



CHARLES SANDERS PEIRCE'S TRICHOTOMY OF OBJECT IN THE FREE PALESTINE CAMPAIGN POSTERS FROM PINTEREST

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Abstract

This research explores semiotic analysis by focusing on the trichotomy of objects, including icon, index, and symbol found in the Free Palestine campaign posters. It emphasizes their role in conveying messages in visual media about the campaign. The visual media are posters that effectively disseminate information and mobilize support through social media platforms. This research uses a qualitative method by analyzing five selected posters taken from the Pinterest platform that reflect the campaign theme. Using Charles Sanders Peirce's trichotomy of objects regarding icons, indexes, and symbols, this analysis reveals how each poster uses different visual elements to communicate a comprehensive narrative. The analysis showed that of the five posters studied, a total of 9 icons, 7 indexes, and 6 symbols were identified. The conclusion of this study shows that the combination of visual representations and symbolic meanings in the posters serves not only as a communication tool but also as a powerful act of support for the liberation of Palestine.

Keywords: Charles Sanders Peirce; Free Palestine Campaign Posters; Semiotics; Trichotomy of Object

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INTRODUCTION

The protracted conflict between Palestine and Israel is still attracting worldwide attention. The conflict originally started in the 19th century when Zionist Jews began immigrating to Palestine and established a Jewish state (Katz, 2024). It means that the conflict between Palestine and Israel has been going on for more than 50 years. The Palestinian government and Israeli authorities have tried to negotiate and reach an agreement to end the conflict. However, the conflict resurfaced in 2023. According to Zanotti (2023), on October 7, 2023, the Palestinian Sunniv Islamist group Hamas (a U.S.-designated foreign terrorist organization, or FTO) led surprise attacks against Israel from the Gaza Strip by land, sea, and air. Since then, Israel has counterattacked not only Hamas but all Palestinians indiscriminately. According to the latest data from the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the World Health Organization, and the Palestinian government as of November 10 (2023), Israel has attacked Gaza and caused more than 40,000 deaths, and among them, around 16,000 are children. This conflict is no longer just a territorial conflict but also involves human rights and humanitarian values. Israel is no longer attacking Palestine but has committed genocide against the Palestinians. On March 25, 2024, the UN Human Rights Council issued a report from the UN Special Rapporteur on the Occupied Palestinian Territories, stating that there are clear indications that Israel has violated some of the five acts in the UN Genocide Convention (Albanese, 2024). Based on the report, it can be believed that what Israel has done to Palestine is no longer an attack, but more clearly Genocide.

Because of this genocide, Palestine gets a lot of attention from the public, especially influenced by the rapid development of information on the internet. As Stamatopoulou (2005) argued, the advancement of the internet, which led to the creation of many mediated websites and forums about the Palestinians, has helped in creating an opportunity for Palestinians to reach an international audience and, therefore, tell their version of the story. Other countries, organizations, and individuals have voiced support for Palestine in various ways. One of the most popular is the Free Palestine campaign on the internet. This campaign is carried out by spreading support for Palestine through posters. These posters are distributed through various media and contain strong and easy-to-understand symbols. These symbols can convey a deep message that can move emotions, evoke empathy, and strengthen the issue of solidarity with the genocide in Palestine.

The symbols contained in the poster are very interesting to study in semiotics. According to (Chandler, 2000), the shortest definition of semiotics is the study of signs. In semiotic analysis, posters are seen as visual texts consisting of various signs that represent certain ideas, concepts, or messages. According to Sebeok (2001), a sign is any physical form that is imagined or created to represent an object, event, feeling, and other. Therefore, by examining signs with semiotic studies, an in-depth interpretation of the poster will be obtained, whether it is a message, concept, or feeling.

In semiotics, there are various theories about signs. One of the most popular sign theories is that of Charles Sanders Peirce. According to Peirce, anything that can be used to signify something else is called a sign (Metzger, 2024). Peirce's semiotic theory divided the sign system into three parts, called trichotomies of signs. The trichotomies of signs consist of Representament, Interpretant, and object. Below is an excerpt from Peirce's (1982) manuscript of 1897 regarding the definition of Representament, Interpretant, and Object.

