41:00)	Representamen	Victor Kwipalo and his relatives marking trees along the boundaries of the customary territory with red paint.
	Object	The affirmation of customary territory boundaries as a form of protecting Indigenous living space..
	Interpretant	The film constructs the meaning that the red markings function as customary symbols used to assert territorial ownership while rejecting the entry of companies into Indigenous living space.
	Type of Sign	Symbol
	Representational Meaning	Customary symbols are represented as a form of Indigenous community struggle to protect their living space.

The red markings are represented as customary territorial signs whose meaning depends on the social context in which they are used. (Sawir dkk., 2026) examined customary practices as elements of Indigenous ecological governance, whereas this study focuses on the communicative function of territorial markings in a documentary. The present analysis adds a semiotic explanation of how a visible mark is presented as a means of asserting territorial claims and communicating the community's relationship with its living space.

The three scenes depict development-related pressure at different levels: visible infrastructure construction, concession-related land-use arrangements, and industrial activity near a specific customary forest. Their combined significance lies in how the documentary connects physical changes to the landscape with narratives about development and Indigenous concerns. This analysis contributes by showing how these distinct signs are organized into a broader representation of pressure on customary territories, without treating the film itself as independent evidence of the legality or environmental consequences of the projects depicted.

Collective Struggle to Protect Living Space

This scene presents sasi, opposition to companies, and criticism of development projects as forms of collective response. The semiotic analysis is presented in Table 9.

Table 9. Semiotic Analysis of the Sasi and Collective Resistance Scene

Scene	Analysis Element	Analysis Result
	Representamen	Indigenous community members conducting sasi, expressing opposition to companies, and criticizing development projects considered harmful to customary land and forests.
	Object	The efforts of Indigenous communities to protect their

 Scene Visual (1:20:00-1:22:00)		customary territories from development projects.
	Interpretant	The film constructs the meaning that the struggle to protect living space is carried out through collective agreements based on customary mechanisms and values as a means of protecting customary territories and ensuring the continuity of future generations.
	Type of Sign	Symbol
	Representational Meaning	Indigenous community struggles are represented as collective actions that combine customary mechanisms with opposition to development projects in customary territories.

The sasi scene represents territorial protection as a collective response combining customary practices with opposition to companies and criticism of development projects. (Sawir dkk., 2026) examined customary practices as forms of Indigenous ecological governance and considered their relevance to environmental management. Both studies recognize the importance of customary practices, but Sawir et al. focused on governance, whereas this study examines their representation alongside verbal expressions of opposition in a documentary. This analysis extends the discussion by showing how the film links customary mechanisms and collective criticism within a narrative of territorial protection. It does not establish the ecological effectiveness of sasi or the policy outcomes of the actions depicted.

Expressing Aspirations as a Form of Struggle to Protect Living Space

This scene focuses on Indigenous representatives expressing concerns and demands for protection to government authorities. The semiotic analysis is presented in Table 10.

Table 10. Semiotic Analysis of the Government Aspirations Scene

Scene	Analysis Element	Analysis Result
 Scene Visual (1:22:40–1:24:11)	Representamen	Representatives of Indigenous communities expressing their demands to the government regarding development projects that have entered customary land, damaged forests, and diminished the living space of Papuan communities.
	Object	The expression of Indigenous communities' aspirations to the government as an effort to obtain protection for their living space.
	Interpretant	The film constructs the meaning that the struggle to protect living space is carried out not only through customary mechanisms at the local level but also through

	expressing aspirations to the government as the authority responsible for development policymaking.
Type of Sign	Symbol
Representational Meaning	Indigenous community struggles are represented as efforts to obtain recognition and protection of their living space through the expression of aspirations to the government.

