Visualising the ritualistic practices of the Tenggerese through photo

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School of Art, Design and Media

VISUALISING THE RITUALISTIC PRACTICES OF
THE TENGGERESE THROUGH PHOTO

Vincent Liew Weh Siang
School of Art, Design and Media
2020

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School of Art, Design and Media

A thesis submitted to Nanyang Technological University
School of Art, Design & Media in partial fulfilment of the requirement
for the degree of Master of Arts (Research)

2020

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Anthropologist Jay Ruby (Ruby, 1981) has argued that photography is one of the most common methods of visual communication for preserving culture and for understanding the way people comprehend the world around them. Photography is not only a tool to record memories, but also a crucial medium to aid us in understanding and representing culture. This is why visual anthropologists use photography to study and represent different communities and cultures throughout the world (Elizabeth Edwards, 1992b). However, there are concerns that visual technology like photography, when used in ethnographic work, can produce false information and is unable to capture intangible cultural traits and social structures (Poole, 2005). Moreover, the visual content of a photograph can offer multiple meanings, depending on the viewer's socio-cultural background as well as the photographer's own social conditioning and intention in making the photograph (Cañete, 2008). Such critical discourses lead to the acknowledgement that a researcher's or participant's background can affect the truthfulness of a study. With this understanding, this study not only acknowledges, but also synthesizes the social and cultural backgrounds of both the participants and the researcher, so as to achieve a more truthful representation of the participants through photography.

When photography was first invented, it was more of a scientific tool than a form of artistic expression. Since many of the earliest photographers were chemists, botanists, and inventors, photography was perceived as an instrument of science that helped to deliver an objective representation of reality. This perception shifted when self-reflective viewers and photographers realized that the photographic image had a subjective element. The way a photographer chooses what to photograph, include in the frame, the type of lens to use etc. is highly subjective. Hence, the view that photography should offer a truthful representation of reality continues to be debated today. In order to enhance the process of representing social

practices through photographic images, practitioners and scholars have devised approaches to improve the ways in which documentary works are produced. This study reviewed these two positions, in order to develop an enhanced process in documenting ritualistic practices of the participants.

In his theorization on how knowledge is formed and organized, Michel Foucault (M. Foucault, 1970) argues that the knowledge produced from the social sciences is far from being objective and is often shaped through reflexive circumstances of people in different epochs. From this perspective, this research recognizes the importance of reflexivity and how it affects the process of deriving and framing conclusions of a study. Hence, this research asks: Can a documentary work truly represent ritualistic practices of a community without including the community's perception, participation and input towards the final outcome of the documentary project? When inviting input from participants, how do we limit 'social desirability biasness' or overly positive feedbacks regarding their community? This research deals with the photographic documentation of ritualistic practices and offers an alternative method to address the issues created by bias representation. This method consists in the mediation of the reflexive biasness between 1) the photographer when producing documentary works and 2) the participants' own 'social desirability biasness' when providing information pertaining to their community.

In considering the above discussion regarding documentary work, it is clear there is a need for documentary photography projects to deliver trustworthy information. As a media, photography can be manipulated to serve a propaganda or deliberately distorted with photo-editing software to show a different record of events. It can also be manipulated mechanically by the selective use of lighting, lenses, composition, cropping of the image, etc.; allowing for a specific perspective to be framed. A reliable documentary process can alleviate misrepresentation and improve the truthful representation of people and phenomena. This

approach can take the form of a co-contribution effort between participants of a documentary project and the photographer. While this approach is not exhaustive, it will guide the practical component of this study.

1.1 Truth in Documentary Photography - A Recurring Challenge

According to Tom Gunning (Gunning, 2004), photography is concerned with being, 1) used as a tool to promote directed narratives and 2) a medium that is easily prone to exploitation. As a result, the notion of photography being able to provide a truthful record of events remains in question. Traversing back to the 1930s, the Farm Security Administration, or FSA, was often criticized for directing the documentary narrative by requiring commissioned photographers to strictly adhere to specific conveyed narratives when producing photographic works (Böger, 2001). This extends to the fact that Roy Stryker, the former Director of the FSA, personally selects photographs that fit his narrative while discarding more than 100,000 images he deems unsuitable for his cause. He also gave very specific instructions or shooting scripts to the photographers to approach their subject. This prompts scholars to question photography's trustworthiness and therefore it is subject to skepticism. For example, photographs of women and children were specifically favoured for publication, with the hope to generate sympathy for impoverished farmers during the Great Depression (Richman, 2018).

In the case of photo manipulation, Agence France-Presse [AFP] released a photo of Iran's missile launch that ended up being a fake image of the actual launch [Figure 1.]. Netizens

Figure 1.

Source: wired.com

who visited AFP's website caught the manipulations in the image. This led AFP to retract the image eventually. If the image had not been removed, it could cause panic to other nations due to a notion of an impending war. Incidents like these have the potential to

create distrust of the press and call attention to the reliability of photography as an instrument to deliver dependable information. More recently, the Korean Central News Agency of North Korea released an image [Figure 2.] of a military manoeuvre being carried out as part of a large-scale military exercise. Alan Taylor, an editor of The Atlantic, a media website, caught the doctored image and pointed out that some of the hovercrafts in the image were cloned to make the military force more intimidating.

Figure 2.

©Korean Central News Agency

The challenge of providing truthful accounts of cultures and phenomena is not limited to documentary photography per se. Since Elizabeth Edwards published *Anthropology and Photography* in 1992 (Elizabeth Edwards, 1992a), there has been a significant anthropological interest in historical ethnographic photography and any photographic practices in this field. Anthropologists have actively use photography as part of their research process. In visual anthropology, Winston (Winston, 1995) highlights that when ethnographers conduct fieldwork, they bring along their own personality, style and narrative choices that closely associates with

their background. But this presents an issue of mixing in an overbearing perspective or cultural baggage, from the researcher in those studies. This is akin to the colonial scientific process that leads research studies to reflect only the voice of the colonizers (Spivak, 1988). However, this cultural baggage can be minimised by diversifying the authorship of the documentary project (MacDougall, 1992). This diversification of authorship can entice more structures of visuals and narratives and thus, the research builds its framework based on a co-contribution model.

Despite the fact that documentary photography is a common genre, there are limited comparative studies that address the methods adopted by different documentary photographers to identify a paradigm for photography to best represent and give voice to subjects and participants. A review of documentary photographers' approaches reveals specific good practices. For instance, exemplary photographers like Claire Garoutte and Anneke Wambaugh have shown that the photographer who has some background knowledge of the community, a clear intention of what the photographer wants to achieve from the documentary project, conversations with participants and participation in local activities, does better at representing communities. By understanding these exemplary practices, the research endeavors to add to and expand the definition, depth and study of documentary photography and recognises co-contribution as an important process in representing ritualistic practices in documentary photography.

Photography is often subject to misinterpretation and misuse. Even now, the medium is still being criticized for its limitation in delivering trustworthy representation of events. For example, in the case of Spencer Platt, who took a photograph whom he mistakenly thought was a group of affluent Lebanese youth visiting a bombed area. It turned out that the youths were residents of the bombed site (Ghattas, 2007). From this example, it is clear that the subjectivity of a photographer can misconstrue the information contained within a photograph. In contrast, a co-contribution approach between the participants and the photographer can reduce

misrepresentations and enhance the trustworthiness of a photography project. With this understanding, photography is commonly used by researchers in fieldwork to understand peoples and culture

1.2 Accuracy and Reliability of Photography

Susan Sontag (Sontag, 2014) has argued that photographs are subject to the photographer's interpretation of reality and are not much different from the way a painter would paint a live scene in a painting. Roland Barthes (Barthes, 2012) deems that photography has nothing to offer to the viewer because the information within a photograph does not truly represent reality. Barthes also argued that photography can even desensitize catastrophes and human conflicts from distant locations. For example, we simply cannot experience the actual impact of catastrophes and wars by just looking at a photograph. John Berger (Berger, 2012) argues that the information from a photograph is not conclusive and is subject to the interpretation of each viewer. This interpretation is also affected by the viewer's socio-cultural background. This shows that, if a documentary project is conducted without a process to guide the project towards achieving a truthful representation of the participants, it risks misrepresentation.

Visual anthropology, incorporated the production of ethnographic documentary photography and film since the mid-1990s (Eddy, 2013). Ethnography may be defined as the process of conducting observations and interviews within a specific community, for a period of time, in order to obtain accurate and truthful views from the community (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). The view on photography as a credible medium for ethnographic documentary works is an ongoing debate as opponents and proponents constantly argue whether the medium can deliver a truthful representation of its subject matter. Regardless, there has been an increase in

the use of photography in documentary work. Anthropologists use old photographs to explore previously unnoticed social cues and ethnographers use photography to document communities during fieldwork. Such processes have been exemplified by visual anthropologists like Margret Mead and Gregory Bateson (MacDougall, 1992). They collectively took 35,000 photographs to document how children were raised in Bali. Sarah Pink's technique, which championed visuals, became an important and popular method for community studies and an object of study itself (S. Pink & Routledge, 2006). The acceptance of photography as a research tool in the anthropological field was brought on by the 'sensory turn', or an increasing attention to the role of human senses in the construction and representation of experience (Sarah. Pink, 2011). Traditional anthropology is a discipline that deals mainly with texts (Foster, 1995). This is where photography can add a dimension to the generation of knowledge. Further, photography has been accepted as a research tool because of the emergence of elicitation methods such as photo-elicitation. The advantage of using photography with such a method is that it encourages participants to voice their thoughts by providing a conducive environment for open discussion.

1.3 Research Questions

The research studies how photographers visualise, construct and represent ritualistic practices. These questions seek to formulate a process where co-contribution between the documentary participants and the photographer can produce a work that minimises any overbearing biasness from either party. In other words, a process that leads to an improved representation of the research participants. The study proposes an alternative method to candid or conventional straight documentary style approaches and investigates how fieldwork, 'participant observation' methods and co-contribution from the Tengerese and me as a

researcher can further the development of documentary photography practice. To realize this, the research asks the following questions:

1. How can documentary approaches in photography be enhanced to ensure accuracy by minimising bias representation?
2. Can there be a more comprehensive process to document and represent ritualistic practices?

1.4 Research Framework

I approach this study using a social constructivist framework. Michael Crotty (Crotty, 2009) claims that a researcher who positions oneself within this framework endeavours to understand the world in which he or she lives and work. In other words, the researcher utilises an inductive method to obtain information through interviews, observations and review of relevant literature. Similarly, I undertake fieldwork to observe phenomena, implement ‘participant observation’ methods, induce responses and thoughts through conversation and dialogues, and perform a literature review. Crotty further explains that a researcher who adopts a social constructivist framework also acknowledges, the research participants’ opinions about the way they perceive and interpret events in their daily lives. These daily phenomena are normally created through social interactions and are influenced by cultural norms. Similarly, I lived together with the participating community for a period of 60 days and spent approximately 8 hours a day with them to acquire an insider’s perspective of their lives and environment. Likewise, the research aims to understand the Tenggerese by observing their thoughts, emotions and responses, as closely as possible (Crotty, 2009).

The research acknowledges that the participants’ realities are created through lived experiences and exchanges with one and another on a daily basis. By living and interacting

with them for a period of time, I aim to understand and record these complex living experiences. The information I found are combined with the inputs of the participants to co-construct knowledge that guides the photography project. The research recognizes the views of the participants by involving them in the photograph selection process, where the opinions of the participants are respected and acknowledged. The Tenggerese determine the photographs to be used to identify themselves. This co-constructed knowledge is wrought from each individual's experiences and moulded into the eventual outcome. By acknowledging the reflexivity of the participants and me as the researcher, the research yields a more truthful representation of Tenggerese ritualistic practices (Creswell, 2013).

This process involves engaging in critical analysis of literature; surveying the methodologies employed by photo-artists in representing ritualistic practices; developing an enhanced documentary approach and applying this approach to the practical component of the research; facilitating photo-elicitation where the Tenggerese are asked to select the photos that they deem best represent them; and combining the results to produce the final outcome of the photography project.

1.5 Co-contribution

The research investigates how co-contribution between the Tenggerese and the photographer can reduce overbearing opinions of either party in the research and construct a shared visualisation of the best way to offer truthful representation of the ritualistic practices of the Tenggerese. Since co-contribution is an important process in this research, the participants are crucially needed to offer their views on said practices in the photography project. This is achieved by reviewing existing literature and understanding how photo-artists visualise, construct, and represent ritualistic practices through their favoured medium. Further

references are drawn from articles and media publications. I also explore ways to further develop the practice of documentary photography by investigating how other photographers conduct their photography projects, and how co-contributory methods between participant and photographer can improve the truthful representation of the participants through documentary photography.

Based on the above, these questions are addressed: 1) how do documentary photographers approach, visualise and represent ritualistic practices in their works?; 2) what are the critical components present, in order to adequately visualise and represent ritualistic practices of a community?; and 3) how can the above questions contribute to better representation of a community's ritualistic practices? The first goal is to identify different methods used by photographers, so as to extrapolate an enhanced process in the treatment of documenting photography within the context of ritualistic ceremonies. To achieve this, the study identifies key areas or components in their methods and map it onto a matrix to analyse recurrent traits in their methodology.

1.6 Practical Component

The practical component of the research documents the last bastion of Hinduism in Java, Indonesia, known as the Tenggerese. They form a small surviving Hindu community on the eastern part of Java. The Tenggerese are believed to be the remnants of the former Hindu Majapahit empire and form less than 2% of the total population of Java (BPS, 2010; Hefner, 1990; UNSD, 2010). They retain traditional ritualistic practices which have been in existence since the beginning of the Majapahit kingdom. For example, the Tenggerese still practice kuda kepeng, a ritualistic dance where the performers go into trance to show possession by ancestral spirits. These traditions are gradually disappearing, as they are not accepted in a predominantly

Muslim Indonesia. Further, the community is at constant environmental risk because their village is built near an active volcano known as Mount Bromo. Mount Bromo plays a central role in the culture and heritage of the Tenggerese even though it is an environmental threat to the community's way of life. At this point in time, the Tenggerese continue to build their lives on the fringe of the caldera surrounding the Bromo-Tengger-Semeru National Park, amidst gradual socio-economic changes and progressive Islamisation.