A sign, or representamen, is something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity. It addresses somebody, that is, creates in the mind of that person an equivalent sign, or perhaps a more developed sign. That sign which it creates I call the interpretant of the first sign. The sign stands for something, its object. It stands for that object, not in all respects, but in reference to a kind of idea, which I have sometimes called the ground of the representamen.

To identify how the posters utilize signs to create a strong message to the audience, this research will focus on object studies only. The object is the last and most basic part of the Trichotomies of sign. Objects in Peirce's theory are also divided into three, including icon, index, and symbol. Peirce said that the analysis of the meaning of a sign is determined by its object, in a way that is contained in the following quote from Peirce's theory:

First, by partaking in the characters of the object, when I call the sign an Icon; secondly, by being really and in its individual existence connected with the individual object, when I call the sign an Index; thirdly, by more or less approximate certainty that it will be interpreted as denoting the object, in consequence of a habit (which term I use as including a natural disposition), when I call the sign a Symbol (C. S. Peirce, 1982).

Based on the explanation above, an icon is a sign that has similarities with the object it represents. According to Peirce (1902), an icon is a sign that possesses the character that renders it significant. Significant means that the sign that becomes an icon is important in representing the object it represents. The index is a sign that has a direct relationship with the object it represents, usually in the form of a causal relationship. The relation between sign and object is concrete (Pangestu & Kustanti, 2023). The last is a symbol, which is a sign that is understood as the object it represents because of human habits or conventions. A symbol is a sign that has a relationship with its object through social or cultural agreement. This relationship is not natural or causal but rather arbitrary and understood only by those who understand certain conventions (Burks, 1999). So, this classification of sign types is created because the sign has an object that it represents, and the way the sign represents the object varies depending on the type (Short, 2007). Therefore, through this object trichotomy theory, semiotic research will be studied more systematically, especially in how each sign element works to convey messages.

All the elements contained in the trichotomy of the object can be found in any visual media, one of which is the Poster. Rowe (2011) stated that posters are designed to give a visual representation of an issue that first attracts attention and then conveys an intended message. In conveying the message, the poster is made as attractive as possible through its elements. The elements contained in a poster include color, text, typeface, illustration, photography, and others. These elements are created and combined as interestingly as possible to convey the issue or message carried well. Various interesting issues can be raised in a poster, such as social issues, humanitarian issues, health issues, education, economics, and various other issues.

Based on the content, posters can be divided into various types, one of which is campaign posters. Campaign posters are visual media used to convey messages or invitations to influence public opinion or action regarding certain issues effectively and attractively. Campaign posters are considered quite effective in influencing readers on the issues contained in the poster. For instance, one of the global issues that is currently being discussed on the internet is the conflict between Israel and Palestine. Following this issue, the Free Palestine Campaign Poster came into being.

Nowadays, Free Palestine campaign posters are very popular on the internet, one of which is on Pinterest. Pinterest was chosen as a source of data for the research because it is one of the most popular platforms for finding and sharing digital posters, including the Free Palestine Campaign Poster. As a visual-based platform, Pinterest allows users from around the world to contribute to spreading messages through images, including posters with strong semiotic elements. Therefore, through the trichotomy of object analysis of icons, indexes, and symbols in Free Palestine posters on Pinterest, this research is expected to provide in-depth insights into how these semiotic

elements build meaning and effective solidarity messages while expanding public awareness of the situation in Palestine.

There are previous studies used as references. The first is Marlina (2022), who examined the semiotic study of global environmental and social issues campaign posters. The data taken for this study totaled 14 posters, consisting of 7 posters on environmental issues and 7 posters on social issues. She used the trichotomy model of Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic theory, which emphasizes the relationship between the sign and the object. The results of this study show that in posters on environmental issues, there are 14 icons, 19 indexes, and 19 symbols, and in posters on social issues, there are 11 icons, 21 indexes, and 17 symbols. Each category of sign has a meaning and role regarding the issues raised.

The second is Assegaf (2017). His research analyzed the semiotic elements contained in the brochure of seminars and workshops of universities in Bandung and the relationship between text and images in the brochure of seminars and workshops of universities in Bandung. The data are images taken from the *Google Images website*. The data were analyzed using Peirce's semiotic theory, which includes representamen, object, and interpretant.

