
SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS OF HORROR REPRESENTATION IN THE POSTER OF
PEMBANTAIAN DUKUN SANTET

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Abstract:

This study examines the horror film poster *Pembantaian Dukun Santet* (2025) through Roland Barthes' semiotic framework. Barthes expands on Ferdinand de Saussure's model of the signifier and signified by introducing three levels of meaning: denotation, connotation, and myth. The research employs a qualitative descriptive method with documentation techniques, analyzing visual and textual elements such as the headless body, severed head, scattered skulls, dark forest, burning torches, typography, and release date. Findings reveal that these signs function on multiple semiotic levels: at the denotative level, they explicitly depict horror imagery; at the connotative level, they evoke cultural associations with ritual killings and supernatural practices; and at the mythical level, they reproduce Indonesia's collective beliefs about the mystical power of santet and the legitimization of violence. This study highlights how Indonesian horror film posters serve not only as marketing devices but also as cultural texts that communicate ideology and collective trauma.

Keywords: Horror films, Indonesian cinema, poster, Barthes, semiotics

INTRODUCTION

The horror film industry in Indonesia has long held a unique and enduring place within national cinema, distinguished by its reliance on cultural mythologies, folklore, and mystical traditions. From the early emergence of films such as *Beranak dalam Kubur* (1972) and *Malam Satu Suro* (1988), Indonesian audiences have been drawn to narratives that intertwine supernatural beings, ritual practices, and collective cultural fears. These films have not only entertained but also reflected the anxieties of a society negotiating modernity alongside deeply rooted beliefs in spirits and black magic. Unlike their Western counterparts, which often focus on psychological suspense, minimalistic atmospheres, or gore, Indonesian horror films are renowned for their explicit depictions of supernatural figures such as *kuntilanak* (female ghost), *pocong* (shrouded corpse), *genderuwo* (giant spirit), and, most ominously, *dukun santet* (sorcerers associated with

witchcraft). These figures are not merely cinematic devices; they embody cultural traditions that continue to resonate strongly with audiences (Fatmawati, 2021).

The forthcoming film *Pembantaian Dukun Santet* (2025) extends this trajectory by revisiting one of Indonesia's most pervasive and unsettling cultural concepts: santet. Unlike the witches or warlocks of Western fantasy, santet is perceived not as mythic metaphor but as a real and potentially devastating force. In the Indonesian cultural imagination, santet is believed to harm victims remotely through the use of personal belongings, mystical rituals, and spiritual intermediaries. These beliefs, far from existing only in folklore, have had profound social consequences. The most striking historical example is the 1998 Banyuwangi massacre, during which hundreds of individuals suspected of practicing santet were brutally murdered by mobs. This event illustrates how belief in the destructive power of witchcraft can fuel communal hysteria and violence, embedding santet not only as a supernatural narrative but as a cultural trauma that continues to shape Indonesian identity (Nguyen & Smith, 2024).

Against this backdrop, the poster for *Pembantaian Dukun Santet* cannot be dismissed as a mere marketing device. It presents stark imagery: a headless body bound in the forest, a severed head raised in hand, scattered skulls, torches glowing amidst darkness, sparks and embers filling the scene, and bold gothic typography announcing the film's title. Each of these elements operates within a semiotic system, encoding meanings that resonate with both cinematic tradition and collective cultural memory. At the literal level, they depict horror and violence; at the symbolic level, they conjure associations with ritual killings and supernatural terror; and at the ideological level, they reinforce the myth of the dangerous *dukun santet* whose eradication is both feared and legitimized. The poster participates in what (Barthes, 1972) calls the production of myth: the transformation of cultural and historical realities into naturalized narratives.

The urgency of analyzing this poster lies in its function as both a promotional and cultural text. Film posters, as (Dyer, 1993 ; King, 2002) argue, operate at the intersection of commerce and culture: they market films while simultaneously encoding ideological messages that shape audience expectations. For horror cinema in particular, posters serve as the first point of contact between the audience and the narrative, signaling themes of fear, danger, and the supernatural through visual tropes such as dark color palettes, grotesque imagery, and ominous typography. In Indonesia, these tropes are inflected with cultural specificity. Where Hollywood posters might rely on ambiguity or minimalism—as in *The Conjuring* (2013) or *Hereditary* (2018)—Indonesian posters often foreground explicit depictions of death, ritual, and mystical entities, underscoring their embeddedness in local cultural codes (Bevins, 2022). This difference reflects not only stylistic variation but also broader cultural distinctions in the construction of fear.

First, semiotics and film. Semiotics has long been a valuable tool in analyzing media texts. (Saussure, 1983) provided the foundational model of the sign as a relation between signifier and signified, emphasizing the arbitrary nature of meaning. (Barthes, 1972) expanded this model to include the concepts of denotation, connotation, and myth, highlighting how media texts naturalize ideology. In the context of film, semiotics allows scholars to move beyond narrative structures to interrogate how meaning is visually and culturally constructed. (King, 2002) emphasizes that film posters act as semiotic gateways, providing audiences with encoded messages about genre, narrative, and ideology even before the film is consumed.

Second, semiotics and Indonesian horror. Studies of Indonesian horror have shown how local myths and folklore are transformed into cinematic codes. (Fatmawati, 2021), for example, found that recurring visual tropes—such as blood, female ghosts, and ritual settings—serve as cultural codes that resonate with collective fears. (Pitriyani, 2024) analyzed the *Sumala* film poster

and demonstrated how color, costume, and textual arrangements create semiotic layers of mysticism and horror. These findings affirm that Indonesian horror operates within a culturally specific system of signs, distinct from Western traditions.

Third, posters as visual communication and ideology. Film posters are not simply marketing devices but ideological texts. (Dyer, 1993) stresses that representations in media always carry cultural meanings, reinforcing or challenging social norms. (Nguyen & Smith, 2024), in their study of NGO campaigns, highlight how visual texts mobilize emotional semiotics to shape audience engagement. Though focused on humanitarian media, their findings apply directly to film posters, which also aim to influence audience affect and expectations through strategic visual codes.

Fourth, myth, folklore, and horror representations. Horror relies heavily on mythological and folkloric structures. In Indonesia, the representation of supernatural beings is not merely fictional but embedded in living traditions of mysticism. (Bevins, 2022) shows how Western horror increasingly relies on suggestion and ambiguity, while Indonesian horror foregrounds myth and ritual. This distinction underscores the importance of considering folklore not as decoration but as central to meaning-making in horror posters.

Fifth, cross-cultural comparisons. Comparing Indonesian and Western horror posters reveals striking differences in the semiotics of fear. Hollywood posters often privilege subtlety—minimalist imagery that invites interpretive suspense—whereas Indonesian posters tend to emphasize ritual violence and grotesque realism. This difference reflects contrasting audience expectations and cultural codes: Western audiences may be drawn to psychological ambiguity, while Indonesian audiences engage more directly with cultural myths of ghosts, witchcraft, and ritual violence (Fatmawati, 2021; Bevins, 2022).

Sixth, posters as promotional and cultural artifacts. Scholars agree that posters are hybrid texts: they sell films and simultaneously reflect cultural contexts. (Pitriyani, 2024) emphasizes that Indonesian posters incorporate traditional costumes and ritual imagery, while (King, 2002) argues that posters communicate ideology by shaping how audiences imagine the narrative world. The *Pembantaian Dukun Santet* poster, in this regard, is not only a commercial advertisement but a mirror of Indonesia's collective fears about mysticism.

Seventh, witchcraft and santet in scholarship. While ghosts and other folklore entities have been widely studied, fewer works focus on santet in visual culture. Yet santet has profound cultural significance. The Banyuwangi massacre of 1998 demonstrated how belief in witchcraft can fuel mass hysteria and violence. Representing santet in a poster thus carries ideological weight: it both reflects cultural trauma and reproduces the myth of sorcery as a legitimate threat. This research addresses this gap by analyzing how santet is visually constructed and myth.