I spent around 60 days with the villagers of Ngadisari, Indonesia. The fieldwork provides a wealth of information not attainable from literature review. The sensory encounter, in terms of sight, sound, smell and touch, is not something which can be experienced by textual narratives. During my stay, I learned the complexity of information-gathering when I found that informants provided conflicting information that prompted further analysis. The investigation takes into account Hindu religious practices. It includes the geographic landmark of Mount Bromo, an active volcano, as many ritualistic ceremonies like the Kasada and Melasti are performed on or around the volcanic mountain.

The practical component was undertaken by integrating 1) the theories from literature review, 2) a comparative review of the approaches adopted by photographers who have conducted work on photographing ritualistic practices, 3) 'participant observation' and contribution, and 4) my own art practise, experience and response to the Tenggerese community under study. To visualise the community, I review references materials from academic journals to equip myself with information relating to the community. Upon gaining fundamental knowledge of the community, I proceeded with fieldwork to acquire further information regarding the Tenggerese and their environment. After establishing directed cordial relationships with the Tenggerese by actively showing interest in their way of life through making efforts to learn their dialect, having communal meals together with them, participating in local festivals or celebrations, donning their local traditional attire and

consistently engaging them in casual conversations, I begin dialogues with the community leaders and residents. The information collected from these conversations are recorded in a journal and reviewed to identify inconsistencies, as well as incongruous information.

After discussing with the participants the kinds of ritualistic events that are important to them, an approach was formulated to visualise the photograph project of the research. Once the photography segment was completed, the photographs underwent a photo-elicitation process wherein the Tenggerese were shown a series of photographs to elicit reflections from them. In iteration, photo-elicitation refers to the use of photographs to induce responses during interview which aims to uncover participants' memories, behavior, viewpoints, beliefs, and meanings (Douglas Harper, 2002; Prosser, 1998). This is to better understand how the community makes sense of their lives (Bigando, 2013; Douglas Harper, 2002).

At the final stage of the photography project, the participants were invited to select a series of photographs that they deem best represents them. This approach supports the co-contributory process proposed by this study, to minimise two issues concerning reflexivity and representation. First, it reduces the potential effect of 'social desirability biasness' where the participants only want to present positive impressions about the community (Furnham, 1986). The theory of 'social desirability biasness' is when the respondent provides bias answers that makes the individual or community appear more favourable to the researcher. This process can lead to a more transparent outcome of the research process. Second, it also curtails any preconceived notions or misconceptions the photographer have regarding the participants. Through this process, the photography project can achieve a more impartial representation by mitigating bias responses from both the participant and photographer.

This method helps me to answer part of the research questions by inferring where the Tenggerese situate themselves in terms of their ritualistic practices. It also improves the participatory role of the Tenggerese in this project by providing them with an opportunity to

expand beyond traditional forms of solemn verbal interviews between researcher and research subjects (Campos & Dollinger, 1998). Further, I think this process creates a more conducive environment for the participant to feel at ease, as compared to a formal verbal interview where there can be more tension. With a relaxing environment, I observe that the participant is more forthcoming in discussing his or her thoughts.

1.7 Limitations of Study

This research had several aspects that potentially challenged the study. First, there may be errors in translation between English and the Tengger Javanese dialect. These come in the form of both oral and written documentations where conversations and literature review might result in ‘errors in translation’. To mitigate this issue, the translations are vetted by at least two native speakers who are also conversant in the English language.

Second, the appointed Tenggerese individuals who are responsible in selecting the images that best represent the Tenggerese may not in actuality represent the opinion of the entire community. They are nominated by the village representative. However, through literature review, I learned that most community studies cannot engage every single individual. Often, a particular group is selected to represent the community. As a result, the study relied on the judgement of the vice Dukun to select the photographs that best represent Tenggerese ritualistic practices.

Third, the research on Tenggerese ritualistic practices can only be based on the time when I was present during the research period from 2017 to 2019. These ritualistic events are suggested by the participants as important because not only are they passed down by their ancestors, but also symbolises their identity as Hindus and embodies their millennia-old cultural heritage. The goal of the research is to explore the process of representing the

Tenggerese through photographic practice and co-contribution. This is achieved by investigating literature and suggesting an enhanced process to better approach representations of specific communities with photography, through the use of photo-elicitation and ethnographic methods. It is not meant to be a project to record the entire ritualistic practices of the Tenggerese community, which will be beyond the scope of this study.

Fourth, the image-making process is subject to the photographer's choice of approach. For this project, colour digital image is primarily chosen. The choice of using colour images lies in the intent to reveal information related to the Tenggerese and their environment. Since their homes are built in high altitudes, very often they will see an overcast or cloudy sky. The greyish-blue tones in the colour images accentuate the ambiance feel of the Tenggerese's misty and cold environment. The colour images also aim to create element separation. Many of the images show lush greenery in the surroundings. Having colour images in this case, helps create a subject separation from the greenish background. For example, the subject and background separation informs the viewer that the Tenggerese lives in a fertile land. Only under certain circumstances, like when shooting the kuda kepang dances in very dim light, black and white images are used to portray the morbid mood of dancers going into trance and also to reduce digital noise created during low-light photography.

The images contain a combination landscape, portrait and street photography. Since the terrain plays an important role in the lives of the community, the landscape images show how the Tenggerese utilise their land for organising ritualistic ceremonies, for farming, to offer hospitality services and also to show the vulnerability of the people who build their lives around an active volcano. On a more intimate level, with respect to the lives of the community in a ritualistic aspect, environmental portraits are used to capture the Tenggerese's in their typical environment. For instance, their home, workplace, and surroundings generally highlight the participants' life. Lastly, candid approach is applied on most of these images showing the

Tenggerese celebrating their festivals, conducting ceremonies and rituals. The aim is to photograph the participants going about their activity without being aware of the photographer. This enables the photographer to capture the participants in their most natural state, without being conscious of their photographs being taken.

1.8 Justification to Conduct Research

I have been a photography practitioner since 1988. In addition to having years of experience in photographing people of different nationalities, I am sensitive to the cultural differences of how people respond to being photographed. Although I had the support of the participants to conduct this photography project, I was aware of the discomfort that my participants may encounter when being photographed.

Before undertaking this research project, I undertook preliminary studies that included a review of literature on visual anthropology, the Tenggerese, and works from photographers who engage in the ritualistic representations of specific communities. This initial study created a basis to inform the research project. An expert consultation in regard to Hindu culture was undertaken with Professor Robert Hefner of the Boston University, who is an authority on Javanese Hinduism, and the author of *Hindu Javanese: Tengger Tradition and Islam*, one of the main textual references of the research.

A preliminary fieldtrip was undertaken to begin informal conversations to understand the current-day Tenggerese living in the upper slopes of village Ngadisari. One of the main goals was to connect with the village representative, Pak Supoyo [a.k.a. Pak Poyo], to inform him of the study and to seek his support for the research. Through local connections, an arrangement was made to meet with him. Pak Poyo agreed to support the research after the details of the study were explained. He also proposed that I meet with the leaders overseeing

religious rituals to better understand the main practices of the village. The preliminary fieldtrip informed me about the importance of talking to local community members, as they offered an emic perspective of their community. The information learned and gathered through these informal conversations helped the research in establishing how the community sees their situation within their own specific context. Through this, I constructed a general understanding of the current circumstances in Ngadisari. However, further studies and conversations were needed to collect more information to inform the research.

CHAPTER 2. BACKGROUND STUDY

This research involves using ethnographic methods to explore Tenggerese ritualistic practices to support the photography project. It is crucial to look at how photography is applied in ethnographic work and in what ways photography can deliver truthful representations of research participants. This chapter reviews photography's role in visual research and identifies approaches adopted by documentary photographers that are best suited for this research. The findings from this chapter was used to guide the development of the photography project.

2.1 Photography In Visual Research

Researchers have acknowledged photography as a research method. Scholars (Poignant, 1992; Street, 1992) have re-looked at ethnographic imagery in colonial-era photo postcards and re-examined undetected ethnological data from historical photographs (Vokes & Banks, 2010). Since the 1990s, there has been a growing interest to revisit such images with the belief that they can be read beyond the photographers' intentions, to provide historical material of the people or places illustrated in the photos (Vokes & Banks, 2010). As a result, this has directed a chain of discussions on the role of photographs in historical narratives and ethnographic archives (Werbner, 1998), and the information we can obtain from different historical ethnographic images. By doing so, researchers also prompted a similar questioning of photographic archives – regardless of whether these photographs are official records, personal, or accidental. Till today, scholars have continued to debate and reshape anthropological studies of all forms of historical photography.

Regardless of whether these photographs are shot with a candid or staged approach, they record moments in individual and communal lives which can provide information for

anthropological projects (Vokes & Banks, 2010). Photographs from ethnographic projects have been reinterpreted or reused since their creation. This also validates the importance of photography in documenting people and communities. Through a co-contribution process, the Tenggerese selected images, that they thought best represented their practices, from a pool of images produced by me. The images do not attempt to replicate their reality per se but serve as an archive that best depict Tenggerese ritualistic practices.

2.2 Visual Methods In Ethnographic Fieldwork

Aside from investigating whether photography persists as a credible medium for documentary work, one of the aims of this research is to answer a key question of whether a more comprehensive process can be constructed to better document and represent ritualistic practices. In responding to this question, it is imperative to understand what constitutes giving voice to research participants. Ethnographic fieldwork has been performed by anthropologists for decades to understand the communities they are studying. According to Angrosino (Angrosino, 2007), there are three characteristic of ethnographic fieldwork. First, it is conducted on-site or within the environment in which the participants live. This allows the researcher to observe how the participants live and respond to the world around them especially when it takes time for a wide spectrum of phenomena to surface and be observed (Jeffrey & Troman, 2004). Similarly, living with the Tenggerese over a period of time helped me to understand and explain social events in terms of their relationship and outlook towards such events. Second, it is a personalized process since the researcher takes the position of both the observer and participant in the lives of the research participants. There are many ways in which researcher bias can affect the study. It can be brought upon by the researcher's values, opinions and experiences and can influence the creation of data gathering tools, the collection of data,

and the analysing and reporting of data. The subjectivity and/or reflexivity of the researcher are known to influence the result of a study.

However, researcher reflexivity can be minimized by keeping an open-mind and encouraging the participants to openly communicate their thoughts. During my field work, I initiated casual conversations with the Tenggerese to encourage them to speak openly about the way they view their ritualistic practices. By encouraging the Tenggerese to voice their thoughts, the process also minimized any preconceived notions I had regarding the Tenggerese and encouraged me to have an open mind when recording information. Third, ethnographers gathers information in multiple ways over an extended period of time. Aside from participant observation, this research took the form of interviews, dialogues and casual conversation. The information I collected during fieldwork was recorded in a journal on a daily basis. This information helped me to identify consistencies and irregularities regarding the views of the Tenggerese.

2.2.1 Digital technologies as new methods. Sarah Pink (Isacc Edgar, 2004) supports the use of photography as an effective tool for research fieldwork and further suggests that ethnographers are adopting new forms of visual methods by embracing digital technologies to complement traditional textual narratives in ethnography. As innovations in digital media become readily available, anthropologists have devised new methods and practices in which photography plays an important role. These include digital photographic images, images in e-books and hypermedia in the form of social media, websites, and museum installations. Pink takes reference from research on how the use of photography can be employed as a method through which knowledge in ethnography is produced and characterized (Banks, 2001; Ian Edgar, 2004; E. Edwards, 2001; Elizabeth Edwards, 2002; S. Pink, 2001).

The use of digital media promotes the ease of information transfer, dissemination, and

the availability of ethnographic information. Pink suggests how new visual methods of research and presentation can have stronger roles in ethnographical studies in general and calls for a closer relook at historical images to investigate obscure evidence or information that might have been unintelligible previously. Pink's discourse supports the importance of photography.

2.2.2 Holistic Approach. Pink also argues that developments in the area of ethnography that have materialized necessitate renewed studies on key areas such as reflexivity, collaboration with interlocutors, ethics, and innovative technologies (Banks, 2001; S. Pink, 2001). Amongst these, visual ethnography is crucial in supplementing textual narrations of ethnographic methodologies. Drawing from this understanding, this research uses photography to supplement a written investigation on the Tenggerese so as to enhance the documentation process of the community. It also examines a co-contribution method to find a better way to document Tenggerese ritualistic practices.

Following these developments in ethnographic methods, is the need to review methods embraced by early proponents and adopters of visual methods (Bateson & Mead, 1962; Collier & Collier, 1999). During the 1970s and 1980s, the purpose of ethnography was descriptive, focused on providing textual information and often carried a strong emphasis from the ethnographer's point of view (Lecompte, 2002). Following the introduction of visual methods, we now have an additional layer of information at the sensory level to complement textual narratives. Ethnographic textual narratives are subject to an ethnographer's written interpretation of the phenomenon and limited to linguistic vocabulary. Photography, on the other hand, offers information beyond language.

This development in ethnographic methods also opened doors to new modes of research that invites co-contribution from the people of study, changing the ways in which ethnographic texts are normally narrated. In addition to traditional visual methods such as photography,

drawing, video and narrative texts, Pink suggests that hypermedia can be used to incorporate visuals into contemporary anthropological research methods (S. Pink, 2004). She suggests that anthropology need not solely rely on texts and narratives as the main tool for representation since texts may encounter challenges concerning the expression of phenomena in words. These challenges may be answered/solved/countered by first considering anthropology and its illustrations as not exclusively verbal but visual as well. She (S. Pink, 2004) also suggests that anthropologists should consider adopting a multilinear approach by employing different mediums to narrate a study rather than relying on just a linear track when conducting fieldwork. This signifies a constraint when documentary works are solely based on textual narratives. By including photography and combining the use of mediums, anthropological representations can be more holistic.