Comparing these previous researches to this current research, there are several research gaps identified. First, there is a need for deepening sign analysis in the context of contemporary social campaigns, especially for sensitive issues such as political and humanitarian conflicts. Most previous studies have examined semiotics in environmental or social issues, but there is no specific study that discusses the use of signs in solidarity campaigns that touch on issues of genocide or humanitarian conflicts, such as the Palestinian cases. Secondly, the unique approach of this research is the use of Pinterest as the main data source, which presents a new perspective on online visual platforms as a medium for disseminating campaign messages that are more complete and focused. This contributes to the understanding of how the internet, particularly visual-based platforms, plays a role in amplifying the spread of global solidarity messages.

Furthermore, the focus on the "Object" trichotomy in Charles Sanders Peirce's sign theory, including the division into icons, indexes, and symbols, provides a more specific approach compared to previous research that only uses the three elements of Peirce's trichotomy as a whole (representamen, interpretant, and object). In Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic theory, the object is an important element that is related to the representamen and interpretant in the process of semiosis, which is defined as the production of signs and meanings (Barbieri, 2009). Without the object, the sign loses its sense of direction and cannot be understood. Through this focus, the research can dig deeper into how each type of sign plays a role in conveying solidarity messages in the Free Palestine campaign.

In general, this research will focus on an in-depth analysis of the use of signs on the Free Palestine campaign poster as a solidarity campaign media in the current humanitarian issue based on Peirce's theory of the trichotomy of object which includes icons, indexes, and symbols, as well as how object interpretation can be found in the poster so that the goal of conveying humanitarian messages to the public can be achieved effectively.

Based on this explanation, the writer hopes that this research can fill the void in semiotic studies related to visual campaigns for the Palestinian-Israeli humanitarian issue and provide a new perspective in understanding the role of visual elements in spreading solidarity messages through digital media. Therefore, the writer researched semiotic analysis, especially on the trichotomy of objects in free Palestine campaign posters. The writer is highly motivated to conduct research entitled "Charles Sanders Peirce's Trichotomy of Object in the Free Palestine Campaign Posters From Pinterest".

RESEARCH METHOD

The research method used in this analysis is qualitative. According to Creswell et al. (2018), qualitative research is particularly useful for exploring complex phenomena where the researcher's goal is to understand the "why" and "how" of human experiences, rather than the "what" or "how many". In addition, this type of qualitative research focuses on words rather than numbers and observes the world in its natural environment, interpreting situations to understand the meanings people make from everyday life (Raharjo et al., 2020). Therefore, this method can provide deep insight into participants' perspectives on the semiotic study of the Free Palestine campaign poster.

Data collection is conducted through a sampling technique by collecting as many as five posters to be analyzed. The posters were selected based on certain criteria, such as containing the free Palestine campaign and having visual elements, including images, symbols, and text.

The research data is sourced from the internet, specifically from Pinterest sites. Pinterest is described as a visual search engine that emphasizes discovery and inspiration through images and visual content rather than text (Sage, 2022). The primary data used in this analysis is free Palestine campaign posters with data sources from the internet. The secondary data of this analysis is through literature and documentation study techniques.

The data is then analyzed with several steps, including preparing the data that has been collected at the data collection stage, then analyzing the data based on Peirce's theory about trichotomy of object including icon, index,

and symbol. Furthermore, interpreting and explaining the meaning contained in the data. Finally, conclusions are drawn from the interpretations.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This subsection has a semiotic analysis of the prepared object of study. Five research data in the form of free Palestine campaign posters are analyzed in this section. Here is the analysis.

Data 1



In Peirce's trichotomy of object, an **icon** is a sign that resembles the object it represents. In the poster above, the raised fist is visually similar to reality. In addition, the raised fist here also depicts strength and unity. In the context of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, this shows that the raised fist invites the audience to unite against Israel for its genocide against Palestine. In addition to the raised fist, the icon is also found in the image of the Palestinian flag. The image of the Palestinian flag is included in the icon because the image is similar to reality. It means that the image of the flag represents the identity of the Palestinian people who need to fight for the genocide they are experiencing.

The second is **index**, which is a sign that has a causal relationship with the object it represents. In the poster above, the index is found in the image of the raised fist, which illustrates the protest as a result of the genocide committed by Israel.