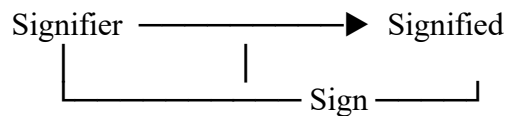
Despite extensive studies on Indonesian horror, existing scholarship largely focuses on ghostly figures and neglects how santet is semiotically represented in film posters, leaving the ideological construction of witchcraft in promotional media underexplored.

The objectives are: (1) to identify the key signs in the poster; (2) to analyze their meanings at the levels of denotation, connotation, and myth; and (3) to situate these findings within broader discourses of Indonesian horror and cultural ideology.

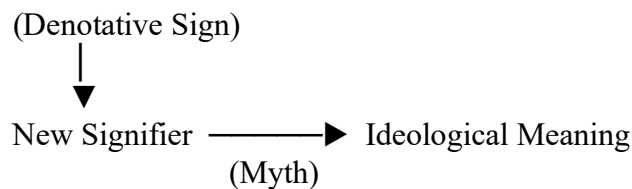
This research applies Roland Barthes' semiotic model (Barthes, 1972). At the denotative level, signs convey their most literal and descriptive meanings. At the connotative level, these signs generate associative, symbolic, and culturally embedded meanings shaped by social experience. At the mythical level, connotations are further naturalized into broader ideological narratives that appear commonsensical and unquestioned within a given culture.

Barthes conceptualizes this process through a two-order signification system, which can be illustrated as follows:

FIRST ORDER OF SIGNIFICATION (DENOTATION)



SECOND ORDER OF SIGNIFICATION (CONNOTATION / MYTH)



In this model, the complete sign from the denotative level functions as a new signifier at the mythical level, enabling ideology to operate invisibly through everyday representations.

For example, in widely discussed semiotic literature, a skull at the denotative level signifies a physical human bone structure. Connotatively, it is commonly associated with death, danger, decay, or violence within many cultural contexts. At the level of myth, the skull may function as part of a broader ideological narrative concerning mortality, supernatural threat, or the inevitability of death, particularly in horror and gothic visual cultures (Barthes, 1972; Dyer, 1993). Importantly, this example is drawn from established semiotic discussions rather than the primary data of this study.

By employing Barthes' three-tiered semiotic framework, this research enables a comprehensive reading of the *Pembantaian Dukun Santet* poster not only as a horror promotional text but also as a cultural artifact that reproduces and normalizes Indonesian collective fears surrounding witchcraft, violence, and mysticism.

This study is grounded in the cultural and historical context of Indonesian horror cinema, with particular attention to santet as an underexplored cinematic theme. Drawing on seven strands of relevant scholarship and Barthes' semiotic framework, the research examines how the *Pembantaian Dukun Santet* poster functions not merely as a promotional medium but as a cultural text that encodes collective trauma, mysticism, and ideological narratives of violence.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach grounded in Roland Barthes' semiotic theory as the primary analytical framework. Qualitative research is particularly appropriate for media and cultural analysis because it prioritizes interpretation, contextual understanding, and the exploration of latent meanings rather than statistical generalization. As noted by (Dyer, 1993 ; King, 2002), media texts function as cultural signs that encode ideological and emotional values beyond surface-level representation. Semiotics, therefore, provides a rigorous framework for examining how cultural codes are embedded and naturalized within visual media such as film posters.

The object of analysis is the official promotional poster of *Pembantaian Dukun Santet* (2025), produced by Pichouse Films. The poster was selected due to its explicit visualization of horror themes deeply embedded in Indonesian cultural contexts, particularly ritual violence, witchcraft (*santet*), and communal fear. Drawing on (Barthes, 1972) concept of myth in Mythologies, which emphasizes how seemingly “natural” images conceal ideological constructions, the poster offers a rich semiotic landscape through both its visual elements—such as a headless body, severed head, scattered skulls, torches, forest imagery, and gothic typography—and its textual components, including the film title and production information.

In semiotic research, the population may be broadly defined as Indonesian horror film posters that engage with supernatural and ritualistic themes. From this population, the *Pembantaian Dukun Santet* poster was selected as a purposive sample, as it uniquely foregrounds witchcraft and ritual violence—topics that remain underexplored in poster studies compared to more frequently analyzed ghost figures such as *kuntilanak* or *pocong*. The sample consists of both visual signs (imagery, composition, and typography) and textual signs (title, credits, and release date), which were systematically identified and catalogued for analysis.

This study employs purposive sampling, a non-probability technique commonly used in qualitative research to select information-rich cases aligned with specific research objectives (Creswell, 2013). This methodological choice is consistent with prior semiotic analyses of Indonesian horror posters, including (Pitriyani, 2024) study of the Sumal poster and (Fatmawati, 2021) examination of recurring ritual and blood imagery in Indonesian horror promotion.

In line with qualitative research principles, the researcher functions as the primary instrument (Creswell, 2013), guiding interpretation through theoretical grounding, cultural knowledge, and analytical sensitivity. Data collection was conducted through document analysis, involving the acquisition of a high-resolution digital version of the poster and systematic close visual observation.

The data collection process included:

1. Identification of visual elements – Observing and recording prominent images such as the headless body, severed head, skulls, torches, forest, sparks, typography, and hanging feet.
2. Identification of textual elements – Recording linguistic components such as the film’s title, production credits, and release date.
3. Contextual documentation – Collecting secondary information about the film’s production background and the cultural significance of *santet*.
4. Literature review – Gathering relevant studies on semiotics, horror cinema, Indonesian cultural beliefs, and film poster analysis to support interpretation.

Supporting literature included works such as (Fatmawati, 2021) on Indonesian horror tropes, (Pitriyani, 2024) on poster semiotics, (Nguyen & Smith, 2024) on visual communication in NGO campaigns, and Bevens (2022) on minimalist Western horror posters. These sources provided comparative and contextual insights, ensuring that the analysis of the poster was situated within broader academic conversations.

The data analysis was conducted using (Barthes, 1972) semiotic framework, which distinguishes between denotation, connotation, and myth. The analysis followed a multi-step process:

1. Denotative Analysis – Each visual and textual element was described at the literal level. For example, the headless body was identified as a human figure without a head.
2. Connotative Analysis – Cultural and symbolic meanings were attached to the denotative signs. The headless body, for instance, was interpreted as a symbol of execution and dehumanization, resonating with communal violence in Indonesian history.
3. Mythical Analysis – Connotative meanings were examined for their ideological function. The headless body was read as participating in the myth of the dangerous sorcerer whose violent eradication is socially legitimized.
4. Contextualization – Findings were related to Indonesian horror cinema traditions, cultural beliefs about santet, and historical events such as the Banyuwangi massacre.
5. Synthesis – Insights were integrated into broader conclusions about how the poster functions as both a promotional object and a cultural text.

This step-by-step process ensured methodological rigor while allowing flexibility for interpretive depth. As (Barthes, 1972) suggests, the task of semiotics is not only to decode signs but to reveal the ideological operations that make cultural meanings appear natural.

The overall research procedure followed these steps:

1. Formulating the research problem – Identifying the need to analyze how horror and witchcraft are represented in Indonesian film posters.
2. Selecting the object of study – Choosing the *Pembantaian Dukun Santet* poster as the primary data source.
3. Collecting data – Obtaining the poster in digital format and conducting a literature review.
4. Identifying signs – Cataloguing both visual and textual elements of the poster.
5. Analyzing signs – Applying Barthes' three levels of meaning (denotation, connotation, myth) to interpret the signs.
6. Contextualizing results – Relating findings to cultural, historical, and cinematic contexts.
7. Drawing conclusions – Synthesizing interpretations into coherent arguments about the ideological function of the poster.

These procedures align with qualitative research traditions in media and cultural studies. They ensure that the analysis is systematic, transparent, and grounded in both theory and data.