2.2.3 Participant involvement. Gemma Orobitg Canal, an anthropologist, has been performing fieldwork in the Pumé village of Riecito in Venezuela when she met Catherine de Clippel, a documentary producer of a French German channel known as ARTE. Through this chance encounter, Clippel introduce to Canal the idea of complementing her field work with photography which later became an important part of her work (Orobitg Canal, 1998). Before embarking on photographing the Pumé, she textually documented the socio-political and environmental confines within which the Pumé subsists. With a clear context in mind she purposefully conducts her research by: collectively producing images from both researcher and participants (Sarah Pink, 1996). The participants produce images to illustrate their own culture, and then discuss their thoughts and opinions on these images through photo-elicitation (Banks, 2001; Douglas Harper, 2002). Through her research, Canal describes the Pumé as a people who have a bleak outlook on their future (Mitrani, 1973; Petrullo, 1969). The Pumé, being largely

marginalized by economic and political circumstances, have capitulated to the harshness of reality.

According to Canal, the Pumé people have given up believing that they can continue to survive on their homeland. For them, daytime is filled with disappointments. They look forward to the night. It is during the night that they celebrate the Tohé ceremony. The Tohé begins at dusk and ends at dawn when the first light appears across the sky. Men and women, youngsters and adults participate in the ceremony four to five times a week. Throughout the night, they chant to connect with gods and ancestors. The chanting helps them to communicate with mythical beings. The Pumé people believes that during the Tohé ceremony, people are cured from sickness and life conflicts are resolved. According to the Pumé people, the Tohé help them to live and to survive. It serves as a temporary detachment from the unkind reality of their lives. (Orobitg Canal, 1998).

From this study, the Pumé people help Canal to support her understanding of the people, by contributing information about themselves. The information helped Canal to triangulate the data she collected on her own accord or through participant observations. However, the information is analysed and interpreted by Canal. The Pumé people have no opportunity to voice their opinion on the final outcome of the photography project or how they want to be represented in photographs. This means, there is an opportunity for further review on how my study can engage the Tenggere people in further contributing to the photography project.

The choice of visual method is crucial to the context of fieldwork (Banks, 2001), in deciding a method to photograph the gloomy condition of the Pumé people, Canal uses black and white photos to illustrate wakefulness while using colour photos to represent the world of dreams. The black and white photos can create a mood of bleakness and solemnity about the reality the Pumé are facing while colour photos depict cheerfulness and joy. Canals stresses that her choice of presentation might have an eventual outcome on how the Pumé are being

represented. In order to have an objective view she includes the Pumé as interlocutors for her visual representation of them. These include narratives and photos taken by the Pumé. She also draws reference from earlier visual records by her predecessor, Roberto Lizarralde. In combining the various sources Canal formulates a logical and inclusive approach to using photographs in her field of study. Canal acknowledges that even though photographs alone cannot replace textual narratives, she argues that they can inspire new narrations (Orobitg Canal, 2014).

Similarly, the choice of visual method employed for this research is equally important to the outcome of this study. The choice of the approach and process was a result of preliminary investigations regarding the Tenggerese. The primary source of information was derived from Anthropology Professor Robert Hefner's book *Hindu Javanese: Tengger Tradition and Islam*, where he gave a detailed account of the Tenggerese's socio-cultural practices and their potentially unfavourable religious predicament amongst a Muslim-majority nation. He also dispelled the notion that practicing animism and other millennia-old traditions like trance dancing or kuda kepanang should be seen as primitive. The research also reviewed James Minahan's book on *Ethnic Groups of South Asia and the Pacific: An Encyclopaedia* 2012, as well as other journals and text reference. However, amid all these academic and scholarly textual references, there were extremely little visual references or images to depict the Tenggerese and their ritualistic practices, of which part of this research also endeavours to resolve by providing image reference. This was achieved by incorporating information from academic references, reviewing approaches of photographers working on this area, designing a methodology matrix to approach the photography project and producing images relating Tengger ritualistic practices that the Tenggerese themselves could endorse.

2.3 Objective Representation in Documentary Photography

Pictorialism dominated the photography scene in the late 19th and early 20th century (Daum, Ribemont, & Prodger, 2006). It is an aesthetic movement to make photographs look like paintings, calls on us to look at the subjective aspect of photographic practice. The emphasis on objectivity prevails even today. This issue remains at the centre of discussion even now, while photographs may motivate, suggest and persuade, the presence of manipulated images does not seem to challenge our acceptance of the objectivity of the photograph. The camera manufacturers design equipment that shapes and constructs photographic images to suggest a reality that often opposes our real world experience (Davey, 1992). Nevertheless, we continue to see that photography is somehow incapable of deceiving us. This leads us to acknowledge the need to situate photography's role in presenting truthful representation of peoples and phenomena.

2.3.1 Photo archives. Photography undertakes the role of providing historical visual archive of past events. However, the ability of photography to truthfully chronicle events and personalities has been constantly challenged in documentary and journalistic works. It is interesting to note that even art historians and critics have found difficulty in ascertaining the objectivity of photography works in providing truthful information since there are no system of methods, relatable styles or definitive techniques to characterize this field (Wells, 2015). This leads to a constant debate on whether photographs can be taken seriously as a source for reliable evidence, amidst public outcry over inaccurate representations of certain events in media. The concern was accentuated by old archived photographs produced during the nineteenth century that were meant to provide evidence and archival purpose (Solomon-Godeau, 1990), but ended-up being propagandistic in nature. As such, photography was still

questioned as a reliable medium remained when endeavoring to represent phenomena and people.

2.3.2 Sociological viewpoint. Furthermore, prominent sociologist Howard Becker suggests that photography has been made to assume whichever role that the society within which it exists has bestowed upon it. In other words, it is simply a social construction (Becker, 1995) and potentially subject to differences in approach adopted by different photographers. Paul A. Boghossian explains that a social construct can be described as something created by the will of social selves. In short, it is something tangible or intangible, created through consensus and choice by a specific community. A distinct factor of a social construct is that it does not occur naturally (Boghossian, 2001) and can have different meanings and purposes for different people as a result of different interpretations, of which this research endeavors to minimize.

This view also reinforces the research's acknowledgement that objective photography is not realizable, and biasness is inevitable. Becker goes on to suggest that as a social construction, the meaning and function of photography are directly derived from historical context and institutional convenience. As such, he argues that photography projects, like documentary works, do not possess any general traits or features but are subjected to the purpose of why they are created and how the resultant work is applied to achieve an eventual objective. Before that, the nature of a photograph is neutral and can have different applications depending on its purpose. Therefore, it can be deduced that a documentary photographer cannot produce quality work, without the contribution and involvement of the documentary participants. To circumvent this, the research approaches the photography project in a way whereby the final photographs representing the Tenggerese are selected by them in a co-constructed outcome relying on the both the Tenggerese and the photographer.

2.3.3 Photographer's reflexivity. Becker's argument supports the view that every photography project reflects the photographer's own socio-cultural inclination. In other words, the photographer's subjectivity is apparent in every photograph and renders the objective value of any documentary works highly questionable. As a result, if a documentary project takes a linear process wherein the photographer dictates the entire outcome of the project, then the relative subjectivity of the project is skewed solely towards the photographer's vision. That is why this research aims at taking a different approach in order to avoid marginalizing the Tenggerese and rendering them invisible (Ritchie, 2014). The approach chosen in this research consists in forming a partnership between the participants and the photographer in such a way that they all contribute to the final project outcome (Smith, 1999). This is achieved by first explaining the purpose of the research to the participants, then giving them the opportunity to decide what will best represent them by vetting and selecting photos taken by the photographer.

2.3.4 Ethnographic style. In order to offer a more enhanced approach to documentary photography projects aimed at representing phenomena and communities, Becker (Becker, 1995) proposes that the subject should be approached with an ethnographic style. By ethnographic style, the author means 'participant observation' methods in obtaining insider perspectives and using photography as a mean to elicit participant's views on specific issues in research projects. The photographer can apply ethnographic style to build knowledge with the specific aim of creating a more precise visual narrative of any specific community (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). In the same way, this research applies 'participant observation' methods in understanding the ritualistic practices of the Tenggerese in Ngadisari, in order to visualize the final photography works. The work should also acknowledge the reflexivity of the documentarian and his or her artistic intent (Becker, 1974), or how the photographer intends to photograph the participants. This can be executed through the

photographer's decision to either portray the participants in portraits or approach them in a candid manner. Additionally, because different photographers can approach the same subject with different perspectives, Becker argues that every photographer, be it a journalist, portrait photographer, or documentary photographer, is adept in their skills by means of specialization. He opined that these photographers who specialize in their areas have always had an artistic intent from the beginning of their photography. While artistic value is not always apparent in photographs that depict mundane daily activities, it should be acknowledged. This acknowledgement is reflected throughout the research, which enhances the researcher's own art practice.

2.3.5 Critical components. With the earlier-discussed concepts on reflexivity and ethnographic style, it is possible to identify the critical components that can lead to better representations of what these documentary photography projects aim to achieve. The commonly recurring components that emerge are period, place, purpose, and rigour in dealing with and understanding the subject matter. With these main features identified, it can be interpreted that accurate representation of any event or community fundamentally requires specificities of time, space, intent and depth of knowledge of the subject matter and context. In the matter of time, Beaumont Newhall argues that a photograph should be accompanied by information of the time it is created, in order to historically position the image itself (Newhall, 1938). He further argues that the location of the photography is also important in giving context to the photograph's environment and helps to visualise the final work.

Newhall proposes that a series of photographs should be created as this would add depth and breadth to, and would provide a more complete coverage of, a documentary project. The indication of time and place in documentary projects can also support future studies just as László Kürti's photographs in postcards serve as historical archives (László, 2004). The

aforementioned is an important aspect of the research because it posits the importance of establishing an understanding of space and time on ritualistic practices, since those evolve over time (Hamberg, 1991). Without a clear indication of when or where these practices took place, it is difficult to conduct any comparative analysis in the future. However, the study notes that textual information is subject to discrepancies and may distort the context of a documentary project.

2.3.6 Adequacy. Despite the importance of time and space, photographers are often confronted with the notion of adequacy. In other words, to produce a comprehensive study of the subject or participant that accurately depicts them, a critical consideration must be made on how much time is needed for the documentary project. To circumvent such limitations, the intent of the study was defined in order to compartmentalize the different areas of the project.

I spent approximately 60 days with the Tenggerese. Each day, I spend about 8 hours engaging them in dialogues and informal conversations. Roderick Coover, an ethnographer, explains that living with his participants on extended stays helps him to observe the environment and activities of his participants. This provides with him a strong understanding of how his participants perceive events and interpret phenomena surrounding them (S. Pink, 2001). Spending time with my participants has given me the opportunity to alleviate any sense of distrust and suspicion created by the presence of a researcher. Furthermore, certain phenomenon may not be obvious in the beginning and takes time to surface before they can be observed. Thus, the longer the time spent with the Tenggerese during fieldwork, the more information I gathered.

2.4 Factuality And Legitimacy

As photography is the medium applied in the practical part of the research, it was necessary to rationalize the significance of photography as an important medium in contributing to social constructions. The arrival of photography has challenged the conventions of how we see things and brought about new visual cultures (Berger, 2012). One of the critical visual languages forged from the invention of this medium is embodied in the form of documentary-style photography. The images produced from this genre articulate the importance of photography. The medium is assumed to authenticate and circumstantiate any written narratives of certain social aspects of life or parts of the globe by providing visual attestation. Likewise, this study embraces the notion that photography is a suitable medium to create credible documentary works of ritualistic practices when being used in parallel with the framework of this research. Despite numerous debates on the validity of photographic images as a vessel of truth, the notion of using photographs as credible proof in both scientific methods and law enforcement remain in common use. It is also for the same reason that photographs are still being published and consumed by different users (Lockemann, 2005). With this in sight, the research adopts the view that photography can attain a degree of factuality and legitimacy in documentary works. In addition, it can serve as a powerful archive of humanity's past in such a way whereby a viewer can behold past events and create an impression through photographs without having to physically experience the phenomenon (Kolodny, 1978).

In many ways, photography possesses the capacity to demonstrate and promote the awareness and understanding of people who live in other parts of the world. By understanding visuality and the perspective of other communities, the audience is able to discern how these communities' can affect other societies, across seas and oceans. This awareness can ignite public debate and activism for a social cause (Ferdous, 2014). Likewise, the research brings

awareness to the thinning ritualistic practices of the Hindus in Tengger, in particular the village of Ngadisari (UNSD, 2010).

2.4.1 Challenging Photographic Truth. Although the objective of this research is not to debate the truth of photographic images, it is necessary to highlight the subjectivity of this concept. With respect to the above, one can infer that photography as a vital social instrument needs to deliver a certain element of ‘truth’, in order to validate it. However, this may not always be the case.

Figure 3a. is an image that won the World Press Photo of the Year in 2007. The image

(c) Spencer Platt, 2006
2007, World Press Photo of the Year singles, World Press Photo of the Year
Figure 3a. "Affluent Lebanese drive down the street to look at a destroyed neighborhood 15 August 2006 in southern Beirut, Lebanon"

was captioned, “Affluent Lebanese drive down the street to look at a destroyed neighbourhood 15 August 2006 in southern Beirut, Lebanon”. This image belongs to a series of documentary photographs taken by Spencer Platt in Beirut. It drew a furore of criticisms because the caption incorrectly represented the actual phenomenon

(Ghattas, 2007).