The government-aspirations scene presents territorial protection as an effort that extends from customary community settings to formal institutional channels. (Wiraswari dkk., 2026) reviewed media ideology and discourse about West Papua across different media contexts, whereas this study analyzes the signs and narrative relationships within a specific documentary. The present analysis extends this discussion by showing how government-directed advocacy is represented alongside customary territorial marking and collective action. These forms of communication are presented as complementary elements in the documentary's representation of Indigenous efforts to protect living space.

The three scenes represent complementary forms of territorial protection: customary boundary marking, collective action grounded in customary practices, and advocacy directed toward government authorities. Although these actions differ in their means and institutional settings, the documentary connects them through a shared concern with protecting Indigenous living space. The contribution of this analysis is to show how customary identity, collective resistance, and institutional advocacy are organized as interconnected forms of struggle rather than isolated responses.

Across the nine selected scenes, the documentary connects three dimensions of Indigenous living space: community life, development-related pressure, and territorial protection. The forest, sago, and pesta babi scenes establish the ecological and cultural significance of living space; the infrastructure, concession, and industrial scenes depict pressures on customary territories; and the remaining scenes present customary marking, collective action, and government-directed advocacy as responses to those pressures. The central finding is that the documentary constructs Indigenous living space as a social and cultural reality through the relationships among these three dimensions.