The last is a **symbol** that is a sign that is understood as the object it represents because of human habit or agreement. In the poster above, the symbol is found in the text "FREE PALESTINE". The text is included in the symbol because it is the headline text and contains a message to free Palestine from Israeli genocide. For more details, the results of the analysis of the types of signs in the object trichotomy in this poster can be seen in the following table:

Table 1. Sign Types of Objects in the Free Palestine Campaign Posters

Sign Types of Objects		
Icons	Index	Symbol
- The raised fist	The raised fist	The text "FREE PALESTINE"
- The Palestinians Flag		

Data 2



In the poster above, the **icon** can be seen in the image of the man holding a flag. The man represents an icon because he depicts the reality of people fighting for Palestine's freedom from Israel's genocide. Then, the image of the Palestinian flag is also an icon because it represents the Palestinian flag similar to reality and symbolizes the identity of the Palestinian people in their struggle for freedom.

The **index** in this poster is presented in the man's determined facial expression. This expression shows a sense of firmness and strong resolve, which is a direct response to the oppression experienced by Palestine. This expression reflects courage and a desire to resist injustice, serving as a sign that shows the spirit of resistance of the Palestinian people against genocide and the injustices they face.

The text "FREE PALESTINE" is categorized as a **symbol**. This text is a symbol because it serves as a headline text conveying a message of liberation for Palestine from oppression. This text is widely understood as a call to support the Palestinian struggle for independence and to oppose the genocide taking place. For more details, the results of the analysis of the types of signs in the object trichotomy in this second poster can be seen in the following table:

Table 2. Signs of Objects in the Free Palestine Campaign Posters

Sign of Objects		
Icons	Index	Symbol
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A man holding a flag - The image of the Palestinian flag 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The man's determined facial expression 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The text "FREE PALESTINE"

Data 3



In data 3 above, there is a picture of a woman wearing a hijab and hugging a small child; that is an **icon**. This image visually represents a Palestinian mother comforting her child, showing love and protection. Furthermore, the bomb blast light behind the mother and child figure symbolizes the genocide that occurred in Palestine by Israel. This bomb blast light serves as an **index** of genocide.

Lastly, the text "FROM THE RIVER TO THE SEA, PALESTINE WILL BE FREE" is a powerful **symbol** in the context of the struggle for Palestinian independence. It is a phrase used to express the desire for the freedom of the entire Palestinian territory from occupation, from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea. This phrase has become a symbol of Palestinian resistance and struggle, although politically, this phrase is often considered controversial in international discussions. The use of green in the word "Palestine" is also a strong symbol because green is often associated with Islam and Palestine. It is a color that signifies hope and life and also has religious connotations in the context of the Arab and Muslim world. This poster powerfully integrates Peirce's three types of signs to convey a visually and emotionally impactful narrative about the Palestinian struggle for freedom, blending storytelling with political significance. For more details, the results of the analysis of the types sign in the object trichotomy in this poster can be seen in the following table:

Table 3. Signs of Objects in the Free Palestine Campaign Posters

Types Sign of Objects		
Icons	Index	Symbol
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A woman wearing a hijab - A small child 	The bomb blast light behind the mother and child	The text "FROM THE RIVER TO THE SEA, PALESTINE WILL BE FREE"

Data 4



In data 4, there is an image of the map of Palestine. The image of the Palestinian map colored with the Palestinian flag is an **icon**. The shape of this map serves as a visual representation of the geographic area of Palestine, which can be recognized by the public, directly connecting it with the country in question.

The barbed wire wrapped around the map of Palestine functions as an **index** that indicates a cause-and-effect relationship between the physical and symbolic oppression of Palestine. The barbed wire is a direct result of the occupation and prolonged conflict that has caused the Palestinian territories to be locked, isolated, and oppressed. The presence of the barbed wire not only reflects the physical boundaries imposed on the Palestinian people but also indicates the tangible effects of colonization, namely the restriction of freedom of movement and their basic rights.

The text "SAVE PALESTINE" at the bottom of the poster is a **symbol** calling for action to save Palestine. It is not just a literal call but also a symbol of global solidarity and the struggle to free Palestine from occupation and oppression. Overall, this poster uses an icon to represent the map of Palestine, an index through the barbed wire showing the oppression and conflict experienced by Palestine, and a symbol through the colors of the Palestinian flag and the text that calls for international solidarity in the Palestinian struggle.