The protagonists in the image are not affluent youths who went on war tourism. In fact, they are residents of the ‘bombed’ area. Platt had likely assumed they were affluent youngsters due to their glamorous dressing. One of the protagonists in the image commented, “You have to remember that in Lebanon, everyone tries to look glamorous, the poor and the rich. Appearances are very important”. The driver of the car in the image remarked, “My problem with the winning picture is that it emphasizes some of the misconceptions people have - that it would be unusual for people who look like us to be in the area, they expect the area to be full of veiled women, to be dirty and impoverished”.

The incident highlighted that the concept of truth is subject to an individual's idea of reality. In other words, it is unlikely for photography to deliver truthful representations of phenomena as it is subject to the photographer's reflexivity. Photographers interpret the things they see in accordance to how they understand the world. This reinforces Becker's view that the socio-cultural background of a photographer has an impact on the way he/she perceives what is true.

The selection of photographs for public viewership in terms of photo curation is also subjected to manipulation. In the case of O. J. Simpson, a famous NFL football star, who was on trial for murder of his wife. While the trial in ongoing, Simpson's case appeared in the Newsweek Magazine. The image in the front cover of the magazine was originally taken from a police archive [Figure 3b. in Appendix A]. The photograph in Newsweek showed Simpson with a neutral skin tone and there was not noticeable modification to it [Figure 3c. in Appendix A].

In contrast, the front cover of Times Magazine revealed that Simpson's facial tone was drastically darkened [Figure 3d. in Appendix A] to give a 'sinister' appearance (Carmody, 1994). In a way, the magazine convicted Simpson even before the trial was concluded. The cover image can potentially evoke negative emotions from the public against Simpson. Eventually, Simpson was cleared off his murder charges due to the lack of evidence.

Becker suggests that photographs are created with a specific purpose and objective. In this case, the editors from Times Magazine used a manipulated photograph to influence viewers' perception of O. J. Simpson. This incident is an example that curated images, regardless of whether they appear in mass media or a gallery, may not provide trustworthy representation of reality.

In a more recent case, the winning image [Figure 3e.] of the Hamdan International Photography Award [HIPA], was found to be staged scene for travel photographers (Zhang,

2019). According to HIPA, the winning image describes “[H]is photo documented an intense humanitarian moment... The feelings of a Vietnamese mother whose speech disorder did not prevent her from feeling hopeful and evoking a sense of strength for her children.” The photographer, Edwin Ong, claimed that the image was the result of an unexpected and “unplanned” moment.

However, Street Photo BD Magazine founder Ab Rashid shared a behind-the-scenes image [Figure 3f.] that seems to have been taken at around the same time as the winning image. As observed from Figure 3f., it is clear that a crowd of photographers was gathered around the same mother. This means that Edwin Ong’s image was potentially just one of a large number of nearly identical photos that emerged from the portrait session.

Source: PetaPixel

Figure 3f.

In photography, the tension between truthful representation of an event and reality is often illustrated in situations similar to this incident. If Edwin Ong took the winning image believing that it was not staged, it is a result of his reflexive assessment of the situation. As such, a photographer’s reflexivity can potentially influence his/her judgment on truthfulness.

2.4.2 Constructed interpretations. A primary understanding of ‘objective truth’ is essential because although perception starts from sensory organs, we interpret this perception using knowledge attained through cognitive processes retained by means of memory, cues or prompts (R. Sekuler; R. Blake). In other words, a photograph may be seen as a system of signs with multiple concrete and constructed interpretations (Tagg, 1988). This issue of multiple interpretations, that can result in photography being an inadequate medium for documentary work, is one of the challenges that the research aims to address. Different interpretations arise

from authors in literature, reference materials, or researcher-photographer and participants. Subsequently it is necessary to formulate a balanced outcome that takes into account the contributions of both the Tengerese and me as the researcher, thus minimising any reflexive biasness from both parties. Barthes suggests that on one hand, a newspaper photograph is akin to an object subjected to professional media treatment. On the other hand, it is being received, perceived, read and consumed by readers and their own connotations and interpretations, thus forming multiple meanings to a single photograph (Barthes, 1977). Since the idea of interpretation and representation is a contestable concept, the goal of deducing an approach to photographing the ritualistic practices of the Tengerese in community of Ngadisari through this research, is a desirable outcome. Before we discuss this approach, the following paragraph takes a deeper look at the criticisms on photography.

2.4.3 Constant scrutiny. Although photographs are casually accepted by pedestrian viewers as reliable evidence, they may not enjoy the same acceptance when viewed by other groups of people like critics and individuals who are adept in visual literacy. There are notable limitations, and these limits gravitate from the inability to show the precursor to the issues that a photograph or image is trying to represent. Often, photographs only show the consequence but not the reason for the problem. For example, Edward Burstynsky's didactic book on Australian Minescapes triggered widespread attention and discussion on humanity's seemingly perpetual hunger for Mother Earth's resources. However, the paradox which was not revealed is the fact that we continue to unearth minerals to make devices like mobile phones, and since each of these require more than a hundred types of minerals to be dug from the earth, it would be most ironic if a conservationist is using a device like the camera to promote conservatism (U.S.Geological.Survey, 2018). As such, the goal to document in order to show and create awareness seems short-changed and incongruous.

2.4.4 Ethnographic authority. The interest in art through ethnographic research began since the late nineteenth century (Kelly, 2016). Artists like Paul Gauguin relocated to the Marquesas Islands and then Tahiti in the 1890s to produce art. Interestingly, he was thought to have gone ‘native’. Many less-known cultures became objects of curiosity and exploration. The more ‘savage’, inaccessible, and unknown the community was, the more fascinating the culture was to the Europeans. Along with a fascination for ‘primitivism’ came a Western-manufactured aesthetic not derived from indigenous owners. Many indigenous art forms were given a facelift to satisfy western aesthetics, sometimes in the name of fashion. In other words, there were no acknowledgements or recognition for the original owners. Such practices were prevalent during the colonial era. It is a concern when the artist’s experience with the communities he works with ends-up as an exoticized/exploitative story with no ethnographic foundation.

Kwon Miwon (Miwon, 2000) cautions us on the dangers of overvaluing ‘experience’ as the main epistemological determinant when producing knowledge in anthropological enquiries. She explicates that in recent years, using approaches like participatory presence, building rapport with people, and concreteness in perception have been the dominant functions in providing evidence and asserting ethnographic authority in anthropological enquiries. However, in critical ethnography, the notion of experience and interpretations are tied together. As more and more artists adopt these approaches in their practice, stimulated by popular media emphasising personal experience, she raises doubts against the quality of knowledge produced by artist projects.

Nevertheless, there is an increasing interest in anthropology for contemporary art. It is triggered by a problematisation of the different ways to convey ethnographic findings and insights. The ‘interest’ is also known as the ‘sensory turn’ in anthropology and ethnographic research (S. Pink, 2009) and is characterized by anthropologists who collaborate with artists

who create projects that generate anthropological insights, or art projects base on ethnographic research (Rutten, van. Dienderen, & Soetaert, 2013). This is a stark departure from anthropology's self-imposed restriction of visual expression to text-based models and implies that the ethnographic turn in contemporary art runs in tandem with a sensory turn in anthropology and ethnographic research.

Perhaps to circumvent this, Joanna Sherer states in her paper, *Ethnographic Photography in Anthropological Research* (Sherer, 1995), that the research methodology for ethnographic photography in an anthropological enquiry should make an analysis of older photos created by other authors; study the intent of the photographer; review how the images are use later; and study in depth the research participants (Hockings, 1995). She argues that photographs are valuable to scholars when they are created in a series. She proposes that the context of each image must be explicit. They should include who, what, when, why, where and authorship in order to establish the photographs as scholarly evidence. Clive Barnett (Barnett, 2005) carries this further by suggesting that in order to understand the community under study, it is necessary to identify their identity by instituting it in relation to other identities, through a continuous process of identification and differentiation from other identities. Though this process offers knowledge, Barnett defers to Cavell's view that 'acknowledgment' of the participants is paramount to minimise any inclinations to cultural biasness (Cavell, 2002). Acknowledgement in this sense goes beyond recognition, and can relate to the acknowledgement of suffering, sympathy, or just listening.

It appears that the approach to photographic representations needs to be revised and the method refined. However, the research does not suggest solutions to the issues concerning the authentication of presumed-authentic photographic images but rather, in a dialectic manner, to investigate and propose an enhanced process to improve and best represent Tenggerese ritualistic practices through photography.

2.5 Review of Photographers' Works

This section surveys the approaches utilised by photographers who document religious practices. This survey helped rationalise the potential for an enhanced process to document and represent ritualistic practices. It also identified strengths and weaknesses in these approaches and contributed to the construction of a methodology matrix through the extraction of critical components and positive recurring traits of the surveyed photographers. This enhanced process, along with its critical components, helped me visualise and represent the ritualistic practices of the Tengerese.

Jan Locus. The photographer who travels extensively to capture Christian devotions, provides the viewer with a glimpse of how the religion is practice in different parts of the world. In his book “Devoted”, Locus attempts to illustrate the different expressions illuminating Christian faith exhibited by pilgrims from Mexico, Poland and Spain (Lenculture, 2018). The collection of photos in “Devoted” are the result of his 15 years of travelling to produce documentary works. Locus’ intent is clear in that he hoped to portray how Christian faith is performed in different parts of the world. In his approach, he used natural lighting. Most photographs were shot in a candid or spontaneous fashion with outstanding portrayals of facial emotions from the believers. Drawing reference from Locus’ book, he was able to capture some of these ritualistic practices but there appear to be little to no interaction between him and his subjects. Moreover, he did not mention how long he stayed with each of the community. The absence of a specific timestamp of when the documentation was performed may lead the viewer to mull over which period the photographs were made (Locus, Huet, Simpson, & Bogaert, 2012). The time factor is important as ritualistic practices changes over time due to modification in doctrines. For example, in the Catholic church, the distribution of the Holy Communion used to be performed only by males called communion ministers. However, many

Catholic churches now have women as communion ministers as well. His works did not explain the differences in practices embraced by different communities and therefore, they cannot be considered as fully representative of Christianity. This may mislead viewers as his efforts to document Christianity fall short on illustrating the diversity in practices existing in Christianity. In other words, his work offers a general impression of Christianity but does not adequately provide any specific context in his photo documentation. The documentary project would have served better if there was more information provided along with the photographs, in order to deliver a more informative documentary project. However, Locus' photographs offer viewers a good impression of the environment where the worshippers conduct their rituals and a general glimpse of how Christianity is practiced in different countries. If this is his intention, he has achieved it successfully.

Thomas Roma. Thomas Roma produced 2 books documenting religion. His first book, "Sanctuary", was the result of 16 years of effort capturing church buildings in Brooklyn. The images did not provide any further accompanying information on religious structures, nor Christian institutions, in Brooklyn. Further, the images appeared to be similar to record shots and there was no evidence that the photographer had knowledge on the religious structures that he photographed between 1990-2006. However, it seemed that his goal for the project was to evoke more than keep an inventory of the buildings (Roma, 2010). He meant for the images in this book to serve as memories on church buildings in Brooklyn. However, without clear descriptions of each building, the book is subjected to potential misinterpretation by viewers who have no prior relationship with the churches. As such, it only appears to be an inventory of church architecture. Since the book is a compilation of works between 1990 to 2006, it is difficult to ascertain which building façades have undergone changes. In other words, by the time the book was published, some of these buildings may have undergone architectural changes. As such, to a non-resident, trying to understand the images may lead to confusion

without a clear reference of when the photographs were made. This makes the documentary project seem haphazard and amplifies the question of whether the photographer had any previous memories or relationship that connected him with the churches he documented. In his second book, “Coming Sunday”, Roma’s change his approach. Instead of just documenting the façades of churches in Brooklyn, he engaged with the worshippers in the churches he attended. Altogether, he went to one hundred and fifty services in fifty-two churches over the span of three years. On average, he attended three services for each church. In other words, it would be difficult to establish a close connection with the congregation of any one of the churches. At best, the images were merely candid shots from a bystander and barely adequate to form a representation of the communities he photographed. Most images illustrated the parishioners going through different stages of the service and exhibiting varying facial expressions. Without further elucidation, the spectator of the photographs has little information to fully appreciate the emotional experience of going through the church services. Without establishing a mutually trusting relationship with the church participants makes ‘participant observation’ difficult, and it will be difficult for him to make any accurate representation of them. As such, any attempt to understand the photographs is potentially stifled due to incomplete information or no prior knowledge of charismatic Christian practices. That said, Roma’s photographs captured the emotional response of the worshippers by focusing on their facial expression during the worship session. He makes attempt to talk to the worshippers to gather information for his project. Additionally, he stated clearly the time and location where the photographs are taken, which is important for good documentary works. The photographs invoke the viewer to think what the worshippers are experiencing at that moment which makes them cry and sing. These photographs provide a rich visual experience that is difficult to describe in words.

Stanley Lanzano. Lanzano has the consent of a local parish pastor who allows him to document the worship sessions of the pastor’s congregation in Georgetown County, state of

South Carolina of the United States. He makes effort to know the church goers and their families, as well as their living environment. These engagements gave him the opportunity to better understand the people he documented during that 10-year period. By developing an amicable relationship with his photography participants, he is able to gain acceptance from them, which helps with his photography project. However, he can only afford to spend a short amount of time with them on each visit. This meant that Lanzano may not have effectively immerse himself into the community long enough to carry out effective participant observation, which requires an extended amount of time to collect information regarding the community's ritualistic practices. Although it can be argued that the clarity and direction of his project may be as important as the amount of time taken to photograph the congregation, the approach and intended outcome of the project was not clearly posited.