This methodological approach aligns with and extends previous research. (Fatmawati, 2021) demonstrated how Indonesian horror posters rely on recurring tropes to resonate with cultural fears. (Pitriyani, 2024) showed how posters encode mysticism through visual and textual signs. (Bevins, 2022) contrasted Western horror posters' minimalism with the explicitness of Indonesian designs. (Nguyen & Smith, 2024) emphasized the role of emotional semiotics in shaping audience engagement. By situating the present study within this body of work, the methodology gains both credibility and relevance.



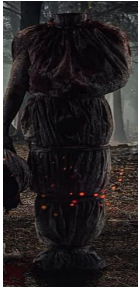


This study addresses a gap in the literature. While ghosts and supernatural entities have been widely analyzed, fewer studies have focused on santet and its representation in posters. By

applying Barthes' semiotics to the *Pembantaian Dukun Santet* poster, this research contributes a new dimension to the scholarship, revealing how visual promotional media can encode and naturalize cultural ideologies of witchcraft, violence, and communal fear.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The results of data analysis are presented in the form of identified signs, their semiotic characteristics, and the layered meanings constructed in the *Pembantaian Dukun Santet* (2025) poster. As this study applies (Barthes, 1972) semiotic framework, the results are categorized according to the three levels of meaning: denotation, connotation, and myth. The analysis reveals recurring patterns of ritualized violence, mysticism, and legitimized ideology of fear.

Table 1. Semiotic Signs and Meanings in the Poster of *Pembantaian Dukun Santet* (2025)

No	Figure	Sign	Denotation	Connotation	Myth
1		Dark forest background	Dense, shadowy woodland	Space of mystery, danger, liminality	Forest as mystical threshold between life and death
2		Scattered skulls and bones	Human skeletal remains	Death, remnants of violence	Eternal cycle of violence, naturalized fear of santet
3		Headless body	Human figure without head	Execution, dehumanization, spectacle of horror	Myth of justified elimination of dukun santet
4		Severed head	Detached head held in hand	Trophy, brutality, visual terror	Communal justice myth
5		Two legs hanging	Bare feet dangling downward	Victim of lynching, communal punishment	Punishment as naturalized justice

No	Figure	Sign	Denotation	Connotation	Myth
6		Burning torches	Fire-lit sticks illuminating darkness	Ritual, purification, resistance	Fire as purifier and destroyer, symbol of justice
7		Sparks and embers	Floating fire particles	Chaotic suspense, uncontrolled energy	Myth of mystical uncontrollability
8		Gothic typography of title	Stylized dark letters	Horror genre marker	Horror as spectacle of fear
9		Credit block	List of names in small type	Authenticating film as cultural product	Myth of cinema authority
10		Release date	"8 May 2025"	Urgency, exclusivity, anticipation	Horror as cultural event
11	 	Film company logo	"Pichouse Films"	Branding, credibility	Institutional authority myth
12		Technology logo	Dolby Atmos	Technical quality of sound	Myth of modernity in fear experience
13		Adaptation credit	"Based on a thread by @JeroPoint"	Digital folklore source	Myth of legitimized online folklore



Figure 1 : Forest background

Level of Meaning	Analysis of the Forest Image
Denotation	A dark forest consisting of tall trees, shadows, mist, and low visibility.
Connotation	Mystery, danger, isolation, liminality; a sacred or haunted space associated with spiritual forces in Indonesian folklore.
Myth	The forest is naturalized as a liminal threshold between life and death, where supernatural justice unfolds and mystical violence becomes culturally acceptable.

The forest image operates as a significant visual sign within the poster, functioning not merely as a background but as an active semiotic element that shapes meaning. At the denotative level, the forest is presented as a physical environment composed of dense trees, deep shadows, and pervasive darkness. The absence of visible human presence and the dominance of natural elements construct a spatial setting that appears isolated, silent, and detached from everyday social life. This literal depiction establishes the forest as a place beyond ordinary human control, visually preparing the audience for events that fall outside the realm of normal experience.

At the connotative level, the forest signifies mystery, danger, and liminality. Within Indonesian cultural traditions, forests are frequently understood as sacred or haunted spaces associated with ancestral spirits, supernatural entities, and unseen forces. Folklore, oral narratives, and traditional beliefs often portray forests as locations where boundaries between the visible and invisible worlds become unstable. Consequently, the forest connotes a space in which social norms and moral regulations are suspended, allowing encounters with the supernatural to occur. This connotation also evokes fear and uncertainty, positioning the forest as a site where violence, secrecy, and ritual practices can take place beyond public scrutiny.

At the level of myth, these culturally embedded connotations are naturalized into an ideological narrative that frames the forest as a “natural” arena for supernatural events and moral

judgment. The forest is no longer perceived simply as a constructed cinematic setting but as an inevitable and culturally sanctioned space where mystical violence and ritual justice related to santet unfold. Through this mythic process, the image reinforces collective beliefs that position nature as an intermediary between the human world and the supernatural realm, legitimizing acts of retribution and punishment as part of a broader cosmological order.

The forest image operates semiotically to transform a neutral natural environment into a culturally charged space of fear, liminality, and supernatural authority. By moving from denotation to connotation and ultimately to myth, the image contributes to the ideological framing of santet as an inseparable part of Indonesian cultural imagination, thereby strengthening the poster’s role not only as a promotional visual but also as a cultural text that reproduces collective beliefs about mysticism, violence, and moral order.



Figure 2 : Scattered skulls and bones

Level of Meaning	Analysis of the Scattered skulls and bones
Denotation	Human skulls and skeletal remains scattered across the forest floor, partially embedded in soil and debris.
Connotation	Death, extreme violence, brutality, and collective suffering; the loss of individual identity and the aftermath of repeated killings associated with ritual punishment.
Myth	Violence against alleged dukun santet is naturalized as a form of moral retribution, where death becomes a culturally justified consequence of transgression and a means of restoring social and supernatural order.

The image of scattered skulls and bones functions as a powerful visual sign that intensifies the horror discourse within the poster. At the denotative level, these elements represent human remains—skulls, bones, and skeletal fragments dispersed across the forest floor. Their physical presence indicates death, bodily destruction, and the aftermath of extreme violence. As literal signs, they signal that fatal events have occurred and that the space depicted is marked by irreversible loss of life.

At the connotative level, the scattered skulls and bones signify brutality, collective suffering, and dehumanization. Rather than presenting a single corpse, the dispersion of multiple skeletal remains suggests mass violence and repeated acts of killing. In the context of Indonesian cultural memory, such imagery resonates with historical narratives of communal punishment, mob violence, and extrajudicial killings, particularly those associated with accusations of santet. The skulls connote not only death but also the erasure of personal identity, reducing human subjects to anonymous remnants. This visual strategy amplifies fear and moral unease, positioning violence as excessive and ritualized rather than accidental.

At the level of myth, these connotations are naturalized into an ideological narrative that frames violence against alleged dukun santet as both inevitable and culturally justified. The scattered remains are no longer perceived merely as evidence of murder but as symbolic proof of a moral order being enforced through destruction. The myth constructs death as a necessary consequence of transgression, reinforcing collective beliefs that ritual violence serves as a form of purification or social cleansing. In this way, the image reproduces a cultural logic in which extreme violence is normalized as a response to supernatural threat.

The visual sign of scattered skulls and bones operates semiotically to transform physical remnants of death into a mythic representation of ritual justice and collective fear. Through the progression from denotation to connotation and ultimately to myth, the image reinforces ideological narratives that legitimize violence within the framework of mysticism, positioning the poster not only as a horror promotion but as a cultural text that reflects and reproduces deeply rooted anxieties surrounding santet and moral order.