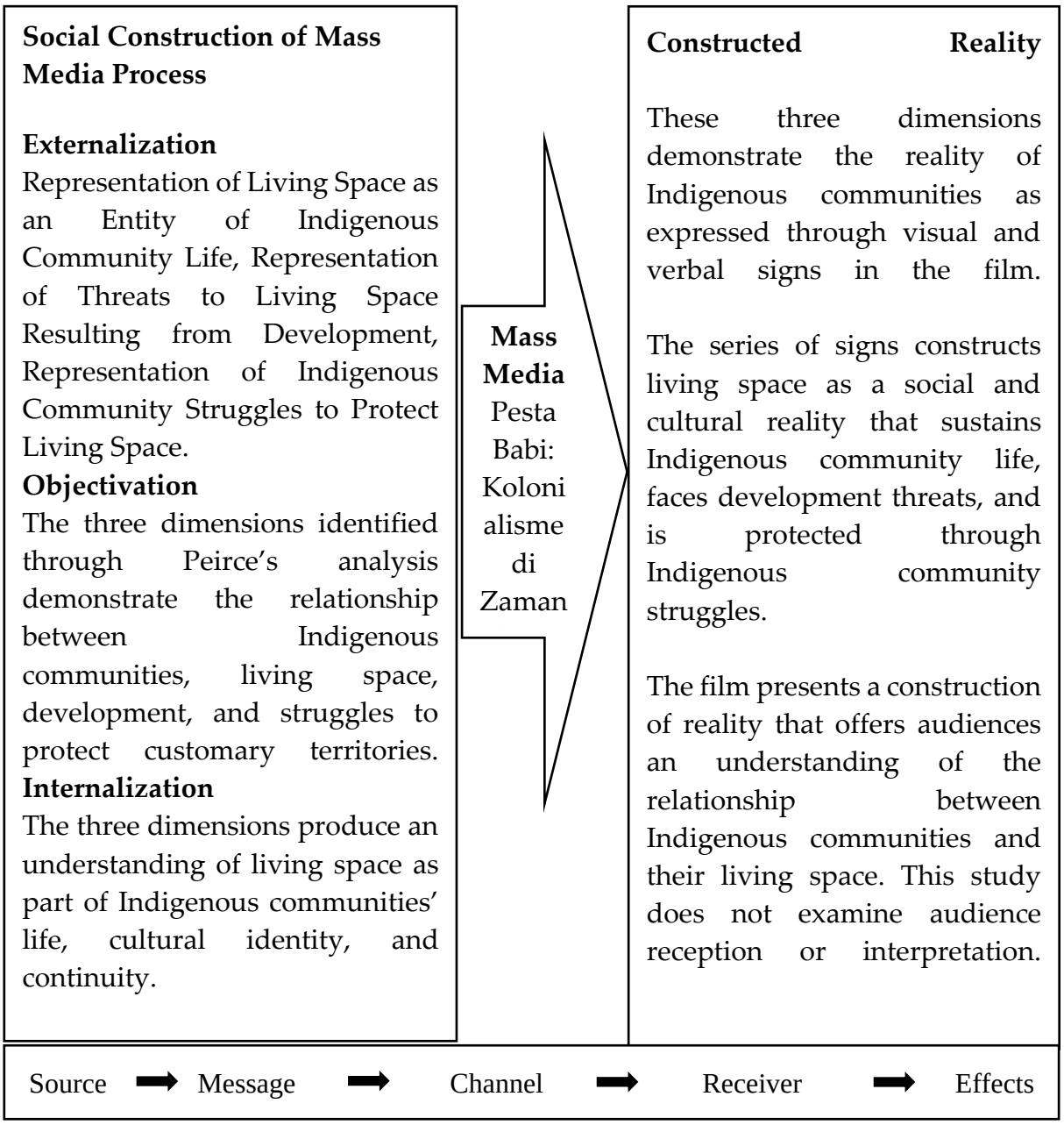


Figure 1. Application of Bungin's Social Construction of Mass Media Perspective

Externalization is reflected in how the documentary presents Indigenous community experiences through selected visual and verbal messages. Scenes depicting forests, sago, and cultural practices communicate relationships with natural resources and collective life, while scenes of development and community resistance present territorial pressures and responses. These representations show how experiences are selected and expressed as media messages, although they do not necessarily capture every dimension of Indigenous community life.

Objectivation can be identified in the recurring narrative relationship among the three dimensions of representation. The documentary presents Indigenous living space as the basis of community life, depicts development-related pressures on customary territories, and shows efforts to protect those territories. Through this organization, the film constructs a coherent

representation of living space as a social and cultural reality shaped by the relationships among the environment, community identity, development, and territorial protection.

Internalization is considered here in terms of the meanings made available to audiences, not as evidence that audiences have accepted or adopted those meanings. The study does not examine audience reception and therefore cannot determine viewers' interpretations or behavioral responses. Integrating Peirce's semiotics with Bungin's perspective contributes an explanation of how meanings generated by individual visual and verbal signs are organized into a broader narrative connecting community life, development-related pressures, and territorial protection.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the documentary film *Pesta Babi: Kolonialisme di Zaman Kita* represents Papuan Indigenous living space through three main dimensions: living space as an entity of Indigenous community life, threats to living space resulting from development, and Indigenous community struggles to protect living space. Through Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic analysis, the study identifies how visual and verbal signs construct meanings associated with the forest, sago, cultural practices, development activities, customary territory marking, collective action, and expressions of aspirations to the government. These findings indicate that Indigenous living space is represented not merely as a physical territory but also as a social and cultural reality connected to community life, identity, and continuity.

The integration of Peirce's semiotics and Bungin's social construction of mass media perspective provides a broader understanding of these findings. Peirce's framework explains how meanings are generated through the relationship between representamen, object, and interpretant, while Bungin's perspective helps explain how the recurring meanings identified in individual scenes are organized into a broader construction of social reality through media. This integration connects the interpretation of specific signs with the documentary's overall representation of Indigenous living space as a relationship between community life, development-related threats, and efforts to protect customary territories.

This study is limited to the interpretation of visual and verbal signs in one documentary film and does not examine audience reception or the actual effects of the film on public understanding. Future research may compare the representation of Indigenous living space across different documentary films or investigate how audiences interpret the representations constructed through documentary narratives. The findings may also provide a reference for filmmakers and media practitioners seeking to present Indigenous communities through representations that include their everyday lives, cultural identities, relationships with their environments, and efforts to protect their living space.