It takes time for a wide spectrum of phenomena to surface and be observed in order to analyse any contradictory behaviours and perspectives (Jeffrey & Troman, 2004). Even if Lanzano managed to capture the ritualistic practices of the community, there is no information on how Christianity arrived in that particular congregation in Georgetown County. Such information can help viewers and researchers understand the phenomenon of mixed ritualistic practices where a Catholic crucifix was used on the coffin of a deceased Protestant. This was a unique occurrence since Protestants rejected the use of the crucifix and regarded it as idolatrous (Obelkevich, 2013). Nevertheless, Lanzano also shot images of religious symbols showing the vestments worn by pastors and other Christian symbols like crosses and bibles. His photographs showed the order of the church service, starting from 'sharing sessions' where attendees shared their worries and troubles, to singing that eventually led to a sermon followed by more singing and dancing. Lanzano's approach seemed unidirectional as the photographs appeared to be solely his visualisation of the congregation's ritualistic practices since there were no records of any inputs from his participants. Correspondingly, he captured the order of

the worship sessions successfully but the ritualistic sequence for those sessions fell short of explaining the intrinsic relationship between the Church and her followers.

Sebastião Salgado. Salgado produced a series of documentary works in his book “Genesis”, composed of multiple series of images taken in different locations. He had travelled to 30 countries in 8 years’ time, which included his visit to the Mentawai people of Siberut Island, off the west coast of Sumatra, in 2008. It is not mentioned how long he stayed with them as there were no journal records. Though Salgado is believed to have training in anthropology and thus had knowledge of his subjects before he photographed them, there is no evidence. Therefore, it can be inferred that Salgado may not have spent sufficient time with them to develop an insider’s view of the Mentawai. The amount of time he spent with the Mentawai would have contributed to how well he understood them and how well they trusted him, allowing Salgado to accurately represent them.

From his photographs, it appears that he managed to capture some of the community’s way of life and its living environment, as well as some ritualistic practises of the Mentawai. Nonetheless, there is no information on whether the ritualistic practises he shot were exhaustive or if there were other unmentioned forms of practice. In this respect, the works mostly contains the reflexivity of the photographer and the subjects’ opinions are not apparent. Also, there are no records as to whether the Mentawai consented to him using their photographs for publication and sale, or agreed to be represented as a documentary project. This raises an ethical issue of whether the Mentawai people are in a disadvantaged position when the photographs were taken. In other words, good ethical practice in documentary works is important but it may not be a constant consideration to documentary photographers. There are opportunities to enhance the documentary process.

According to Young, Salgado’s approach was very similar to a colonialist’s way of documenting and representing indigenous communities (Young, 1995), where knowledge must

follow the conditions established by dominant beliefs in order to be accepted as truth. This is even more so when Salgado's aim was to show aspects of our vulnerable world. By representing the Mentawai as a group of poor people in view of globalization, Salgado might have a preconceived notion of poorness based on first world standards. Similarly, before undertaking the fieldwork in Tengger, I have a preconceived notion that the Tenggerese were poor. But as the fieldwork progressed, I understood that they have everything they need for livelihood and therefore acknowledged the presence of first world standards in defining poverty. This realisation also attests to the importance of 'participant observation', in order to sift accurate information of the Tenggerese based on an insider's perspective.

Maïmouna Guerresi. Guerresi's book "Inner Constellations", offers an alternate means of documenting rituals and practices by employing a conceptual approach. Instead of adopting mainstream documentary approaches where the focus is on capturing individuals or the communities to illustrate their actual native living condition and environment, she chose to represent them conceptually by staging the photographic shoot. Her works clearly show her intent to exhibit intimate encounters with spiritual concepts developed by humans in connection with their inner self. Her images offer subtle narratives that bring about awareness of our shared humanity that transcend beyond the limitations of the human mind, culture, and politics. She uses religious symbols and artifacts in an allusive manner and often integrated them into her work through representations such as hijabs, minarets, and trees, and interjected them with white and black to represent the unifying characteristics of Islam.

Maïmouna moved to Senegal after marrying her husband, a Senegalese. Being a resident in Senegal, she does not have photographs that show her community's actual living environment, even though her photography participants are often her family and friends. It can be inferred that she is a member of the Senegalese community where she lives and is familiar with her subjects. It is not certain if she was consciously aware of the community's social

norms, even if she was living in an Islamic community. Although Maïmouna is a Muslim by definition, there are hints of Catholic philosophy that are being intermingled with her portrayal of Islam. In an interview with *The New Yorker* she commented that “.....the body is no longer a prison of the soul, but rather like a temple to house and augment the Divine” (DenHoed, 2015). This comment corresponds with the Catholic doctrine which professes that the body is the temple of the Holy Spirit in the Catholic Bible under 1 Corinthians verse 6-20. Therefore, it is difficult to ascertain that she approaches her work purely on an insider’s perspective on Islam, as compared to someone who might be born and raised in an Islamic environment in Senegal. At the same time, it is not known if her works were accepted as representational by the local community since there were no feedback system where the community can contribute to the final outcome of her project. As an artist, Maïmouna’s work leaned towards the fine arts. Her works could have been supplemented with further narratives regarding Islamic practices within her Senegalese community so as to provide a stronger visual rhetoric to the viewer.

Claire Garoutte and Anneke Wambaugh. Garoutte and Wambaugh’s book on African-Cuban religious practices, “*Crossing the Water: A Photographic Path to the Afro-Cuban Spirit World*”, presents a clear and concise representation of the of the specific community of which they have investigated. The comprehensive depiction of a religious leader and his community’s religious rituals and their environment, may be largely due to the adoption of an ethnographic approach when photographing their subjects. Garoutte and Wambaugh studied several texts related to the Afro-Cuban religion in prior to complement the authors’ personal experience in field work covering ‘participant observation’, and their photo essay. The authors visited the actual site on 5 occasions and they spent a total time of 5 years on the project. Their goal was to be immersed in Afro-Cuban religious culture in order to have an emic understanding of their rituals.

In these five years, the two women went to the homes of the religious leader and his religious community. On each visit they focussed on social immersion where they participated in social events to the extent they were initiated into local rituals and made ‘god-daughters’ of the local religious leader, and members of the community. Their photographs reflected the people they familiar with and the ritualistic practices they observe and shared through their lives as members of their community over the years. They also explained and photographed their religious artifacts, as well as the ritualistic procedures. These include initiation rites for new followers, rituals for ailments, the consecration of shrines, and spiritual invocations. The authors also acknowledged that due to the sensitivity and personal privacy of some of the rites, they could not be photographed. This encounter influenced one of the research questions regarding truthful presentation of participants in the face of placing them in an unfavourable situation. I propose a balanced approach by taking into account the reflexivity and response of both the photographer and the participants to co-construct a visual narrative of Tenggerese ritualistic practices.

Garoutte and Wambaugh were able to combine photographs pertaining to the ritualistic practices of a community with a succession of essays illustrating the people and the historical context of their religious practices. This is a reflection of the intensity of their participation in community events and rituals, which guided their photojournalistic photographic approach and contextualized the people they represented. The duo had satisfied most of the critical components stated in the matrix. The only enhancement to the project would have been to engage with the participants in seeking their opinions on the photographs that would best represent them.

The different approaches of the photographers above provided the research with the context to distinguish exemplary practices, like ensuring that there was ample time spent with the Tenggerese to ensure that their trust was gained, and also to avoid undesirable practices

where they are not given an opportunity to voice their opinions regarding the representation of their ritualistic practices. The exemplary practices are noted and indicated in a matrix as critical components to guide the photography project.

2.6 A Better Approach To Representation

As stated by Beaumont Newhall (Newhall, 1982) in his book “The History of Photography: From 1839 to Present”, pertaining to the limitations of photography, regardless of how beautiful or informative a photograph can be, it is inadequate on its own. According to Newhall, a photograph can only be established as evidence when the photograph itself is documented. In other words, it has to be timestamped and its location marked. He suggests that this could be achieved by contextualisation where the unfamiliar is included with the familiar using one or more images together in a sequential order. He further argued that, “A series of photographs, presented in succession on exhibition walls or on the pages of a book, may be greater than the sum of the parts” (Noland, 2006). To substantiate the term “documentation” it is necessary to accord a time factor to the photography project. Without a time factor, the works have no value. Time is what authenticates a photography project (Cummings & McDarrah, 1975).

Photographers who use an ethnographic style should include photographs that show an unlimited number of potential events, instances and activities that occur over a period of time. In other words, the process accounts for “life” and therefore it is inadequate to represent “life” with a purely specific moment or single phenomenon, since “life” is in constant motion and occurrences materialise in a sequential order one after another. If the approach is adopted copiously, photographs can show the interconnectivity between the different strata of life and facets of daily living along with the unrestrained emotions of individuals centralised under the

viewfinder. By means of provoking connotations and comparisons, a photograph has potential to engage all human senses. When such works are shown, audiences are then invited to engage in the works with their intellect and individual experiences to appreciate, critique and even to judge. As a result, photographs that cannot accomplish this are likely to stay solely as data or visual information. Their narratives are restricted to the walls of the photographic frame, where the viewer is left to comprehend and interpret the presented photograph based purely on the information offered within the frame and nothing beyond (Kratochvil & Persson, 2001).

With reference to the above arguments, the research acknowledges these confines and proposes an alternative approach in the documentary process by introducing co-contribution between the documentarian and participants to circumvent these limitations. These limitations are often the result of 1) incomplete information of the subject matter as the photographer has little or no knowledge of the subject he or she is photographing; 2) ambiguity regarding the information within the image; 3) the goal of the photography project being unclear and thus resulting in misinterpretation; and other challenges as stated above. This being stated, we should address here the methods stated by Beaumont Newhall, Paul Cummings and Anotnin Kratochvil that improve a photography project. In order to fill the gap and accomplish a photography project of notable quality, it is important to understand not only the critical components of approaching a photography project but also the subject or participant within their cultural landscape.

2.7 Photographic Images as Visual History

László Kürti described images in postcards as instruments that embody both the sender and the recipient and traverse space and boundaries (László, 2004). They often illustrate certain identity, geography and ethnographic character. These postcards usually create a frozen

segment of space and time and represents a concept more familiarly known as heterotopias (Michel Foucault, 1986). He further explains that one of the primary functions of postcards is to produce a visualized history that connects both the viewer and the company that produces the postcards. And this visualized history shall, in varying degrees, potentially become peoples' memories. He explains that our connection to reality is mediated by these postcards or photos and that they contributed to the medialisatation of our lives through heterotopias (Augé & Jacobs, 1999). He also explores the use, meaning and functionality of postcards in the twentieth century from Lajosmizse, a small town in Budapest. As with this study, the production of a series of images is intended to build an image archive for future reference and as a channel to visualize history. Kürti's study validates that photographic images have the potential to preserve distant memories and the ability to serve as visual archives for future generations through different forms of media. Likewise, the photography project of this study produces a series of images with the foresight that these images can become a credible visual archive for future generations to take reference from. This view also reinforces the research's suggestion that photography can continue to be a medium suitable for documentary works.

2.8 Social Immersion

It is as important to be able to accurately produce images that can best represent the studied community, on top of having an image archive to provide insights to the past. To socially immerse himself within that community and activate 'participant observation' methods, I spent an average of 8 hours per day with the participants during fieldwork, began learning the local dialect, and compiles a list of vocabulary. This helped me to visualise, appreciate events, and think in ways which the locals would have. In essence, social immersion requires time and deliberate effort: more time spent with the Tenggerese enhances how much

and how wide a spectrum of phenomena can surface and be observed (Jeffrey & Troman, 2004). Likewise, when Roderick Coover began studying the various cultural traits of making wine in Burgundy, he adopts several methodologies to better ‘immerse’ himself. He starts by working as a grape harvester in several wine-making villages and then proceed to study the languages used to define wine and the different processes that go into making wine. He stresses the importance of how common items or objects, events and activities helps him in understanding the participants of his research. He explains that by observing the environment and affairs of the world alongside his interlocutors, it provides him a stronger grasp of how they perceive events, interpret domestic or worldly affairs, and elude objectifying photographs in ethnographic studies (S. Pink, 2001). He simultaneously adopts traditional methodologies in ‘participant observation’, interviewing participants and researching archives for photo studies, video recordings and hypertext applications. With this method, Coover develops a strategy to re-enact the multi-faceted information accumulated from his experience and research, which later became a documentary film “La Bourgogne et le Language du Vin” (Coover, 2003).

2.9 Photo-Elicitation in Research

This research adopts photo-elicitation as a process to support its practical component. It is a method of interview in visual sociology where visual images are used to elicit thoughts and comments (Bignante, 2010). This process addresses the question of whether co-contribution can generate truthful representations of Tenggerese ritualistic practices. Through the photo-elicitation process, the Tenggerese offer their views based on a series of images presented to them for deliberating which best represented their ritualistic practices. Photo-elicitation was originally conceived by John Collier as part of his research to examine how families adapt and live among people with different ethnicity, and their reaction to new urban

factory jobs. Since the major challenge in research methods concerning identity are generally reliant on “writing instruments” by most researchers (D. Porta & M. Keating(Eds), 2008), this research medium empowers me to document the way the Tenggereese identify themselves. In this way, the participants will possess the autonomy to illustrate their personal notion of “self”, instead of succumbing to the researcher’s pre-categorised framework (Juhasz & Munshi, 1990). Furthermore, there are scholars who believe that it is only from images that the construction of the self can be best illustrated (Combs & Ziller, 1977; Ziller & Lewis, 1981). In light of this, it is an ideal approach for the Tenggereese to engage actively to define themselves in the construction of their identity (Noland, 2006). This research method restricts excessive reflexivity from the researcher, curbing him from forcefully directing the outcome of the photography project.

The process of photo-elicitation is recognised by many researchers as an effective tool because they agree that images can trigger more detailed conversations about a community, their memories, and reflections, as compared to oral interviews (Clarke-Ibañez, 2004; Hazel, 1995; Holliday, 2000). Additionally, researchers suggest that images can act as a bridge between the distant cultural background of the researcher and participants (Epstein, Stevens, McKeever, & Baruchel, 2006; D Harper, 2000; Wagner, 2002) which can contribute to the neutralisation of socio-cultural forces that shape both the participant’s and researcher’s social worlds (Prosser, 1998). Aside from the advantages of photo-elicitation, the process has disadvantages. Following Collier and Harper (Collier & Collier, 1990; Douglas Harper, 2002), the process hampers communication in certain ways. During the photo-elicitation interview of the research, the participant did not talk about some of the photos as he seemingly expresses no interest or connection to these photos. Likewise, he is also restricted to discuss only the photographs presented to him. That means, the discussion on ritualistic practices is only based

on the photo set produce by the me and consequently, may not achieve the depth and breadth of a deep dialogue.

