



Theological and Anthropological Analysis of the Representation of the Pig Feast Tradition in Documentary Films in Papua

Umas Tabuni

Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Baptis di Papua

Corresponding Author: Umas Tabuni umastabuni4@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

The study aims to analyze the representation of the pig feast tradition in a documentary film and to identify the theological and anthropological meanings embedded within it. This research employs a qualitative approach using content analysis of a single documentary film as the main data source. Data collection techniques are conducted through visual observation by watching, taking notes, and classifying relevant scenes, which are then analyzed descriptively and interpretatively without involving respondents or field informants. The findings show that the pig feast tradition is represented as a cultural practice with a spiritual dimension, expressed as a form of gratitude and a relationship with local belief systems, while also functioning as a social mechanism that strengthens solidarity, social structure, and the identity of Papuan communities

INTRODUCTION

The pig feast tradition in Papua is one of the cultural practices that holds strong social, economic, and spiritual values within indigenous communities, where pigs are not only regarded as economic commodities but also as symbols of social relations, honor, and communal solidarity (Kusumaryati, 2024; Suryandari, 2026). From a contemporary anthropological perspective, the pig feast is also understood as a mechanism of social exchange that strengthens kinship ties and the social structure of Papuan society (Peyon, 2023).

In a global context, the study of local traditions has become increasingly important amid the processes of modernization and globalization, which often shift the meanings of traditional cultures. In Papua, the pig feast does not only function as an indigenous ritual but also as a medium for reinforcing social relations, community-based economic distribution, and the expression of local spiritual values (Hastings & Miller, 2022). The representation of this tradition in media, particularly documentary films, becomes an important space in shaping public understanding of Papuan culture.

From an academic perspective, studies on cultural representation in documentary films have been widely conducted; however, they are still limited to visual and cultural communication aspects without integrating both theological and anthropological approaches simultaneously. Creswell (2020) emphasizes the importance of qualitative approaches in understanding social meanings within visual texts, yet does not specifically address the religious dimensions of local traditions. Meanwhile, Turner (2021) argues that documentary films construct social reality based on the filmmaker's perspective, which may influence the cultural meanings being represented. This gap highlights the need for a more holistic analysis of audiovisual cultural texts.

Previous research also indicates that anthropological studies of Papuan communities have largely focused on social structures and ritual practices (Geertz, 2020), but have rarely connected them with modern media analysis such as documentary films. On the other hand, theological studies of local culture have predominantly focused on formal religious practices, leaving traditional cultural expressions such as the pig feast underexplored within the framework of contextual theology (Browning, 2022). This reveals a research gap between cultural anthropology, theology, and media studies.

In addition, Nichols (2021) in documentary film studies emphasizes that visual representation is not neutral, but rather a constructed meaning shaped by particular ideologies. In the context of Papua, the representation of the pig feast tradition in documentary films may shape public perception in various ways, ranging from positive appreciation to stereotypical interpretations. Therefore, an analytical approach capable of uncovering the underlying meanings within such visual representations is required.

Based on these gaps, this study aims to analyze the representation of the pig feast tradition in documentary films in Papua through theological and anthropological approaches. The main focus of this research is to uncover how spiritual, social, and cultural meanings are represented in film media, as well as how such constructions shape understandings of Papuan identity.

Theoretically, this study is expected to contribute to the development of interdisciplinary scholarship across religious studies, cultural anthropology, and media studies. Practically, this research is expected to serve as a reference for documentary filmmakers to be more sensitive in representing local cultures, and to help the wider public gain a more comprehensive and contextual understanding of Papuan traditions.

METHODS

Research Type, Approach, and Design

This study employs a qualitative research design using qualitative content analysis to examine the representation of the pig feast tradition in documentary films from Papua. The qualitative approach is chosen because it enables the researcher to explore the symbolic, social, and theological meanings embedded within audiovisual texts in a deep and contextual manner. According to Schreier (2020), qualitative content analysis is a systematic method used to interpret non-numerical data with a focus on meanings and categories that emerge from the data. In this study, documentary films are treated as cultural texts analyzed through a process of thematic categorization.