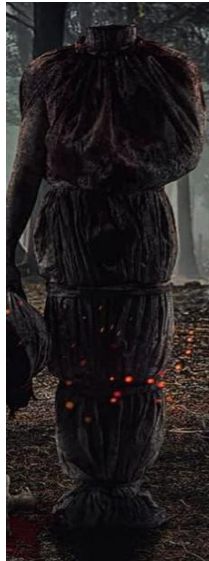


Figure 3 : Headless Body

Level of Meaning	Analysis of the Headless Body
Denotation	A human body standing upright in a forest setting without a head, dressed in dark, coarse clothing and holding an object in one hand.
Connotation	Extreme violence, dehumanization, loss of identity, and public punishment; the severing

	of the head signifies the removal of reason, voice, and social agency.
Myth	The headless body is naturalized as a symbol of justified retribution against dukun santet, reinforcing the ideological belief that violent eradication is an acceptable means of restoring moral and supernatural order within the community.

The image of the headless body functions as a central and disturbing visual sign that anchors the discourse of violence within the poster. At the denotative level, the image depicts a human body standing upright in a forest setting without a head, dressed in dark, rough clothing and holding an object in one hand. The absence of the head is presented explicitly and unmistakably, signaling physical mutilation and death. As a literal sign, the headless body represents a corpse that has been subjected to extreme bodily violence.

At the connotative level, the headless body signifies dehumanization, punishment, and the complete erasure of individual identity. The removal of the head symbolically strips the body of reason, voice, and agency—elements culturally associated with humanity and moral subjectivity. In Indonesian cultural and historical contexts, decapitation is strongly associated with acts of brutal justice, public punishment, and extrajudicial violence. Within narratives surrounding accusations of santet, the headless body connotes a form of ultimate sanction, suggesting that the accused has been reduced from a human subject to an object of collective retribution. The upright posture of the body further intensifies this meaning, transforming the corpse into a visual display of punishment rather than a private act of killing.

At the level of myth, these connotations are naturalized into an ideological narrative that frames decapitation as a legitimate and necessary response to supernatural threat. The headless body is no longer perceived merely as evidence of cruelty but as a symbolic embodiment of moral cleansing and restored order. The myth positions violence as an acceptable instrument for eliminating perceived evil, reinforcing the belief that dukun santet exist outside the boundaries of social and moral protection. Through this mythic framing, the poster reproduces a cultural logic in which extreme violence is justified as a defensive act against unseen supernatural dangers.

The visual sign of the headless body operates semiotically to transform an act of bodily mutilation into a mythic representation of ritual justice and ideological control. Through the progression from denotation to connotation and ultimately to myth, the image normalizes the erasure of humanity as a culturally sanctioned response to witchcraft. As such, the headless body does not merely intensify the horror aesthetics of the poster but functions as a cultural text that reflects and reproduces collective fears, moral panic, and legitimized violence surrounding santet in Indonesian society.



Figure 4 : Severed Head

Level of Meaning	Analysis of the Severed Head
Denotation	A human head that has been physically severed from the body and is being carried by a figure in a dark forest setting. The head appears lifeless and detached, indicating death through decapitation.
Connotation	Extreme violence, humiliation, loss of identity, and domination. The severed head symbolizes the complete destruction of human agency and dignity. In Indonesian cultural contexts, it evokes public punishment, communal violence, and fear-based control, particularly in narratives surrounding accusations of santet.
Myth	The severed head is naturalized as evidence of moral justice and the successful elimination of supernatural threat. Violence is framed as necessary and legitimate, reinforcing the ideological belief that extreme brutality is justified to restore social and spiritual order against dukun santet.

The image of the severed head functions as a highly explicit and unsettling visual sign that intensifies the discourse of violence and horror within the poster. At the denotative level, the image depicts a human head that has been physically detached from the body and is being carried by the figure in the forest. The head appears lifeless, with visible indications of decapitation. As a literal sign, the severed head represents death, bodily mutilation, and the direct outcome of extreme physical violence.

At the connotative level, the severed head signifies humiliation, domination, and the symbolic annihilation of identity. In many cultural contexts, including Indonesian society, the head is associated with intellect, authority, and moral agency. Its separation from the body therefore connotes the total loss of power and humanity. The act of carrying the severed head further intensifies this meaning, suggesting not merely killing but the display of violence as a warning or message. Within the cultural discourse surrounding santet, such imagery resonates with narratives of communal punishment, where alleged sorcerers are publicly shamed and violently eradicated to restore social order. The severed head thus functions as a sign of both terror and control, reinforcing fear through its visibility.

At the level of myth, these connotations are naturalized into an ideological narrative that frames decapitation as a justified and even necessary act in the confrontation with supernatural evil. The severed head is no longer read solely as evidence of brutality but as symbolic confirmation that the perceived source of danger has been eliminated. This myth legitimizes violence as a form of moral enforcement, reinforcing collective beliefs that extraordinary threats—such as dukun santet—require extraordinary, violent responses. Through this mythic framing, the poster reproduces a cultural logic in which cruelty is normalized and reinterpreted as righteous action.

In conclusion, the visual sign of the severed head operates semiotically to transform an act of extreme violence into a mythic symbol of ritual justice and ideological reassurance. Through the movement from denotation to connotation and ultimately to myth, the image reinforces narratives that dehumanize the accused and justify lethal punishment. As part of the poster's visual system, the severed head not only heightens the horror aesthetic but also functions as a cultural text that reflects and reproduces deep-seated anxieties surrounding santet, power, and moral order in Indonesian society.



Figure 5 : Two Legs Hanging

Level of Meaning	Analysis of the Two Legs Hanging
Denotation	Two human legs hanging downward, suspended in mid-air within a dark forest setting. The upper body is not visible, indicating a body that is either hanged or partially concealed outside the frame.
Connotation	Execution, punishment, helplessness, and public display of death. The hanging legs connote extrajudicial killing and the stripping of agency from the victim. In Indonesian cultural memory, such imagery recalls mob justice and ritualized punishment, particularly in cases involving accusations of santet, where bodies are often displayed as warnings to others.
Myth	The image is naturalized as a symbol of legitimate moral enforcement, constructing hanging as a culturally sanctioned response to perceived supernatural threat. Violence is framed as necessary discipline, reinforcing the ideological belief that the elimination of the accused restores communal and spiritual order.

The image of two hanging legs functions as a disturbing yet central visual sign within the poster, intensifying the discourse of violence and punishment. At the denotative level, the image depicts a pair of human legs suspended in mid-air, with the upper body deliberately excluded from the frame. This literal representation signifies a body that has been hanged or displayed, emphasizing physical immobility and the absence of agency. The framing choice—showing only the lower limbs—visually fragments the human body, drawing attention to the act of execution rather than to the individual identity of the victim.

At the connotative level, the hanging legs signify execution, public punishment, and dehumanization. The absence of the torso and face erases personal identity, reducing the human subject to a symbolic object of violence. In Indonesian cultural and historical contexts, such imagery resonates strongly with collective memories of extrajudicial killings and mob violence, particularly during periods of social unrest involving accusations of santet. The hanging body connotes not only death but also public spectacle, where violence is performed visibly to assert authority, instill fear, and reinforce communal boundaries between what is perceived as “normal” and “deviant.” The vertical suspension of the legs further suggests power imbalance, positioning the victim as powerless while implying the presence of unseen perpetrators or communal forces that control life and death.

At the level of myth, these connotations are naturalized into an ideological narrative in which hanging becomes a legitimate and morally justified form of social control. The image no longer signifies an act of murder but is reinterpreted as an unavoidable consequence of

transgression, particularly in relation to supernatural threats such as santet. Through this mythic framing, violence is stripped of its brutality and re-coded as ritual justice. The hanging legs symbolize the restoration of moral and spiritual order, reinforcing the belief that the physical elimination of the accused is necessary to protect the community from invisible danger. This myth operates by transforming fear into justification, allowing collective violence to appear natural, inevitable, and culturally sanctioned.