2.10 Discrepancies in Information

After fieldwork journal and information were reviewed, several discrepancies and reservations were identified. For example, Pak Poyo commented there were only a fraction of Muslims in Ngadisari while the vice Dukun Pak Ruslan claimed there were 2% of the residents, while a local Muslim gentleman informed me there were at least 10% Muslims in Ngadisari. In the absence of a current official census, this can signal the silently-proliferating Muslim population in Ngadisari that may affect the sustainability of Tengger ritualistic practices. Further, Pak Poyo voiced that children of interfaith couples between Hindus and Muslims will grow up as Hindus to secure and increase the Hindu population in Ngadisari. However, even in a moderate Muslim country like Indonesia, this is contrary to standardized Islamic laws where the spouse of a non-Muslim must convert and raise their children as Muslims (Kutty, 2012; Saeed & Saeed, 2004).

While it is evident that the Tenggerese in Ngadisari are culturally rich and that they still practice much of their ritualistic traditions today, it was observed that they were rather lean in terms of knowledge towards their ritualistic practices. Amongst the villagers who were asked whether they knew the meaning behind some of the religious articles used in rituals like the penjor, sugarcane, cow or beef, and daum leaves, none could offer an affirmative answer.

This secularization goes beyond mere knowledge. Even though they are deemed to be animistic, they are not the only community that practices animism. For example, Chinese Taoist followers share similarities and worship deities representing natural elements like lightning or wind; the only difference is the format of worship. On several occasions to

photograph the pura, or temple, it was empty save for the prayer celebrants which added up to 4 people in total.

Conversations with Pak Ruslan, the vice Dukun, revealed that most religious and ritualistic instructions are received from Bali and that if any information is required, they will look to the Balinese for answers. This was also observed when the locals went on Google.com to look for answers when asked about the rituals! They mentioned that the sources they found online were of Balinese origin. In a way, perhaps this photography project may invite the community to revisit their faith.

2.11 External Influence

Regarding the land in Ngadisari, I understand from the Tenggerese that land transfer is hereditary and may not be sold to outsiders. This may help the village to retain much of their customs and traditions by restricting external influence from any potential settlers even though interfaith marriages may dilute Tenggerese ritualistic practices. Pak Poyo also mentioned that there is a very small number of Muslims in Ngadisari and most of them are married into the village. However, their children will grow-up as Hindus and help sustain Tengger's culture and customs. This contrasts against my understanding that the children from these marriages may inevitably be assimilated into the Islam faith. Hence, if the villagers gradually forego Tenggerese ritualistic practices either by secularization or conversion of religious faith, the number of villagers who will continue such practices will decline over time.

Despite having both Hindus and Muslims in Ngadisari, the villagers live in harmony because everyone shares the same customary practices. These cultural traditions and ritualistic practices have not changed, even with the development of tourism. Likewise, the dressings also remained the same, and the udeng, or Tenggerese headdress and the sarong, a body-length tube

garment, are still unique to the people there. Once again, this is contrary to what I discovered during fieldwork. In fact, not every villager follows the Hindu faith or Tenggerese ritualistic practices. Many of the villagers with whom I spoke are secularized. Rather than believing in any form of divine influence, some of them follow the rituals more for customary sake [Appendix B]. From the dialogue, the tendency towards social desirability biasness is evident. This tendency reinforces the need for co-contribution towards documentary projects.

2.12 Transference of Ritualistic Practices

I initiated a conversation with the vice dukun, or assistant village shaman, of Ngadisari, Pak Ruslan. When asked about the origins and system of ritualistic practices in Tengger, he explained that most of the methods or procedures of customs and traditions came from Bali, a Hindu majority island to the east of Indonesia. He also presented a reference book that explained all the different religious and ritualistic practices in Tengger. The book contained all the major ceremonies and festivals of Tengger along with their meaning and ritualistic processes. Pak Ruslan briefly described each of the ceremonies and festivals and added that many of these are practiced in Bali as well. Without a proper visual record, it is difficult to have a complete documentation of Tenggerese ritualistic practices. For example, when I showed the images extracted from the Tropenmuseum's photo archive in Exhibit A, none of the Tenggerese who saw it had any recollection of the attire depicted in the images. As such, this supports the study that it is necessary to have an enhanced process to document the Tenggerese ritualistic practices.

I further asked what offerings like the sugarcane and daum leaves symbolised in Tenggerese ritualistic practices. Pak Ruslan explained that these items were used traditionally and the practices were passed down by their ancestors. He had the same response when ask

about the symbolism of other religious articles. Prior to the meeting with Pak Ruslan, I reviewed the meaning of these offerings. The sugarcane represents unity and the daum leaves symbolizes abundance and prosperity. It appears that knowledge on religious articles and ritualistic practices is seemingly shallow, even for a vice dukun.

The dialogue with Pak Ruslan yielded an understanding that the villagers in Ngadisari still embrace a culture, rich with customary ritualistic practices that descend through ancestry dating from as far back as the Hindu-Buddhist Mataram Kingdom (Kinney, Klokke, & Kieven, 2003). There are more than twenty significant ritualistic ceremonies and festivals celebrated throughout the Hindu calendar year. Even with this explanation, it is difficult not to conclude that the community practices the form, but not the essence, of the rituals.

According to Pak Ruslan, all the residents in Tengger celebrate and observe these important occasions, including the two percent of Muslims in Ngadisari and other minority religious faiths. I further noted that he identifies a higher number of Muslim villagers as compared to Pak Poyo, who claimed it was only a fraction of the villagers. On a separate occasion, a Muslim villager in the community informed me that 10% of the village are now Muslims. After speaking to different people from different social classes within the community, I understood the motivations behind the information given by different people. This contradiction in information establishes a strong degree of social desirability biasness amongst the leaders of the community whom offered an overly positive outlook of the village. This also meant that an enhanced process is needed to mitigate such responses which the study had achieved.

CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

The study investigates how documentary approaches in photography can be enhanced to minimise bias representation and ensure accuracy of the documentation of the ritualistic practices of the Tenggerese. This is achieved by using a 5-pronged approach.

First, a preliminary study of the participants was undertaken. This preliminary study gave me an initial understanding of their ritualistic practices, based on existing literature of Tenggerese rituals and ceremonies.

Second, I initiated dialogues with local community leaders in Ngadisari during fieldwork to better understand current ritualistic practices in the village. I also initiated informal conversations with the villagers in order to understand their thoughts and opinions regarding local rituals and ceremonies.

Third, an analysis of prominent documentary photographers was conducted. The photographers were selected based on the following cumulative criteria: A) the photographers' subject matter was on religion or ritualistic activities; B) their photographs included portrayal of people and their environment; and C) they had published at least one book on the subject matter. These criteria ensured that the photographers under review have spent a significant amount of time for the project: from the actual photographic documentation to the publication of their books. The study identified the approaches of the photographers and mapped their combined approaches onto a matrix for analysis. The knowledge gained from the second and third prongs offered insights to the current situation, in terms of the ritualistic practises in Tengger.

Fourth, the photography project proceeded with reference to the critical components discussed such as specificities of time, space, intent and depth of knowledge of the subject matter and context. This is to ensure that the images produced adhere to the rigorous conditions

stipulated in the matrix, achieving the most accurate representation of Tenggerese ritualistic practices in Ngadisari. The goal is to combine all the information and knowledge gained from the literature review, fieldwork, and the review of photographers' works, to construct the visual strategy for the photography project.

Fifth, the vice Dukun was invited to select images that he thought best represents Tenggerese ritualistic practices. These images consisted of a combination of conceptually created work in response to the study, and straight documentary images shot with a candid approach. The photo-elicitation method empowered the Tenggerese by enabling them to co-contribute to the documentary process. This ensured that the Tenggerese voice was heard and fairly represented. I refrained from making suggestions on the selection criteria in order not to influence the vice Dukun during the selection process. The images went through a simple process of elimination.

The decision on the time spent on fieldwork is based on planned schedules for major ceremonies held in Tengger. The time spent on fieldwork need not be lengthy (Jeffrey & Troman, 2004). Instead, the time required is dependent on the form and specific features of ethnographic study. In this case, the fieldwork focussed on the purpose of understanding ritualistic practices. Rather than adopting traditional ethnographic methods where the researcher would stay for at least 1 ecological year (Gerard Forsey, 2010), the fieldwork lasted a total of 2 months and I spent an average of 8 hours per day with the community. Most of the major ceremonies like Unan-unan, Nyepi, Kasada and Melasti fell within the period of the fieldwork. Within that period, I had ample time to engage the community and gather data regarding their ritualistic practices for this study.

3.1 Ethnographic Approach in Information Gathering

The aim of the fieldwork was to live amongst the Tenggerese to experience phenomena familiar to them, in order to articulate these phenomena with textual and photographic narratives. The ethnographic approach was adopted to harness insider perspectives through ‘participant observation’ which was originally used by Verrier Elwin, an English anthropologist. Elwin described his ethnographic method as living among the people and sharing their life as much as possible as an outsider could (Tedlock, 1991). This meant that Verrier did not rely merely on asking questions. Instead, he gradually acquired knowledge of the community by being part of it. By immersing myself socially with the Tenggerese, I acquired part of their vision of their world.

In those Tenggerese ceremonies I attended, it was observed there were two groups of individuals involved. The first group consisted of specific individuals performing the actual ritual, and the second group consisted of other villagers participating in the ritual as attendees. For instance, during the Unan-unan celebration, the Dukun and vice Dukun would conduct the ritual while the rest of the villagers participated in the ceremony as attendees. I joined the ceremonies as an attendee when participating in both the Melasti and Unan-unan processions and prayer sessions. I also joined the villagers in watching the Kepang ritual dance. As a result of taking part in these ceremonies, I experienced what a local would in terms of atmosphere, sight, sound, smell and other human sensations. These physical sensory experiences were not attainable from textual narratives. However, physical experiences were not sufficient to provide insights to the thoughts and opinions of the Tenggerese. To fill these gaps, I initiated informal conversations, dialogues and interviews during fieldwork to gather information on the views of the Tenggerese regarding their ritualistic practices.

3.2 Recruitment Process and Access

3.2.1 Inclusion criteria. The village representative, Pak Poyo, agreed to support the research and photography project after I explained to him the aim of the research to understand Tenggerese ritualistic practices. Pak Poyo was encouraged to ask questions to clarify uncertainties and avoid ambiguities. He suggested I meet with the village shaman or Dukun overseeing religious affairs so as to better understand the operating mechanism of ritualistic practices in Ngadisari. During the fieldwork, there were several failed attempts to meet with the Dukun. However, I managed to engage the vice Dukun who agreed to help with the study. An interpreter was used to ensure that he clearly understood his contribution and the aims of the research. I explained to him that the study was aimed at understanding the ritualistic practices encountered during fieldwork, and that this process would be carried out in reference to previous written documents and conversations with the villagers. I also explained to him that a series of images would be produced as a result of the documentary project and he would be involved in the selection of images that in his opinion, are the most representational of the community's ritualistic practices.

3.2.2 Gaining access. Before 'participant observation' was implemented, I obtained the support from the village representative who facilitated access to different parts of the village for the photography project. He helped me to gain the villagers' support for this study hence I was granted with reasonably uninhibited access throughout the village and within religious buildings. I was also given permission to religious ceremonies for photography documentation. The Tenggerese offered support in thoughts, opinions and advice in my effort to understand the connection between the community and their ritualistic practices. By having direct engagements with the community through fieldwork, I was able to grasp the opinions and thoughts of different individuals and acquired different opinions on their ritualistic practises.

3.2.3 Informal conversation. I initiated casual conversations with the villagers regarding the different forms of religious practices and ritualistic ceremonies, to harness insider perspectives. This approach gave me an emic perspective on how the Tenggerese perceive, explain, and understand the world based on what holds meaning for them (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). In this way, I also reduced pre-conceived ideas attained from conventional conceptual and theoretical frameworks at the beginning of the research process. Such pre-conceived ideas are irrelevant to the Tenggerese (Morris, Leung, Ames, & Lickel, 1999). Throughout the study, I kept a comprehensive journal that records daily observations, events and conversations while on fieldwork. The information recorded was presented in a narrative form and includes detailed descriptions of the phenomena observed by me, conversations with the Tenggerese, and their thoughts and opinions (Fetterman, 2010).

I recorded my daily observations and engagements with the participants in my journal, shown in Appendix B. The information collected was examined for ambiguity and further analysed to uncover useful information. The result of the analysis was used to form conclusions that could assist with the photography project. Amongst the photographers reviewed, most did not disclose any record of their daily activity during their documentary project. If their observations were solely based on memory, this might lead to inaccurate representation of information.

My initial observations focussed on the collection of information derived from learning of their ritualistic practices and the Tenggerese dialect used at the site (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008), which included making a list of vocabularies of the local dialect. I used my journal to record what transpired in the field. From the casual conversations, I deduced that many of the villagers have little theoretical understanding of their religion and ritualistic practices. For them, religion and rituals seemed to act more like their cultural identity than any form of divinity.

3.2.4 Participation. I undertook a ‘participant observations’ method by participating in major ceremonies like Nyepi and Unan-unan. There were two observed groups of people participating in a ritualistic ceremony. The first group composed of villagers who performed the actual ritual and the second group included villagers who took part in the ritual as attendees. For example, during the purification ritual of Melasti, a designated group was tasked to bear the offerings and relay it to the sacred cave in Mt Widodaren, while the second group partook in the ritual by joining the procession toward the mountain. Here, along with the villagers, I took part in both the processions and prayer sessions of Melasti and Unan-unan. I also joined the village in observing Nyépi, the day of silence. These activities were undertaken to obtain a Tenggerese perspective of the events in order to better represent them. I was the only non-Tenggerese who participated in those ceremonies.