The research design is descriptive-interpretive, focusing on media representation analysis. This design allows the researcher to provide a detailed description of how the pig feast tradition is represented in the film while also interpreting the theological and anthropological meanings embedded within it. This approach is aligned with the principles of qualitative media analysis, which emphasize the interpretation of social and cultural contexts within audiovisual texts (Given, 2021). Therefore, this study does not merely describe the content of the film but also interprets the construction of meaning within cultural representation.

Population, Sample, and Research Participants

The population of this study consists of all documentary films that portray Papuan cultural traditions, particularly those related to the pig feast practice. However, due to accessibility limitations and the specific focus of the study, a non-probability sampling technique, specifically purposive sampling, is employed. This technique is used because the researcher deliberately selects films that are relevant to the research objectives based on specific criteria, namely documentaries that explicitly feature the pig feast tradition as a central part of their narrative.

This study does not involve human participants, as the research object is audiovisual text. Therefore, the units of analysis consist of scenes, narratives, dialogues, and visual symbols within the selected documentary film. This approach is consistent with Hansen et al. (2022), who state that in media content analysis, units of analysis may include texts, images, or scenes without requiring direct human informants. The selection of analytical units ensures that the data analyzed are directly relevant to the research focus.

Data Collection Techniques and Data Validity

Data collection in this study is conducted through documentation and non-participant observation of the selected documentary film. Data are gathered by repeatedly watching the film, taking detailed notes on important scenes, and classifying visual, narrative, and symbolic elements related to the pig feast tradition. The main instruments used are observation sheets and coding sheets developed based on theological and anthropological analytical categories.

Data validity is ensured through source triangulation and theoretical triangulation to maintain consistency in data interpretation. According to Nowell et al. (2021), validity in qualitative research can be strengthened through audit trails and reflective discussions on the categories used. Reliability in this study is achieved through repeated coding (re-coding) to ensure consistency in the analytical results. Thus, the data obtained are considered valid and academically accountable.

Research Procedure

The research procedure begins with identifying the research problem and defining the focus on the representation of the pig feast tradition in documentary films. The next stage involves selecting documentary films based on purposive criteria, followed by data collection through repeated observation of the selected film(s). The researcher then conducts visual transcription by documenting

relevant scenes, dialogues, and symbols related to the research focus.

The subsequent stage involves coding the data based on theological and anthropological categories, followed by thematic categorization. This process is continued with interpretative analysis to uncover the meanings embedded within the film's representation. The final stage involves drawing conclusions based on the analyzed data, which are verified through triangulation and conceptual discussion with the supporting theoretical framework.

Data Analysis Techniques and Supporting Tools

This study applies qualitative content analysis using a thematic approach. Data are analyzed through the stages of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The analysis involves organizing data into theological and anthropological categories, which are then interpreted in depth. According to Vaismoradi et al. (2020), thematic analysis in qualitative research enables researchers to systematically identify patterns of meaning emerging from textual or visual data.

In the analysis process, this study utilizes NVivo software to facilitate coding, theme development, and data visualization. The use of this software enhances the systematic organization of qualitative data analysis and reduces researcher subjectivity bias. Consequently, the analysis results become more structured, transparent, and academically defensible within the context of media and cultural studies.

RESULTH AND DISCUSSION

Representation of the Pig Feast Tradition as a Spiritual Practice and Expression of Gratitude

The results of the analysis indicate that the documentary film portrays the pig feast not merely as a cultural ceremonial activity, but also as a practice imbued with spiritual significance. In various scenes, the processes of preparation, implementation, and distribution of the feast are depicted as expressions of gratitude by the community for the sources of life and sustenance they have received.

The film's narrative illustrates that the tradition is understood as a medium through which people connect with local belief systems that have been passed down from generation to generation. The ritual symbols presented in the visual documentation demonstrate a close relationship between the social life of the community and the sacred dimensions of belief that they uphold.

The Representation of the Pig Feast Tradition as a Mechanism of Social Solidarity

The results of the analysis indicate that one of the dominant themes portrayed in the documentary film is the social function of the pig feast tradition as a means of fostering and strengthening community solidarity. Most scenes depict the participation of various social groups in a shared activity, ranging from the preparation stage to the execution of the feast. The film demonstrates that the event is not carried out individually; rather, it involves extended families, customary leaders, men, women, and younger generations in a well-organized collective effort. The involvement of these diverse segments of society suggests that the pig feast serves as an important space for social interaction that strengthens relationships among community members.