In conclusion, the visual sign of two hanging legs operates semiotically to transform an act of execution into a mythic representation of ritual punishment and social cleansing. Through the progression from denotation to connotation and ultimately to myth, the image reinforces ideological narratives that legitimize extrajudicial violence within the framework of mysticism and communal fear. Rather than merely contributing to horror aesthetics, the hanging legs function as a powerful cultural sign that reflects and reproduces deeply rooted anxieties surrounding santet, moral transgression, and the collective enforcement of justice. As such, the poster positions violence not as an aberration but as a normalized response to supernatural threat, revealing its role as both a promotional artifact and a cultural text embedded in Indonesia’s historical and ideological landscape.



Figure 6 : Burning Torches

Level of Meaning	Analysis of the Burning Torches
Denotation	The image shows flaming torches placed intentionally to light the forest environment, indicating human presence and organized activity in a dark space.
Connotation	The burning torches connote vigilance, collective action, and ritualistic practices. They suggest a group mobilization driven by fear, suspicion, or the need to confront a perceived supernatural threat. Fire symbolizes both protection and danger, reinforcing tension and readiness for violence.
Myth	At the mythic level, the torches naturalize the ideology that collective violence is justified as

	<p>a form of moral cleansing and communal justice. Fire is constructed as a purifying force that legitimizes aggressive action against those accused of santet, transforming fear-based violence into a culturally sanctioned ritual.</p>
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The image of burning torches functions as a crucial visual sign that structures the atmosphere of rituality and collective action within the poster. At the denotative level, the torches are depicted as wooden poles topped with open flames, positioned upright within a dark forest environment. Literally, they serve as sources of light that illuminate the surrounding space, cutting through darkness and guiding visibility. Their presence suggests intentional placement rather than randomness, indicating human involvement and organized activity within the scene.

At the connotative level, the burning torches signify vigilance, surveillance, and communal mobilization. In many cultural contexts, including Indonesian traditions, torches are associated with night rituals, processions, and collective hunts or searches. Within the visual economy of the poster, the torches connote a group presence, even though no collective body is directly shown. The flames imply watchfulness and readiness, symbolizing a community that is actively engaged in confronting a perceived threat. Moreover, fire carries ambivalent meanings: it provides light and protection, yet it also represents destruction and purification. In the context of santet-related narratives, the torches evoke images of mobs seeking out alleged sorcerers, where fire becomes both a practical tool and a symbolic marker of moral authority.

At the level of myth, these connotations are naturalized into an ideological narrative in which fire operates as a legitimizing force for ritual violence. The torches are no longer perceived merely as sources of illumination but as symbols of righteous action and communal justice. Fire is mythologized as a purifier that exposes hidden evil and restores cosmic balance. Through this mythic lens, the collective use of torches frames violence against the accused as a necessary and morally sanctioned act. Darkness represents danger and supernatural threat, while torchlight symbolizes truth, order, and communal resolve. This opposition reinforces the belief that violent action, when performed collectively and ritualistically, is justified in the name of protection and purification.

In conclusion, the visual sign of burning torches operates semiotically to transform a functional object into a mythic symbol of collective vigilance and ritual justice. Through the progression from denotation to connotation and ultimately to myth, the image reinforces ideological narratives that normalize communal violence as a response to supernatural fear. Rather than functioning solely as atmospheric decoration, the torches anchor the poster's horror discourse in cultural practices of collective punishment and moral enforcement. As such, the burning torches contribute to the poster's role as a cultural text that reflects and reproduces deeply embedded beliefs about santet, purification, and the legitimacy of violence carried out in the name of communal order.



Figure 7 : Sparks and embers

Level of Meaning	Analysis of the Sparks and embers
Denotation	The image depicts embers drifting and settling in a dark forest environment, indicating the recent or ongoing presence of fire.
Connotation	The sparks and embers connote lingering danger, unrest, and emotional intensity. They symbolize unresolved violence, fear that has not yet extinguished, and the persistence of anger or hatred within the community. Their scattered form suggests chaos, instability, and the spread of destructive emotions beyond a single point of origin.
Myth	At the mythic level, the embers naturalize the ideology that violence leaves enduring traces even after the act is completed. Fear and moral panic are shown as self-perpetuating forces, where collective aggression continues to smolder beneath the surface of society, legitimizing repeated acts of violence under the guise of protection and justice.

The visual presence of glowing sparks and floating embers functions as a subtle yet powerful sign that reinforces the atmosphere of sustained terror within the image. At the denotative level, the sparks and embers represent small fragments of fire—glowing particles produced by burning wood or torches that drift through the air and settle on the forest ground. Their appearance indicates that fire has recently been ignited or is still actively present in the surrounding

environment. As literal visual signs, these embers signify heat, combustion, and the physical aftermath of burning, suggesting that the space depicted is not neutral but has been exposed to destructive forces.

At the connotative level, the sparks and embers signify lingering danger, unresolved violence, and emotional intensity that persists beyond the immediate act of destruction. Unlike open flames, which signal active aggression, embers represent what remains after violence has already occurred. Their scattered distribution across the forest floor and air evokes a sense of chaos and instability, implying that fear and brutality are not confined to a single moment or location. The glowing particles appear almost alive, drifting freely and unpredictably, mirroring the spread of panic, suspicion, and collective anxiety within a community. In the context of Indonesian cultural narratives surrounding *santet*, embers can be read as symbols of moral panic that continues to smolder even after the accused has been punished. They suggest that fear does not disappear with death but instead circulates, reproducing itself through rumor, superstition, and collective memory.

Furthermore, the embers connote the persistence of trauma and the normalization of violence. Their faint yet constant glow visually communicates that danger is never fully extinguished; it remains present beneath the surface, ready to flare up again. This imagery reinforces a sense of psychological unrest, where society exists in a perpetual state of vigilance against perceived supernatural threats. The embers thus symbolize the emotional residue of violence—anger, hatred, and fear—that continues to influence social behavior long after the physical act has ended.

At the level of myth, these connotations are naturalized into an ideological narrative that frames violence as a continuous and self-sustaining necessity. The embers are no longer perceived merely as remnants of fire but as signs of an ongoing moral struggle that justifies repeated acts of aggression. The myth constructs fear as something that must be constantly managed through punishment and exclusion, suggesting that eliminating the alleged source of danger is never sufficient. Instead, the community remains trapped in a cycle where violence leaves traces that legitimize future violence. In this ideological framework, social order is maintained not through rational judgment or legal process but through perpetual readiness to destroy perceived threats.

In conclusion, the visual sign of sparks and embers operates semiotically to transform minor remnants of fire into a powerful metaphor for enduring fear and ideological violence. Through the progression from denotation to connotation and ultimately to myth, the image reinforces a cultural logic in which violence is normalized as an ongoing response to supernatural anxiety. Rather than symbolizing closure or purification, the embers signify that terror continues to burn quietly within the collective consciousness, positioning the image as a cultural text that exposes the cyclical nature of moral panic and ritualized violence associated with *santet*.



Figure 8 : Gothic Typography of the Title

Level of Meaning	Analysis of the Gothic Typography of the Title
Denotation	The title “Pembantaian Dukun Santet” is visually presented using gothic typography, indicating the central theme of mass killing associated with alleged practitioners of santet.
Connotation	The gothic font evokes horror and fear, aligning the narrative with death, brutality, and the occult. The jagged and distressed letterforms connote cruelty, chaos, and psychological terror. The word pembantaian (massacre) intensifies the sense of extreme violence, while dukun santet activates cultural anxieties surrounding witchcraft and mystical threats.
Myth	At the mythic level, the typography naturalizes violence as an acceptable and even necessary response to supernatural danger. The visual style transforms the act of massacre into a culturally justified moral reaction, reinforcing an ideology in which fear overrides legality and human rights.

The gothic typography used in the title “Pembantaian Dukun Santet” functions as a central linguistic and visual sign that anchors the overall horror discourse of the image. At the denotative level, the title is rendered in a bold, distressed gothic typeface characterized by sharp edges, irregular strokes, and a rough, weathered texture. The white lettering contrasts starkly against the dark background, making the text immediately legible and visually dominant. As a literal sign, the typography serves to identify the narrative subject of the image: the massacre (pembantaian) of individuals labeled as dukun santet. The font style itself, commonly associated with horror, darkness, and the supernatural, visually situates the text within the horror genre.