The information provided the research with insights on the Tenggerese way of life, ritualistic culture and practices. Such information is beyond the contents of the literature review and provided deeper insights into the village of Ngadisari. However, the information derived from leaders of the village is subject to their bias responses in providing a positive outlook of the village. Similarly, I also acknowledged that the information collected by me is interpreted based on my own reflexivity. This signified that the method of co-contribution in producing the documentary project outcome is critical, helping to minimise the subjectivity of both the documentarian and participants.

3.3 Mapping The Visual Approaches

The research investigated different approaches toward developing a process for documentary photography of ritualistic practises. This investigation, as discussed in Chapter 2, reviewed photographers with a more traditional approach like Sebastião Salgado, and more

contemporary styles of documentary by Maïmouna Guerresi. The analysis was focussed on photographers who had undertaken projects in documenting religion and rituals. The collective information was organised and mapped onto a Methodology matrix [Figure 3.], where the main identifiable critical components were identified and recorded to illustrate recurring methods in the way these photographers approach their subjects, and to detect areas where further enhancements can be made in the approach to documenting ritualistic practices.

The critical components represented the different methods used by ethnographers and approaches adopted by photographers who had undertaken works in this area. The ethnography approach entailed in-depth knowledge of the subject and/or participants and involved an extended period of stay within the local community. The ethnographer conducted observations and interviews within a specific community in order to obtain accurate and truthful views from the community (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). This often also involved a great extent of background study of the participants (Whitehead, 2005). The matrix proposed an enhanced process to document the ritualistic practices of a specific community, in this case the Tenggerese. However, it's purpose may be extended to other cultural elements beyond the scope of this study.

Methodology Matrix

Critical Components	Sebatiao Salgado	Jan Locus	Thomas Roma	Stanley Lanzano	Maimouna Guerresi	Garoutte & Wambaugh
Background Study	✓			✓	✓	✓
Artifacts	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Rituals		✓				✓
Environment	✓	✓				✓
Symbols	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Staged Shots	✓			✓	✓	
Spontaneous Shots	✓	✓	✓			✓
Intent/Purpose	✓			✓	✓	✓
Time Indication	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Place Indication	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Conversation with Participants	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Participation from Participants						
Participant Observation	✓				✓	✓

Figure 3.

The critical components residing within the context of this research are described based on my interpretation of them in the study:

- A. Background study. Any preliminary investigation or study performed through text references with a focus on geography, social structure, culture, economics, and political landscape.
- B. Artifacts. Any object of human invention that contains cultural or historical significance.
- C. Ritual. A sequence of actions that are performed as part of a religious or cultural activity.
- D. Environment. Images of the environment around the participants are presented.
- E. Symbols. An object or visual representation that signifies an artifact, process, system of belief and function.
- F. Staged shots. Or, staged photography. An approach to photography where the scene of the shoot is purposefully constructed in accordance to the photographer's vision.
- G. Spontaneous shots. Or, candid photography. An approach to photography where aside

from composing the shot, there is no conscious manipulation of elements within the frame. The human subject in this approach is normally unaware that they are being photographed or chooses to ignore the presence of the photographer.

- H. Intent/Purpose. Well-defined objectives, goals and purpose of the documentary project.
- I. Time indication. The date or period of time over which the documentary project is being carried out.
- J. Place indication. The exact location or locations where the documentary project is being carried out.
- K. Conversation with Participants. Any form of conversation and interviews carried out with the participant in a formal or informal setting.
- L. Participation of Participants. A condition whereby the participants are empowered to influence the outcome of the research.
- M. 'Participant observation'. Where the researcher spends extended time living with the participants to directly observe the participants as they interact and respond to the phenomena surrounding them.

From the matrix, the different approaches adopted by each photographer were illuminated. Each of them covered areas where artifacts and symbols were concerned. All but one of them appeared to have made conversations with their participants and had indicated the time and location of their projects. While most of the photographers have not included the project environment or surrounding, and the need for 'participant observation' or spending extended time living with the participants or subjects, most of them have done some form of study on their participants or subjects. The most notable concern was that none of the photographers seemed to have engaged their participants to validate the images that were meant to represent them. It seemed that the endorsements of the participants were not a significant

consideration for the photographers. In iteration, the matrix reflects the critical components that should be considered when producing documentary project through photography. Furthermore, a few photographers did not seem to have exercised any ‘participant observation’ method, which can contribute to better representation of the ritualistic practices of the community they are documenting. Nevertheless, photographers like Salgado shot photographs that inspired us to pay closer attention to vulnerable indigenous communities. Jan Locus and Stanley Lanzano gave us an insight on Christian churches and Thomas Roma provided an inventory of Brooklyn churches. The photographs produced by these photographers may not have adhered to the matrix, nonetheless, they showed records of humanity.

3.4 Fieldwork

Fieldwork is an integral part of this research and supports the study by facilitating data collection. My fieldwork was conducted at Ngadisari, a Tenggerese village in East Java, Indonesia. It consisted of three stages that included a document review, a preliminary fieldtrip and the conducting of interviews and informal conversations.

3.4.1 Preliminary study. Before I left for the fieldtrip, I did background research on the Tenggerese. I reviewed their ritualistic practices from related academic journals, articles and books. This bibliographic review offered me insights into the origins of the Tenggerese and their environment, livelihood, beliefs and social practices. This preliminary understanding was imperative in my preparation for the actual fieldwork as it then allowed me to relate to the phenomena that was happening around me .

I also did a review on photographers who undertook projects documenting religion and rituals. This included photobooks and articles on the photographers’ works. By reviewing these

texts, I obtained an understanding of their approaches to documenting religion and rituals. The review enabled me to extract information on certain ideal approaches practiced by these photographers and to take note of the concerns that might arise when documenting such events.

3.4.2 Preliminary arrangements. The fieldwork included a preliminary fieldtrip. The aim of this visit was to:

- a. establish contact with village leaders to gain their support for the research;
- b. source for a personal guide and translator,
- c. establish a means of transport to help me move around the vicinity;
- d. familiarize myself with the environment;
- e. estimate expenses; and
- f. make plans for an extended stay.

3.4.3 Interviews and informal conversations. This research used formal interviews and informal conversations to gather data during the fieldwork. Formal interviews were used to understand the current state of ritualistic practices in Ngadisari and what the village leaders considered as ideal representations of such practices. Informal conversations were used to gather information by acquiring stories of participants' experiences. Through these interviews and conversations, I gathered a wide variety of information regarding their thoughts on their rituals. This information helped me to reconcile or reassess the data I collected from the preliminary study.

3.5 Ethics in Conducting Fieldwork

To the best of effort, I assured all care has been taken to ensure no direct risk or harm to the Tenggerese participants. The Tenggerese were informed of any research activity beforehand and consent was sought before carrying out research activities which included interviews and the photography project. The photography approach included both spontaneous and staged shots. The staged shots conformed to reality and existing events that commonly occur within the environment or community. In addition, a ‘model release’ was obtained as a document to record the participants’ consent to take part in the photography sessions. I avoided any cultural or religiously sensitive issues when necessary. All care have been taken and consent sought before, during, and after any photographing to ensure there were no direct or indirect activities that would lead to any discomfort, undue stress, immodesty and/or obscene situations. As an assurance to the participants, the images were shown to the vice Dukun and consent was sought before the images were used. The informal conversations with the Tenggerese were recorded for transcription, analysis, and interpretation. Finally, the participants agreed to the use of the data for artistic photo projects and/or scholarly purposes. These will be published and displayed in exhibitions, festivals, conferences, journals, and publications worldwide.

3.6 The Photography Project

The photography project of this study formed part of the co-contributory process between the Tenggerese and me as the researcher. The images produced from the photography project characterized the way I visualized the Tenggerese. These images were subsequently

subjected to a photo selection process whereby the vice Dukun selected the ones that best represent the community's ritualistic practices.

I have applied both candid approach and portrait photography when photographing the participants. The candid approach consisted of taking photographs of the Tenggerese without a posed appearance or without the participant's knowledge. The portraits consisted of either individuals or group of people that I captured to show their personality through the use of effective lighting and background.

3.6.1 Portraits of the Tenggerese. Each of the portraits shot included three elements. The

Figure 4.

elements consisted of the people, the environment and a religious symbol. I visualized them as sharing a tenacious relationship because they symbolized the identity of the Tenggerese. For example, in Figure 4, the children represented the future of the community. The continuity

of Tenggerese ritualistic practices rested on their shoulders. This image is framed with Pura Poten, their most important temple, as a backdrop to highlight that Hinduism is part of their cultural heritage. The background is filled with Mount Bromo which represented the richness of their land and an important support to the Tenggerese's way of life.

The locations of the photography sessions were determined by me based on the way I wanted to portray the three elements. The participants were encouraged to choose their own attire for the photography sessions because I did not want to influence their choice. This decision created a more relaxing environment for the participants.

There were some challenges during the photography sessions. The weather was often cloudy and rainy, so I had to use an external strobe light to compensate for the poor lighting. Some of the locations have difficult terrains and getting there posed some difficulty. I managed to overcome this with the help of the locals.

3.6.2 Candid approach. The candid approach was used when I could not control the shooting activity. This frequently transpired because the event was happening in real time. That said, the candid approach allowed me to freeze specific moments of important events like the Melasti, Unan-unan and Nyepi. These frozen moments were a reconstruction of a reality, experienced by me as the photographer.

Figure 5.

In those images that I shot using the candid approach, I aimed at providing a view of the Tenggerese practicing their rituals. These images showed how the Tenggerese celebrated major religious festivals. For example, the image in Figure 5, showed the Melasti procession in progress. It was intended to offer viewers a sense of the moment when events were in progress, as witnessed by me as the photographer.

At certain points, it was difficult to carry out documentation using the candid approach. I aimed to capture the participants in their most natural behavior but when potential subjects noticed that they were being photographed, an immediate change in demeanor was expected. They often turned their face away from my camera, glared at me or simply smiled.

Another problematic situation I encountered using the candid approach was when I documented Kasada at Mount Bromo. On that day, the wind was strong and caused a sandstorm.

The visibility level was very low, and I did not want to risk my camera equipment from being damaged by dust particles, so I had to stop photographing.

This study recognizes the importance of both the photographer researcher's reflexivity and the participants' 'social desirability biasness', when gathering information for the documentary photography project. This study investigates the use of ethnographic style when approaching participants of a documentary project. It also analyses the approaches used by photographers who have created documentary works related to religions and rituals. The approaches are consolidated to develop an enhanced process based on a co-contribution approach between the participant and photographer. This process is applied in this project to present truthful representation of Tenggerese ritualic practices. However, the enhanced process is not an exhaustive method that attempts to resolve every complexity in documentary photography. Instead, it serves as a point of departure for further discussions on enhancing the documentary process.

CHAPTER 4. CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

After discussing how photography can be manipulated to misrepresent information, this study considers definitions and assumptions that can be important for providing a trustworthy representation of its research participants. The use of visual methods by anthropologists and ethnographers are taken into consideration. I reviewed the concepts of reflexivity and social desirability biasness to evaluate their impact on research, and to investigate ways to minimise their effects on this study. Following a review on such approaches adopted by documentary photographers, I argue that there are ways to enhance the truthful representation of documentary participants by adopting an ethnographic style in the documentary process.

In regard to the methodology, this study investigates the approaches used by documentary photographers who have works relating to ritualistic practices and researchers using photography as part of their research, and then proposes an investigation into the use of photography in documenting ritualistic practices. This leads to the establishment of an enhanced process using critical components that requires the identification of time, place, purpose, and rigour in dealing with and understanding the subject matter, which are used by documentary photographers and researchers who use visual methods.

Following this enhanced process, I applied the critical components in my photography project during my fieldwork. This method received positive feedback from the Tenggerese, who were enthusiastic in taking part in the project, since they could decide for themselves the images that are truthful representations of their people.

The following sections highlight insights I attained from my investigation and provide a review of the study.

4.1 Misconceptions

A section of my study entails investigating old photographs of Tenggerese ritualistic

Figure 6.

practices. At the initial stage of the fieldwork, I had a preconception of Tenggerese culture based on my initial review of older images in scholarly materials that show the Dukun wearing ceremonial attires while conducting rituals. In reality, there is a significant difference between the attires of the

Tenggerese in those materials and those I observed during the fieldwork. For example, Robert Hefner's seminal book on Tenggerese culture, 'Hindu Javanese: Tengger Tradition and Islam 1985', shows a photograph [Figure 6'] of the Dukun's attire that not even the current village elders can remember. Similarly, the photograph in the Tropenmuseum's archive [Figure 7.], yields the same response. I inquired with the villagers but no one could recognise the attire shown in the image. This may mean that the villagers do not have a picture archive wherein they can refer to their previous way of life.

As such, assessing documentary works purely based on desk research is at risk of using older reference materials as current data.

The fieldwork helped me to gather the latest information regarding the Tenggerese. I

Figure 7.

compared this new information against older records of the Tenggerese so as to obtain an accurate account of current Tenggerese lives. The Tenggerese attires have evolved and they no

longer wear those costumes showed in older photographs, and their village is now filled with homestays for tourists. The community is not as isolated as I originally expected them to be. From this experience, I argue that both photographs and textual narratives can, at times, create or offer very different perceptions of the community.