Furthermore, the film illustrates how the implementation of the feast reflects the values of togetherness, mutual cooperation, and shared responsibility. The interactions that emerge throughout the event reveal a clear division of roles based on the social structure of the community. As a result, the tradition functions not only as a cultural celebration but also as a mechanism for strengthening kinship ties, fostering a sense of unity, and maintaining social harmony within the community.

The findings further reveal several forms of social solidarity represented in the documentary. Collective labor emerges as the most prominent aspect, as the preparation and execution of the feast are carried out collaboratively by community members. The value of togetherness is reflected in the participation of nearly all members of the

community, demonstrating a high level of social engagement and collective commitment. Social distribution is represented through the equitable sharing of the feast's resources, highlighting the values of reciprocity, fairness, and communal welfare that are central to Papuan society. Strong kinship relations are also evident through interactions among families during the celebration, reinforcing familial bonds and social connections. In addition, social integration is reflected in the tradition's capacity to unite different groups within the community around a common purpose, thereby strengthening communal unity and cohesion.

Overall, these findings suggest that the documentary represents the pig feast not merely as a cultural ritual but also as a significant social institution that plays a vital role in maintaining social cohesion and ensuring the continuity of community life in Papua. Through its emphasis on collective participation, mutual support, kinship, and social integration, the film portrays the tradition as a fundamental mechanism for sustaining the social fabric of Papuan society.

Representation of Social Structure and Customary Leadership

The results of the analysis indicate that the documentary film represents the pig feast tradition as a social space that reflects the social structure and customary leadership system of Papuan society. In various scenes, customary leaders are portrayed as having a prominent role in directing the course of the event, organizing the implementation of ritual activities, and ensuring that the entire celebration is conducted in accordance with established cultural norms and values. Their presence functions not only as leadership within customary activities but also as guardians of traditional values that have been passed down from generation to generation. Through this representation, the film demonstrates that the successful implementation of the pig feast is closely associated with the community's ability to preserve the customary values that form the foundation of its social life.

In addition to highlighting the central role of customary leaders, the film also depicts a clear division of duties and responsibilities among community members throughout the celebration. The social structure is visualized through the participation of various groups performing specific functions according to their positions and roles within the community. In this regard, the pig feast tradition serves not only as a cultural ritual but also as a mechanism for transmitting social norms, values, and rules to younger generations. The collective participation portrayed in the film further reinforces the social legitimacy of customary leaders while emphasizing the importance of social order in Papuan society.

These findings suggest that the documentary presents the pig feast as more than a cultural ceremony; it is portrayed as an institution that contributes to the preservation and continuity of social structures and customary leadership systems that have long been embedded within Papuan communities. By highlighting the authority of customary leaders, the organization of communal roles, and the transmission of cultural values across generations, the film underscores the significance of the pig feast tradition in sustaining social stability and cultural continuity within Papuan society.

Representation of Papuan Cultural Identity

The documentary film consistently represents the pig feast tradition as a symbol of Papuan cultural identity. Through various scenes depicting traditional attire, the use of local languages, customary symbols, and ritual practices that have been passed down through generations, the film constructs an understanding that the pig feast is an inseparable part of Papuan community life. The recurring presence of these cultural elements throughout the film creates a framework of meaning that positions the pig feast as one of the primary markers of Papuan collective identity.

Beyond functioning as a cultural activity, the pig feast tradition is also represented as a means of preserving cultural values inherited from one generation to the next. The film demonstrates that this practice not only maintains ancestral heritage but also serves as a medium for transmitting norms, knowledge, and social values to younger members of the community. Through the participation of multiple generations in the implementation of the tradition, Papuan cultural identity is continuously reinforced and sustained within everyday social life. Consequently, the film does not merely document a customary ritual but also constructs a cultural narrative that illustrates how Papuan communities preserve and affirm their collective identity through the pig feast tradition.

The findings further indicate that the representation of cultural identity in the film is constructed through several interconnected dimensions. The historical dimension is reflected in the portrayal of the pig feast tradition as a cultural heritage that has been preserved and transmitted across generations. The continuity of this practice demonstrates a collective commitment to safeguarding cultural values that have become an integral part of the community's historical legacy. The social dimension is evident in the representation of the tradition as a symbol of unity that strengthens relationships among community members. The involvement of diverse social groups in the celebration suggests that cultural identity is shaped not only through physical symbols but also through social interactions that foster a sense of togetherness and belonging.