Therefore, this poster effectively conveys a powerful message about the complex political and social situation in Palestine, highlighting the ongoing struggles faced by its people while simultaneously serving as a compelling call to action for global solidarity and support in the fight against occupation and oppression. For more details, the results of the analysis of the types sign in the object trichotomy in this poster can be seen in the following table:

Table 4. Signs of Objects in the Free Palestine Campaign Posters

Types Sign of Objects		
Icon	Index	Symbol
- The Palestinian map	- The barbed wire	- The text "SAVE PALESTINE"

Data 5



In the data 5 above, several images and symbols fall under the type of signs according to Peirce's theory. First, the image of the Al-Aqsa Mosque. The visual representation of the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem functions as an **icon** that is immediately recognized as one of the sacred sites in Palestine, symbolizing both spiritual and national identity. Next, there is the image of people raising the Palestinian flag and posters about Palestine. This image directly depicts real action in the field, thus functioning as an icon showing pro-Palestinian demonstrations and resistance against oppression.

Second, the index in this image can be found in the smoke and dark background. The smoke and dark background are **indexes** of the ongoing war and conflict in Palestine. The smoke and darkness indicate that violence and instability are everyday realities in the region, showing a cause-and-effect relationship between military actions and the damage inflicted. Then, there are the facial expressions of the fighters and protesters. The determined and passionate faces that appear in this poster are indexes of feelings of anger, determination, and hope for freedom. These expressions depict emotional reactions to oppression and injustice, directly connected to the struggle of the Palestinian people.

Lastly, the **symbol**. The symbol in this poster is found in the text “#SAVE PALESTINE”. This text is a symbol of global solidarity and a call to defend Palestinian rights. The hashtag symbolizes a social media movement and international public support to end the conflict and fight for Palestine’s freedom. Additionally, there are the words "WE WILL NOT BE SILENT ON PALESTINE.": This is a symbol of protest, representing the determination to continue fighting for justice for Palestine without giving up or remaining silent in the face of injustice.

For more details, the results of the analysis of the types sign in the object trichotomy in the last poster can be seen in the following table:

Table 5. Signs of Objects in the Free Palestine Campaign Posters

Types Sign of Objects		
Icons	Indexes	Symbols
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The image of Al-Aqsa Mosque - The image of people raising the Palestinian flag and posters about Palestine. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The smoke - The dark background - The facial expressions of the fighters and protesters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The text “#SAVE PALESTINE” - The text "WE WILL NOT BE SILENT ON PALESTINE"

In general, this poster uses icons to display the visual reality of the Palestinian people's struggle and their sacred sites, indexes to show the connection between visual signs and the conditions of war as well as the emotional feelings brought about by the conflict, and symbols to express global solidarity, nationalism, and resistance against oppression. Together, these signs work to convey a powerful message about the Palestinian struggle and a call to never give up in supporting their freedom.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion of the semiotic analysis of the Free Palestine campaign posters reveals how these visual artifacts effectively integrate semiotic elements to communicate a compelling narrative about the Palestinian people's struggle against oppression and genocide by Israel. Using icons such as the raised fist, the Palestinian flag, the Al-Aqsa Mosque, and the map of Palestine, these posters create direct visual representations of solidarity, strength, national identity, and spiritual significance. These elements offer a clear depiction of the resilience and ongoing fight for justice in Palestine.

Furthermore, indexes like barbed wire surrounding the Palestinian map, smoke and dark backgrounds, and determined facial expressions of protesters reflect the tangible impacts of war and occupation. These signs illustrate the cause-and-effect relationship between the visuals and the lived reality of the Palestinian people's physical and emotional struggle, evoking a deeper understanding of their plight.

In addition, symbols such as the phrases "Free Palestine" and "Save Palestine," act as powerful calls for global solidarity and resistance. The texts emphasizing the call for international support in advocating for Palestinian independence and human rights.

From the analysis of five posters, a total of 9 icons, 7 indexes, and 6 symbols were identified. Together, these semiotic elements form a cohesive and impactful message, engaging the audience both emotionally and intellectually. The posters transcend mere visual communication, serving as tools of resistance and protest, uniting viewers worldwide in solidarity with Palestine, and inspiring them to take action in support of its freedom and justice.

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