At the connotative level, the gothic typography signifies fear, brutality, and moral extremity. The jagged and aged appearance of the letters evokes violence, decay, and historical trauma, suggesting that the events referenced are not merely fictional but deeply rooted in collective memory. The word pembantaian carries strong connotations of mass violence and

inhuman cruelty, while dukun santet invokes cultural anxieties surrounding black magic, witchcraft, and hidden supernatural threats in Indonesian society. The typography amplifies these meanings by visually framing the title as ominous and threatening, positioning the text not as neutral information but as a declaration of terror. The rigid, almost carved quality of the letters resembles inscriptions or curses, reinforcing associations with ritual punishment and irreversible judgment.

Moreover, the use of gothic typography transforms language into an instrument of intimidation. The title does not invite inquiry or empathy; instead, it asserts authority and finality. This visual strategy reduces the complexity of social violence into a simplified moral binary: perpetrators are implicitly justified, while the accused are constructed as absolute evil. In this way, typography becomes a semiotic tool that intensifies dehumanization, aligning linguistic meaning with the visual violence depicted elsewhere in the image.

At the level of myth, these connotations are naturalized into an ideological narrative that legitimizes collective violence as a culturally sanctioned response to supernatural fear. The gothic typography contributes to a myth in which the killing of alleged dukun santet is framed not as murder but as an inevitable and even necessary act of moral cleansing. The aestheticization of the title disguises brutality beneath genre conventions, making extreme violence appear culturally intelligible and symbolically justified. Language, through its visual form, becomes complicit in normalizing violence by presenting it as part of a dark but accepted social order.

In this mythic framework, fear of the supernatural is positioned as a greater threat than the ethical implications of violence itself. The title’s typography reinforces the belief that social harmony can only be restored through eradication, not understanding or legal process. As a result, the act of naming—Pembantaian Dukun Santet—functions ideologically to fix meaning, closing off alternative interpretations and reinforcing a collective logic in which suspicion, fear, and violence mutually sustain one another.

In conclusion, the gothic typography of the title operates as a powerful semiotic device that transforms written language into a visual embodiment of horror ideology. Through the progression from denotation to connotation and ultimately to myth, the title does more than label the narrative; it actively constructs and legitimizes a worldview in which violence against the accused is normalized and culturally rationalized. As such, the typography positions the image not only as a horror text but as a reflection of deeper socio-cultural anxieties surrounding mysticism, justice, and collective fear.

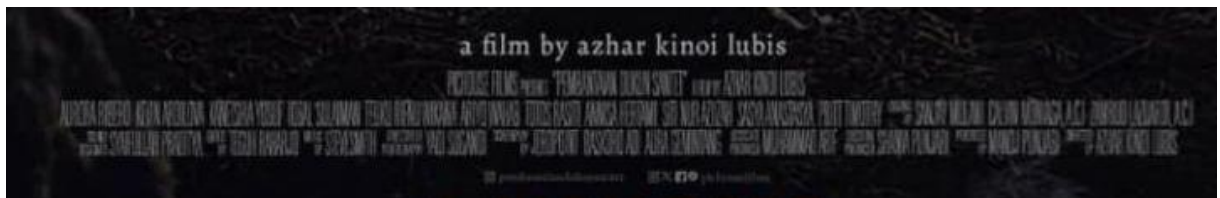


Figure 9 : Credit Block

Level of Meaning	Analysis of the Credit Block
Denotation	The credit block provides factual information about the film’s creators, production team, and contributors, functioning as a standard paratextual element in film posters.

<p>Connotation</p>	<p>The subdued size and monochromatic presentation suggest seriousness, gravity, and realism. Emphasizing the director’s name confers auteur status, signaling that the narrative carries intentional artistic and ideological direction. The dense layout also evokes documentary-like authenticity, reinforcing the impression that the story is grounded in real or historically inspired events rather than pure fiction.</p>
<p>Myth</p>	<p>At the mythic level, the credit block naturalizes the film’s narrative as a legitimate cultural product rather than a sensational exaggeration. By foregrounding authorship and professional production, the poster frames the representation of violence and santet-related persecution as a credible and authoritative retelling, thereby masking its ideological construction.</p>

The credit block in the *Pembantaian Dukun Santet* poster functions as a subtle yet ideologically significant visual sign that contributes to the overall meaning-making process of the promotional text. Although often perceived as a purely informational element, the credit block operates semiotically to legitimize the narrative and anchor the film within institutional cinematic discourse.

At the denotative level, the credit block presents factual information regarding the film’s production, including the director’s name, production team, and contributors. Rendered in small, condensed white typography against a dark background, it follows the conventional visual structure of film posters. Its placement at the lower section of the poster reinforces its role as supplementary information rather than the primary visual focus. On the surface, the credit block simply communicates authorship and production credentials, fulfilling a standard paratextual function within film marketing.

At the connotative level, however, the visual treatment of the credit block conveys meanings beyond mere information. The restrained size, monochromatic color scheme, and dense arrangement of text connote seriousness, gravity, and professionalism. The deliberate emphasis on the phrase “a film by Azhar Koino Lubis” elevates the director’s role, invoking the notion of auteurship. This emphasis suggests that the film is not a random or sensational exploitation of horror themes, but a deliberately crafted work guided by a singular artistic vision. Moreover, the compact and almost obscured appearance of the credits resonates with documentary aesthetics, subtly implying authenticity, realism, and historical grounding. In this sense, the credit block contributes to framing the narrative as one that draws upon real cultural experiences and collective memory rather than pure fantasy.

At the level of myth, these connotations are naturalized into an ideological narrative that positions the film as a legitimate cultural artifact authorized by cinematic institutions. The presence of a formal credit block reinforces the idea that the violent events depicted—particularly the persecution and massacre of alleged dukun santet—are not merely fictional spectacles but

meaningful representations worthy of public reflection. The myth obscures the constructed nature of the narrative by presenting it as a culturally sanctioned retelling of social trauma. Through this process, the poster normalizes the depiction of extreme violence by embedding it within the framework of professional filmmaking, thereby masking its ideological implications behind claims of artistic intent and cultural relevance.

Ideologically, the credit block functions to legitimize the film’s discourse on violence, superstition, and moral judgment. By signaling institutional authorship and production credibility, it encourages audiences to interpret the narrative as authoritative and culturally significant rather than ethically problematic. The violence associated with santet accusations is thus reframed as a historical or social inevitability, reducing critical distance and inviting acceptance rather than interrogation. In this way, the credit block participates in reproducing dominant narratives that rationalize collective violence under the guise of cultural tradition, trauma, or moral order.

In conclusion, the credit block in the *Pembantaian Dukun Santet* poster operates far beyond its denotative informational role. Through the progression from denotation to connotation and ultimately to myth, it functions as a legitimizing device that anchors the horror narrative within institutional cinema and cultural authority. This semiotic operation transforms the poster into a persuasive cultural text that not only promotes a film but also reproduces ideological narratives surrounding violence, superstition, and social justice in Indonesian society.



Figure 10 : Release Date

Level of Meaning	Analysis of the Credit Block
Denotation	The text “8 MAY 2025” indicates the film’s official release date, while the phrase “ONLY IN CINEMAS” specifies that the film will be screened exclusively in movie theaters.
Connotation	The release date signifies anticipation, importance, and immediacy. The capitalized typography and exclusivity of theatrical release connote prestige, seriousness, and collective viewing. The timing suggests that the film’s themes are urgent and relevant to contemporary audiences.
Myth	The release date is naturalized as a cultural event, framing the film as a necessary and timely confrontation with violence, mysticism, and moral anxiety. It constructs the narrative

	as socially significant rather than mere entertainment, reinforcing the ideology that horror cinema serves as a medium for collective memory and cultural reflection.
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The release date displayed in the *Pembantaian Dukun Santet* poster constitutes a crucial temporal sign that extends the semiotic work of the image beyond visual horror into the domain of cultural anticipation and institutional authority. Although seemingly functional, the release date operates as a meaningful sign that anchors the film’s narrative within a specific socio-historical moment and frames audience reception.