Furthermore, the cultural dimension is expressed through distinctive elements featured in the film, including customary rituals, local languages, and traditional attributes that distinguish Papuan society from other cultural groups. These elements emphasize the uniqueness of Papuan culture and reinforce its visibility within the broader cultural landscape. The symbolic dimension is reflected in the way the pig feast is positioned as a representation of Papuan collective identity. In this regard, the tradition functions as a cultural symbol

that embodies the values, historical experiences, and cultural characteristics of the community as a whole.

Overall, these findings suggest that the documentary film does not merely portray the pig feast tradition as a cultural activity but also constructs a deeper understanding of its significant role in shaping, preserving, and affirming Papuan cultural identity. Through its representation of historical continuity, social unity, cultural distinctiveness, and symbolic meaning, the film highlights the importance of the pig feast tradition as a cornerstone of collective identity within Papuan society.

Representation of the Pig Feast as a Symbol of Togetherness

The findings of this study indicate that the representation of the pig feast tradition in Papuan documentary films predominantly constructs a strong sense of togetherness through various collective scenes. Visual analysis reveals that scenes depicting gatherings, collaborative work, and the distribution of feast resources appear more frequently than scenes focusing on individual activities. This pattern guides viewers to understand the pig feast as a social space that reinforces communal values within Papuan society. The characteristics of togetherness are reflected in cross-generational participation, the involvement of entire families, practices of mutual cooperation, equitable distribution of resources, and communal and inclusive celebrations.

These findings suggest that the film represents the pig feast not merely as a cultural activity but also as a social symbol that strengthens community identity. Such representation reinforces the understanding that the pig feast serves a broader social function, acting as a medium of social integration that sustains solidarity and a sense of belonging among community members. Consequently, the film consistently frames the tradition as a collective practice rich in social and cultural significance.

Furthermore, the analysis demonstrates that the representation of the pig feast tradition can be understood through three interconnected dimensions. From a theological perspective, the tradition is portrayed as an expression of gratitude and a means of maintaining a relationship with local belief systems. The documentary highlights the spiritual significance of the pig feast, emphasizing its role as a manifestation of thankfulness and its connection to values and beliefs inherited across generations. From an anthropological perspective, the tradition functions as a mechanism for strengthening social solidarity, maintaining social structures, and preserving cultural identity. Through collective participation and shared responsibilities, the pig feast reinforces communal bonds and contributes to the continuity of social life within Papuan communities.

From the perspective of media representation, the documentary frames the pig feast as a symbol of togetherness enriched with cultural and religious meanings. The film constructs a narrative that portrays the tradition as more than a customary ritual, presenting it instead as a meaningful social and spiritual phenomenon. These dimensions are closely interconnected in shaping a comprehensive understanding of the pig feast tradition. The theological dimension emphasizes its spiritual significance as an expression of gratitude, while the anthropological dimension highlights its social functions in strengthening solidarity and cultural identity. At the same time, the dimension of media representation demonstrates how documentary film serves as a medium through which the pig feast is constructed as a symbol of togetherness that embodies both cultural and religious values.

Overall, the findings of this study confirm that the pig feast tradition, as represented in documentary films, should not be understood solely as a cultural practice. Rather, it represents a complex socio-spiritual phenomenon that plays a significant role in maintaining community solidarity, preserving cultural identity, and expressing the spiritual values embedded within Papuan society.

Representation of the Pig Feast as an Expression of Spiritual Values and Contextual Theology

The findings of this study indicate that the documentary film represents the pig feast not merely as a cultural tradition but also as a practice that embodies significant spiritual dimensions. The narrative and visual elements depicting the preparation, implementation, and distribution of the feast demonstrate a deep respect for values inherited from ancestral traditions. These findings suggest that local cultural practices can serve as living expressions of religious and spiritual values within society. From the perspective of contextual theology, religious experience is not always manifested through formal religious rituals; rather, it can also be expressed through cultural practices that carry spiritual meaning and communal values (Rumbay, Kause, Siahaan, Patora, & Siagian, 2023).