References

Adoni, H., & Mane, S. (1984). Media and the social construction of reality: Toward an integration of theory and research. Communication Research, 11(3), 323–340. https://doi.org/10.1177/009365084011003001

Bungin, B. (2015). Konstruksi sosial media massa: Kekuatan pengaruh media massa, iklan televisi dan keputusan konsumen serta kritik terhadap Peter L. Berger & Thomas Luckmann. Kencana.

Fatubun, W. (2023). Papuan Voices: An Initiative for Decolonized Filmmaking to Document Indigenous People's Lived Experiences in West Papua. Video Journal of Education and Pedagogy, 52(1), 1–15. https://doi.org/10.1163/23644583-bja10044

Frank, S. A. K., Wenehen, A., & Idris, U. (2020). The land tenure and the land use among Supiori in Papua. ETNOSIA: Jurnal Etnografi Indonesia, 5(1), 105–118. https://doi.org/10.31947/etnosia.v5i1.9924

Ginsburg, F. (1991). Indigenous media: Faustian contract or global village? Cultural Anthropology, 6(1), 92–112. https://doi.org/10.1525/can.1991.6.1.02a00040

Hamidah, S. K., Priyawan, P., & Abqoriyyah, F. H. (2024). Peirce's triadic analysis in the script of The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring film. JETLEE: Journal of English Language Teaching, Linguistics, and Literature, 4(1), 54–67. https://doi.org/10.47766/jetlee.v4i1.1797

Indriyana, T., & Albab, C. U. (2020). Blaming the victim: Representation the victim of rape in M.F.A film. Informasi, 50(1), 46–57. https://doi.org/10.21831/informasi.v50i1.27861

Kemas, R., Kurniawan, K., Aditya, G., Suhanto, D., & Puti, A. (2020). From Boluf to Kampung: Spatial Changes in The Korowai Traditional Settlements. ISVS E-Journal, 7(1).

Mariani, O. (2025). Peran Komunitas Papuan Voices dalam Produksi Narasi Digital Subaltern untuk Pelestarian Budaya Lokal Masyarakat Papua. https://doi.org/10.31947/aiccon2025.v1i1.47698

Montoya, T., Baca, A., Martinez-Chavez, T., & Ramones, I. (2023). Producing Indigenous media: Protocols, circulation, and the politics of accountability. Visual Anthropology Review. https://doi.org/10.1111/var.12294

Morales, R. A., Kumar Sunuwar, D., & Veran, C. (2021). Building Global Indigenous Media Networks: Envisioning Sustainable and Regenerative Futures around Indigenous Peoples' Meaningful Representation. Humanities, 10(3). https://doi.org/10.3390/h10030104

Rosalia, M., Krisdinanto, N., & Fiesta, B. R. S. (2019). Analisis Semiotika tentang Penggambaran Orang Pedalaman pada Film Indonesia. Communicatus: Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi, 3(2), 153–170. https://doi.org/10.15575/cjik.v3i2.6541

Satu, I. E. I. N. (2025). Dialektika Media Massa: Menelusuri Akar Konfliktual Media dalam Pemberitaan Seputar Warga Adat Besipae. Jurnal Audience, 184–194. https://doi.org/10.33633/ja.v8i2.14061

Sawir, M., Younus, M., Meiyani, E., & Kosasi, R. (2026). Local wisdom as the basis for environmental policy innovation with the practice of sea sasi and sago hamlets in Papua's ecological governance. Discover Environment, 4(1). https://doi.org/10.1007/s44274-026-00601-x

Wiraswari, L. M., Agustin, H., & Al-Faqih, M. Z. (2026). A Literature Review: The Media's Ideology in the Construction of Discourse about West Papua. Jurnal Representamen, 12(1), 58–71.

Yulianto, H., & Iskandar, H. M. (2026). Analisis Semiotik Makna Judul dan Representasi Konflik dalam Film Dokumenter Pesta Babi. Jurnal Kajian dan Penelitian Umum, 4(3), 244–252. https://doi.org/10.47861/jkpu-nalanda.v4i3.2357