At the denotative level, the release date “8 MAY 2025” accompanied by the phrase “ONLY IN CINEMAS” provides explicit information regarding the time and medium of the film’s distribution. Rendered in capital letters with a restrained yet striking typographic emphasis, the text informs viewers when the film will be available and specifies its exclusive exhibition in movie theaters. On a literal level, the sign functions as a practical announcement intended to guide audience access.

At the connotative level, the release date conveys meanings related to anticipation, legitimacy, and exclusivity. The clear and bold presentation of the date suggests an event of importance rather than a routine entertainment release. The phrase “ONLY IN CINEMAS” connotes prestige and seriousness, positioning the film as a theatrical experience that demands collective viewing rather than private consumption. Within the broader context of the poster’s dark imagery and violent symbolism, the release date also generates a sense of inevitability: the horrors depicted are not distant or abstract, but imminent. Temporality thus becomes an affective tool, transforming fear into expectation and positioning the audience as witnesses awaiting an unfolding confrontation with violence, mysticism, and historical trauma.

At the level of myth, these connotations are naturalized into an ideological narrative that frames the film as a culturally significant event rather than mere horror entertainment. The precise dating of the release constructs the narrative as timely and socially relevant, suggesting that the themes of santet, collective violence, and moral panic resonate with contemporary anxieties. The myth obscures the constructed nature of this urgency by presenting the film’s arrival as a necessary cultural moment, as if the story must be told now. In this way, the release date participates in transforming a fictional horror narrative into a symbolic intervention within public memory and discourse.

Ideologically, the release date reinforces institutional authority and cultural legitimacy. By emphasizing theatrical exclusivity and temporal specificity, the poster aligns the film with established cinematic traditions that value collective spectatorship and cultural ritual. The audience is positioned not merely as consumers but as participants in a shared encounter with national trauma and mythologized violence. Consequently, the depiction of brutality associated with accusations of dukun santet is framed as something to be collectively remembered, experienced, and perhaps normalized through cinematic representation.

In conclusion, the release date in the *Pembantaian Dukun Santet* poster functions as more than an informational marker. Through the semiotic progression from denotation to connotation and myth, it constructs anticipation, legitimizes the narrative, and embeds the film within a broader ideological framework of cultural urgency and collective remembrance. As part of the poster’s overall semiotic system, the release date contributes to positioning the film not only as a horror

spectacle but as a culturally sanctioned event that invites audiences to confront deeply rooted fears, violence, and mysticism within Indonesian society.



Figure 11 : Film Company Logo

Level of Meaning	Analysis of the Film Company Logo
Denotation	The visual element displays the production company name “Pichouse Films Presents,” accompanied by the company logo, placed prominently against a dark background within the poster.
Connotation	The logo and production credit signify authority, legitimacy, and professional credibility. The dark color palette and minimalist design align the production house with the horror genre, suggesting seriousness, intensity, and thematic darkness. The phrase “presents” positions Pichouse Films as the authoritative mediator between the narrative and the audience, framing the film as a curated and intentional cultural product.
Myth	At the mythic level, the production logo is naturalized as a mark of trust and genre expectation. Audiences come to associate the company’s identity with specific thematic qualities—darkness, brutality, and culturally rooted horror. The myth constructs the production house as a cultural gatekeeper that legitimizes violent and mystical narratives as acceptable entertainment. This reinforces the idea that horror rooted in local superstition and ritual violence is not only marketable but culturally validated through institutional backing.

The film company logo and production credit, presented as “Pichouse Films Presents,” function as an important visual sign that frames the entire poster within an institutional and ideological context. At the denotative level, this element consists of the name of the production company and its logo, displayed clearly against a dark background. Its placement within the poster

signals authorship and production authority, indicating which institution is responsible for bringing the film to the public. As a literal sign, it serves an informational function, identifying the film’s industrial origin.

At the connotative level, the logo signifies legitimacy, professionalism, and cultural authority. The restrained color palette—dominated by dark tones—aligns the production house with the visual language of the horror genre, suggesting seriousness, darkness, and emotional intensity. The phrase “presents” implies an act of deliberate offering, positioning the film not merely as entertainment but as a curated narrative endorsed by an established institution. In this context, Pichouse Films is connoted as a mediator between cultural fear and cinematic representation, guiding how the audience should interpret the violent and supernatural imagery that follows. The logo thus prepares viewers to accept the poster’s extreme visuals as purposeful, controlled, and narratively justified rather than gratuitous.

At the level of myth, these connotations are naturalized into an ideological belief that institutional backing legitimizes horror narratives rooted in ritual violence and mysticism. The production logo becomes more than a corporate marker; it functions as a cultural seal of approval that frames violence, witchcraft, and communal punishment as acceptable and meaningful cinematic themes. Through this mythic process, the audience comes to perceive the depiction of santet-related brutality not as a social problem or historical trauma, but as a normalized cultural spectacle authorized by the film industry. The production house is thus mythologized as a cultural gatekeeper that transforms collective anxieties, fear, and moral panic into consumable visual narratives.

In conclusion, the film company logo operates semiotically to anchor the poster within a system of institutional legitimacy and ideological normalization. Through the progression from denotation to connotation and ultimately to myth, the logo reinforces the notion that culturally specific horror—particularly violence associated with accusations of dukun santet—is validated when framed by an authoritative production entity. As a result, the poster positions itself not only as a promotional artifact but also as a cultural text that reproduces and stabilizes dominant narratives about fear, morality, and supernatural justice within Indonesian society.



Figure 12 : Surround Sound Technology Company Logo

Level of Meaning	Analysis of the Surround Sound Technology Company Logo
Denotation	The visual element displays the “Dolby Atmos” logo, indicating that the film employs Dolby Atmos surround sound technology for its audio design and cinematic presentation.

Connotation	The logo signifies technological sophistication, immersive audio experience, and heightened sensory intensity. Within a horror context, it connotes that fear will be amplified through sound, suggesting an enveloping atmosphere of whispers, screams, ritual chants, and environmental noises that surround the audience.
Myth	At the mythic level, Dolby Atmos is naturalized as a guarantor of authentic and embodied horror. The logo reinforces the belief that advanced sound technology legitimizes fear and violence by making them more visceral and unavoidable, positioning technology as an invisible force that intensifies supernatural terror and collective anxiety.

The surround sound technology logo, Dolby Atmos, functions as a supplementary yet meaningful visual sign within the poster’s compositional structure. At the denotative level, this element appears as a recognizable corporate logo accompanied by the text “Dolby Atmos,” indicating the use of advanced audio technology in the film’s production and exhibition. Literally, it serves an informational role, signaling that the film’s sound design is supported by a specific technological system intended for cinematic presentation.

At the connotative level, the Dolby Atmos logo signifies technological sophistication, immersive experience, and heightened sensory realism. Within the context of a horror film poster, this logo does not merely suggest sound quality but implies an intensified auditory encounter designed to envelop the audience. The presence of this technology connotes that fear will not be limited to visual shock but will be amplified through sound—whispers, screams, ritual chants, and ambient forest noises that surround the viewer. As such, the logo contributes to the construction of expectation: the horror promised by the poster will be experienced physically and emotionally through an immersive soundscape. The technological sign thus aligns modern cinematic innovation with traditional supernatural horror, bridging contemporary media practices and archaic fears.

At the level of myth, these connotations are naturalized into an ideological narrative that frames technological enhancement as a means of authenticating fear. Dolby Atmos becomes mythologized as a guarantor of “real” horror—one that penetrates the body and senses rather than remaining distant or symbolic. The myth suggests that advanced sound technology legitimizes and intensifies representations of violence, ritual, and mysticism, transforming cultural trauma and supernatural belief into a fully embodied cinematic experience. In this way, technology is positioned not as neutral equipment but as an invisible force that deepens audience submission to fear, making terror feel inevitable, immersive, and unavoidable.