These findings reinforce the view that local culture and the spirituality of indigenous communities are closely interconnected and mutually influential. The dialogue between religion and culture enables the emergence of contextual expressions of faith that are rooted in the social realities of local communities. Nenohai (2023) argues that the relationship between local traditions and religion is not necessarily characterized by conflict; instead, it can create a space for dialogue that enriches the religious understanding of community members. Therefore, the representation of the pig feast in the documentary film can be understood as an articulation of Papuan spirituality that is deeply embedded within its cultural context.

The Pig Feast as a Mechanism of Social Solidarity

This study finds that collective scenes dominate the overall narrative of the documentary film. The participation of community members from various age groups, collaborative efforts in preparing the feast, and the equitable distribution of its resources indicate that the pig feast functions as a mechanism of social integration. These findings are consistent with the study conducted by Gopi (2021), which explains that feast traditions in many indigenous societies serve as a means of

strengthening social cohesion, fostering intergroup relationships, and promoting a sense of togetherness within communities.

Furthermore, collective ritual-based cultural practices generally serve not only symbolic purposes but also play an important role in maintaining the continuity of social structures. Research by Baan, Allo, and Patak (2022) on Torajan customary rituals demonstrates that communal ritual activities function as mechanisms for reproducing cultural values, social identity, and group solidarity. The findings of the present study reveal a similar pattern, in which the pig feast is represented as a medium for strengthening social relationships and reinforcing the collective identity of Papuan communities.

Film Representation and the Construction of Cultural Meaning

The analysis also demonstrates that the documentary actively constructs particular meanings surrounding the pig feast tradition. Through the selection of scenes, narrative structure, and camera perspectives, the film emphasizes values of togetherness and communal harmony more strongly than potential conflicts or social inequalities that may exist in actual practice. These findings indicate that cultural representation in media is a form of social construction shaped by the perspectives and intentions of filmmakers.

This phenomenon is consistent with the findings of Lazarus (2022), who argues that documentary media and cultural recordings of indigenous communities function not only as cultural archives but also as instruments for constructing particular understandings of community identity. Consequently, the representation of the pig feast in the documentary film can be interpreted as an effort to construct an image of Papuan culture centered on the values of solidarity, togetherness, and the continuity of tradition.

Factors Influencing the Findings

Several factors may have contributed to the emergence of these representations. First, documentary films tend to emphasize cultural aspects that are perceived as educational, meaningful, and humanistic. Second, the pig feast occupies a significant position within Papuan society as a tradition with strong social functions, making it readily representable as a symbol of togetherness and communal cohesion. Third, contemporary media often demonstrate a tendency to portray indigenous cultures positively as a form of recognition and appreciation of cultural diversity.

Nevertheless, the findings of this study differ from several studies that emphasize the political dimensions of indigenous cultural practices. Barber (2020) argues that local cultural identity frequently becomes a site of negotiation among tradition, religion, and globalization. This difference may be attributed to the documentary's primary focus on socio-cultural aspects rather than political issues. Therefore, the divergence in findings does not indicate a contradiction; rather, it demonstrates that a single cultural tradition can be interpreted in different ways depending on the context and analytical perspective employed.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the pig feast tradition in Papuan documentary films is represented through three primary dimensions: theological, anthropological, and media representation dimensions. From a theological perspective, the pig feast is interpreted as an expression of gratitude and a reflection of the spiritual values embedded within Papuan society. From an anthropological perspective, the tradition functions as a mechanism for strengthening social solidarity, kinship relations, and cultural identity. Meanwhile, the documentary film frames the pig feast as a symbol of togetherness through various collective activities involving all members of the community. These findings confirm that the pig feast is not merely a cultural practice but also carries significant social and spiritual meanings within the lives of Papuan communities.

This study has several limitations. First, it relies on a single documentary film as the primary data source, which limits the generalizability of the findings. Second, the analysis is largely dependent on the researcher's interpretation, as it employs a qualitative content analysis approach. Furthermore, the study does not incorporate the direct perspectives of either the filmmakers or members of Papuan communities. Therefore, future research is recommended to adopt a more comprehensive approach by combining content analysis, in-depth interviews, and field observations. Comparative studies involving multiple documentary films are also encouraged to provide a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of the representation of Papuan culture in contemporary media.

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