In conclusion, the Dolby Atmos logo operates semiotically to reinforce the poster’s ideological promise of total sensory domination. Through the progression from denotation to connotation and ultimately to myth, the logo naturalizes the belief that horror must be technologically enhanced to achieve authenticity and emotional impact. As part of the poster’s visual economy, this sign strengthens the construction of *Pembantaian Dukun Santet* as a spectacle

where modern cinematic technology collaborates with cultural mysticism to reproduce collective fear, positioning sound as an unseen yet powerful agent in the narrative of supernatural violence.

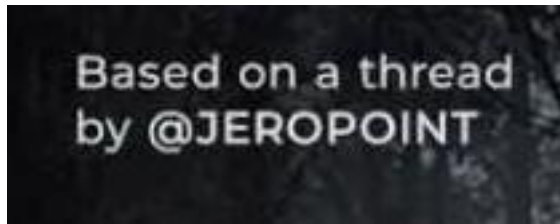


Figure 13 : Adaptation Credit

Level of Meaning	Analysis of the Adaptation Credit
Denotation	The text states that the film is based on a thread created by the social media user @JEROPOINT, indicating the source material from which the narrative is adapted.
Connotation	This credit connotes authenticity, virality, and collective engagement. It signals that the story originates from a digital platform where personal experiences, rumors, or communal anxieties are shared and amplified. In the context of horror, it suggests that the narrative is rooted in “real” or widely circulated stories, enhancing its perceived credibility and immediacy.
Myth	At the mythic level, the adaptation credit naturalizes the idea that digital narratives and viral threads function as legitimate sources of cultural truth. The myth constructs social media as a contemporary archive of collective fear, where stories of <i>santet</i> are framed not as fiction but as lived or witnessed realities, reinforcing the belief that supernatural violence persists within modern society.

The adaptation credit stating “Based on a thread by @JEROPOINT” functions as a significant textual sign that anchors the poster within contemporary digital culture. At the denotative level, this credit explicitly informs the audience that the film’s narrative is adapted from a social media thread authored by the account @JEROPOINT. On a literal level, the text merely identifies the source of the story, positioning the film as an adaptation rather than an entirely original screenplay.

At the connotative level, however, the adaptation credit carries deeper cultural implications. Referencing a social media thread connotes virality, immediacy, and participatory storytelling. Unlike traditional literary sources, online threads are often associated with personal testimony, communal rumor, and digitally mediated fear. In the Indonesian context, stories

of santet frequently circulate through informal channels such as online forums, Twitter/X threads, or messaging groups, where boundaries between fact, belief, and speculation are blurred. As a result, the credit suggests that the film draws from narratives perceived as “real,” “experienced,” or collectively witnessed, thereby intensifying the audience’s sense of authenticity and emotional proximity. The use of a username rather than a formal author name further reinforces the idea of grassroots storytelling, implying that horror emerges from everyday voices rather than institutional authority.

At the mythical level, these connotations are naturalized into an ideological narrative in which social media becomes a legitimate repository of cultural truth. The adaptation credit constructs a myth that digital platforms function as contemporary archives of collective memory and trauma. Within this myth, stories shared online—particularly those involving witchcraft and supernatural violence—are not merely entertainment but reflections of unresolved societal anxieties. The credit thus reinforces the belief that santet is not a relic of the past but an ongoing threat embedded within modern life, circulating through digital networks as both warning and confession. By legitimizing a social media thread as a narrative foundation, the poster normalizes the idea that communal fear and moral panic are produced, validated, and transmitted through online spaces.

In conclusion, the adaptation credit operates semiotically to bridge traditional folklore with digital culture. Through the progression from denotation to connotation and ultimately to myth, the phrase “Based on a thread by @JEROPOINT” transforms a simple acknowledgment of source into an ideological statement about authenticity, collective fear, and the cultural power of social media. The credit positions the film not only as a cinematic horror text but as an extension of contemporary digital mythology, where narratives of santet are continuously reproduced, believed, and internalized within Indonesia’s collective imagination.

The findings of this study demonstrate that the *Pembantaian Dukun Santet* poster operates as a dense semiotic system in which visual and textual elements collaboratively construct a powerful horror discourse rooted in Indonesian cultural memory. Through Barthes’ three levels of meaning—denotation, connotation, and myth—the analysis reveals that the poster does not merely function as a promotional medium but as a cultural text that reproduces collective anxieties surrounding witchcraft, violence, and moral order.

At the denotative level, the poster presents explicit images of a dark forest, a headless body, a severed head, scattered skulls and bones, burning torches, sparks and embers, gothic typography, and institutional film credits. These elements establish a literal narrative of death, ritual violence, and isolation. However, at the connotative level, these signs acquire culturally specific meanings associated with fear, liminality, communal punishment, and supernatural threat. The forest signifies a sacred and haunted space, bodily fragmentation connotes extreme brutality and dehumanization, and fire imagery suggests both illumination and destruction, drawing upon long-standing associations within Indonesian folklore and historical experiences of mob violence related to accusations of santet.

At the level of myth, these connotations are naturalized into ideological narratives that legitimize ritual violence as a necessary response to perceived supernatural danger. The poster constructs violence not as an aberration but as an inevitable and culturally sanctioned act of justice. Mythically, nature becomes a mediator between the human and supernatural realms, death is framed as moral consequence, and collective fear is transformed into communal justification. Even institutional elements such as production logos, adaptation credits, and release information

contribute to this myth-making process by reinforcing the authority, authenticity, and cultural legitimacy of the narrative.

The findings confirm that the *Pembantaian Dukun Santet* poster encodes and reproduces deeply embedded ideological structures related to mysticism, trauma, and social control in Indonesian society. By foregrounding witchcraft rather than ghostly apparitions, the poster expands the visual vocabulary of Indonesian horror and exposes how promotional media participates in the normalization of violence through mythic storytelling. This discussion underscores the importance of examining film posters not only as marketing tools but as ideological sites where cultural fears, historical memories, and moral narratives are visually negotiated and reaffirmed.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the poster of *Pembantaian Dukun Santet* (2025) operates far beyond its surface role as a promotional artifact, functioning instead as a complex cultural construct that visualizes collective fear, historical memory, and ideological tension within Indonesian society. Through the application of Roland Barthes' semiotic framework, the analysis reveals how visual and textual components interact to generate layered meanings that move from literal representation toward culturally embedded interpretation and ideological naturalization.

The findings indicate that the poster systematically organizes images of bodily fragmentation, ritual objects, natural settings, and institutional markers to produce a coherent discourse of horror grounded in local belief systems. Each sign contributes to an overarching narrative in which violence is framed not as random cruelty but as a socially intelligible response to perceived supernatural danger. The transformation of fear into moral justification occurs through mythic signification, where historical trauma, folklore, and communal anxiety are rendered seemingly inevitable and unquestionable.

Importantly, the emphasis on santet rather than conventional ghost figures highlights a distinctive dimension of Indonesian horror representation. By foregrounding witchcraft and collective punishment, the poster draws attention to unresolved cultural tensions surrounding superstition, authority, and social control. Institutional elements—such as production credits, technological branding, and adaptation references—further reinforce the legitimacy of the narrative, embedding fear within cinematic authority and contemporary digital culture.

This research contributes to semiotic and film studies by expanding the discussion of horror posters as ideological texts rather than merely aesthetic or commercial objects. It underscores the need to critically examine how visual media participates in shaping collective memory and normalizing certain worldviews, particularly those involving violence and moral panic. Future studies may extend this analysis by comparing representations of santet across different media forms or by exploring audience reception to better understand how such visual myths are negotiated, resisted, or reinforced within contemporary Indonesian culture.

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