4.1.1 Observation error. Apart from the risk of considering older information as current data, there is also a risk of observation error. When I first arrived in Ngadisari, I had difficulty distinguishing the Tenggerese from any lowland or city dwellers. Their attire looked very different from my reference sources. Many of them own smartphones and use social media apps like Facebook and Instagram, and drive personal vehicles. Because Mount Bromo has become a touristic area, the locals are in constant contact with foreigners. I was informed that some Balinese travel to Tengger to celebrate important ritualistic festivals. Such developments are not apparent to most tourists who encounter the Tenggerese. Without spending an extended period of time with the Tenggerese, it is not easy to distinguish them from other Indonesians just by appearance. Living with the Tenggerese during fieldwork, helps me to look beyond ‘first impressions’ to gain a deeper perspective on their identity.

In Chapter 2, Jan Locus informs us that he photographed the expression of Christian faith in various African countries and India. However, I argue that it is difficult to make an overarching claim to photograph the ritualistic practices of a nation without first identifying if the participants of the rituals are locals or foreigners. In other words, without knowing the people being photographed, it is challenging for Locus to claim that the participants are from the same country.

For example, when I first arrived at the village, I was told that everyone is a Hindu. Later, I discovered that a Muslim community exists in the village. Such insider information was not readily available to me during the early stages of my fieldwork. As this study adopted

the ethnographic method to gather data, I spent time to initiate regular informal conversations with the participants. The informal conversations helped me to dilute the formal researcher/participant connection and develop friendly relations with them. At the same time, I exercised participant observation to enhanced my understanding of the community's ritualistic practices. Over a period of about three weeks, I sensed that the participants were comfortable with me because they began to initiate conversations. They also invited me to family gatherings and prayer sessions.

At this point, my participants were more open with their thoughts and I was able to exchange views with them on Tenggerese ritualistic practices. These exchanges helped me to gain insider perspectives and I was able to gather differing opinions to enhance the accuracy of my data. I also strengthened their confidence in my study by being transparent with the research activities conducted within the village. In addition, I invited the participants to co-contribute to the photography project. Through this approach, I was able to gather rich data that helped me to visualise the participants' ritualistic practices through photography.

To overcome an observation error, I conducted my fieldwork in three stages. I first reviewed texts on Tenggerese ritualistic practices to give myself a preliminary understanding. Next, I engaged the village leaders in dialogues and interviews. Lastly, I spent approximately eight hours a day to engage the community in informal conversations, participate in their common activities like tending to the farms, and attending religious festivals. This process helped me to gather information from different sources and I validate the accuracy of each information I collected.

4.1.2 Sensory experience. I reviewed Kepang or the traditional ritualistic horse dance, covered by Clara Groenendael and Paul Christensen (Christensen, 2014; Groenendael, 2008).

Figure 8.

Both researchers conducted a detailed study of Kepang. There was no images in Groenendael's study, while only one image relating to Kepang was found in Christensen's work. I had a misconceived impression that it was just a traditional dance performance. After spending more than 18

hours photographing and spectating as one of the villagers on three sessions of the Kepang performance, I managed to glean insight. The Kepang performances I experienced during fieldwork have an ominous atmosphere that were difficult to explain using words. For example, in Figure 8, some of the performers went into trance and seemed to be in agony due to spiritual possession. It appeared to me they were suffering from violent fits, as if being forcefully possessed by some spiritual beings. The entire performance turned into a frenzy as the performers became disorientated and oblivious of their surroundings. Words seems limited to fully capture the sensory bombardment from experience. Field work can provide sensory experience not attainable by textual narratives. It was clear to me at this point that existing textual narratives, in this case, are lacking in providing a complete documentation of Kepang because of the lack of visual-sensory experience. Textual narratives can provide information on such phenomenon but photography can offer an immersive sensory experience in documentary works.

4.2 Establishing Common Grounds

4.2.1 Partnership. This study cannot be complete without the voice of the participants. Scholars (Clifford, Fortun, & Marcus, 2011) suggest that ethnographies are constructed narratives with fictional elements that by themselves cannot provide thorough accounts of the reality. However, truth representation can be enhanced by including the Tenggerese not only as contributors to the photography project but also as partners.

This approach reduced bias in two ways. First, the photographer's bias is limited because the photographs that best represents the community are selected by the participants themselves. If I photographed my participants and decided on the photographs that represents them, then their voice will not be heard. In such a scenario, the project will lean heavily on my bias because I will solely direct the photography project by determining the shooting location, what my participants should wear, what are the important rituals to photograph, which photographs I think best represent the participants etc. The participants will not have the opportunity to co-contribute in the documentary project.

For example, Figure 8a. is an image of how I visualised the Melasti ceremony. The participants were dressed in their ceremonial attire and carrying baskets containing gifts for the spirits. These baskets were presented as offerings in a sacred cave near the peak of Mount Widodaren. In the image, I framed the participants carrying the offerings with Mount Widodaren in the background. I intended to illustrate the Melasti ceremony by presenting the spiritual

Figure 8a.

connectivity between my participants and their land. However, this image was not selected by

the vice Dukun as a representation of their ritualistic practice during the image selection session. Based on personal preference, I would have chosen this image but the co-contribution approach had restrained my bias and gave the participants an opportunity to voice their opinion. If I solely determined which images should represent Tenggerese ritualistic practices, my participants may not agree with me. In this case, the trustworthiness of the photography project will be significantly reduced.

Since the documentary project concerns the participants, this study suggests that their opinions should be acknowledged. Instead of deciding on every shooting locations and the attire to wear for the photography sessions, I invited the participants to make suggestions; their opinions enhanced my understanding of how they perceive their ritualistic practices. By doing so, I discovered it improved their eagerness to participate in the photography project.

Second, the participants were not involved in the actual photo-taking process. If the participants were to take photographs that best represent themselves, social desirability biasness may occur. They may only take pictures that portray the community with a positive outlook. In this case, their bias will overshadow the photography project. As an alternative, the participants were invited to select photographs that best represent them. In this way, a balance was achieved, through a co-contributory process that limits bias between the participants and the photographer.

I went beyond the photographer and subject relationship where the photographer mostly directs the shooting. Instead, I formed a partner relationship with the participants to co-produce the images. As such, the co-contributory process reduced the participant's bias by limiting their involvement in the actual photo-taking process. The photographer's bias was also reduced because the participants were the ones who selected the final images that best represents them. This process yielded a positive outcome and was well-regarded by the participants. They viewed this process favourably as it respected the views of the community by establishing a

common ground for the photography project. When I highlighted the co-contributory approach to the village representative, Pak Poyo, at the initial stage of this study, he welcomed this process as he felt that it is right to give the community an opportunity to voice their opinion. The vice Dukun or assistant village Shaman also welcomed the co-contributory approach and commented that it is a good process because it allowed the community to select images that best represent them. He validated that some of these images are truly representative of Tenggerese ritualistic practices. Although the co-contributory approach yielded a positive outcome for the photography project, this study also acknowledges there are other methods to approach documentary works.

4.2.2 Ethical issues in photographic representation. There are challenges to photographing communities when ethical issues are a concern. This concern, if not addressed, hinders the progress of the study. When ethical issues are resolved, the documentary process can be enhanced because it improves the working relationship between the participants and the photographer. It is a critical consideration as there are contemptible consequences when ethical considerations are applied crudely. During fieldwork, I photographed harvesters from a potato farm after permission was given by the farm owner. I sensed that some of the harvesters were uneasy with having their photographs taken. One of them walked away when I photographed him. Another harvester turned her face away from my camera. I gathered that they might be shy or just did not want to participate in the photography project. As a result, I decided not to use those photographs even though the harvesters did not openly reject my approach to photograph them. On a separate occasion, during Unan-unan, I was stopped from entering the temple to photograph their preparation for the event. The warden informed me that no one was allowed to enter during that time. I chose to respect his instruction in order to maintain the trust the Tenggerese have in me, to observe local rubrics. There are other similar incidents that

occurred during my fieldwork. In this study, I choose not to use images which I consider detrimental or may potentially cause distress to the participants.

To ensure the continuity of my study within the community, I need to be mindful not to break the trust the participants have given me. Any undertaking by me that leads to a breach of trust would have hampered the study. In the worst of scenarios, I may unknowingly induce distrust, suspicion and contempt, which will steer the community to withhold information from me. As such, it is important to conduct the study with an ethical approach since the community had opened their doors to the study. By constantly embracing an ethical approach with the Tengerese, I can gather rich information from their opinions.

The case of Stephanie Sinclair (Phillips, 2013) highlights the complexity of the issue. She gained access to a Yemeni mountain home in Hajjah in 2010 to document the plight of child brides, sparking a global outrage on the practice of child marriage. One of her works shows two men who agreed to be photographed with their underaged brides. Likely unknown to the men in her image, they became an international icon for child abuse. Sinclair produced wonderful work in bringing to light the unfortunate predicament of child brides and the detestable practices of child marriage.

Consider how the views of those two men on child marriage practices were not sought and that in a broader sense, it could be argued that they were also victims of social conditioning. According to a report by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF & UNFPA, 2019), child marriages often propagate as an intergenerational poverty cycle. In rural communities, it is more of a social norm than an abnormality in the eyes of parents. The persistent civil war in Yemen further spurs this condition. Parents often marry off their daughters to alleviate the cost of their care or because they believe a husband's family can offer better protection (UNFPA, 2016).

In addition, another ethical issue regarding Sinclair's approach is that she did not obtain appropriate consent to show the face of the victims, who were minors, to the world. Even if Sinclair's subjects signed model release contracts, they do not imply that she has the right to use images in unlimited ways (Sarah Pink, 2007). The ethical issue of whether Sinclair broke the trust of the Yemeni who welcomed her into their community to document their way of life, only to end up being a target of her agenda, is rarely discussed.

4.3 Empathy in Fieldwork

Following the issue with ethical concern, I encountered several difficult situations that challenged my own moral values during fieldwork. One of them occurred when I documented my first Keping dance performance. Near the end of the performance, the dance master walked around the performance area with a live chicken held high in his hands to ensure the audience could see it. Shortly, he tore the chicken's head from its body. He proceeded to distribute parts of the carcass to the other performers who then began to feast on the raw flesh and entrails of the animal. I was appalled at the sight of the phenomenon.

From this encounter, I realised that my reaction was a reflection of my own moral values. I also understood that this initial unfavourable impression regarding my participants was potentially damaging to the good relationship I sought to foster with them, which is a crucial part of this study.

After further reflection on my reaction to the incident, I decided to take an empathetic approach to limit my personal bias. By applying empathy on my participants, I meant to understand and share their thoughts, instead of exerting judgmental views on their practices based on my moral values. This empathetic approach helped me to see their world in a deeper sense, reduce my reflexivity and enhance my insider perspective of the Tenggerese. It also

helped me to build stronger relationships with my participants, which in turn, enabled me to gather richer information to support the study.

My subsequent documentation of other Keping performances were more insightful because I perceived the Tenggerese as who they are and not who I wanted them to be. When used together with the critical components, the empathetic approach greatly enhanced the way Tenggerese ritualistic practices are represented in the photography project.

4.4 The Photo Interview

From the photo-selection session with the vice Dukun, I identified several differing characteristics to the photo elicitation interview as compared to verbal interviews. First, the photo elicitation interview was lengthier and more cohesive than verbal interviews. The relaxed environment encouraged the participant to engage in conversation. Second, the interview allowed previously unconsidered information to surface. For example, from the photo-interview, I discovered that the position of Dukun is somewhat hereditary. Third, it offered the participant greater control over the discussion. The vice Dukun held the autonomy to discuss topics that he deemed important. Fourth, it simplified the process of gathering data. When we discussed how the landscape contributes to the Tenggerese, instead of finding suitable words to describe the landscape, I only needed to point him to a specific landscape photograph. From these identified characteristics, I argue that the documentary process can be improved by my proposed enhanced process since it has the ability to gather much richer data than traditional interviews.

Amongst the photographs I took, three of them are of particular interest to me. Figure 9. shows Mount Bromo with Pura Poten at the base of the mountain. I shot this image to visualise my interpretation of how the landscape, the Tenggerese and their ritualistic practices

Figure 9.

are unified as a single entity. Despite the fact that Mount Bromo is an active volcano which may potentially erupt, most of the important Tenggerese rituals are conducted in its vicinity. In addition, Mount Bromo supports the Tenggerese economically by catering to tourists who want to

experience a live volcano up close. For me, this image represents the unique Tenggerese identity. The vice Dukun co-selected this photograph as he felt it relates strongly to the people of Tengger and their way of life. I consider this as an example of how the documentary process can be enhanced by applying the process I am proposing.

Figure 10. shows the bamboo horses used by Kepang performers. This image was selected by the vice Dukun. He also selected two other images representing Kepang: one about child performers, and the other about some musicians in a Kepang performance. From the pool of images I offered him to

Figure 10.

select, I included several images of Kepang performers who went into trance and performed superhuman feats like chewing glass and contorting their bodies in unimaginable positions. I personally think that the images presenting the performers in trance are a stronger representation of Kepang because that is basically the apex of the performance. However, the

vice Dukun did not select any of those photos. If I had not adhered to the proposed enhanced process and focused on co-contribution between my participant and me, I would have chosen the prior pictures, and the photography project would not have effectively represented the Tenggerese.

I was pleasantly surprised when the vice Dukun selected the image in Figure 11. In this image, I show the Tenggerese udeng or headdress and their sarong. These two items are considered sacred and are symbols of Tenggerese identity. I also want to show the difficulty of

Figure 11.

farming, as can be seen from the rotting cabbages and the gloomy sky, which is a common sight in Tengger due to the high altitude of their land. My initial thought was that this image would be rejected by the vice Dukun because it does not portray a positive image of the community. In general, rotting

vegetables and gloomy skies are not the best representation of a positive and progressing community. My assumption was proven incorrect.

This element of my research substantiates that the proposed co-contribution enhanced process can dispel pre-conceived notions that I had of the Tenggerese and can lead to a more trustworthy representation of the community. The photo elicitation interview with the Tenggerese helped the participants enjoy the interview session as compared to traditional interviews, and showed that photographs can stimulate more thorough discussions.

4.5 Resolving Challenging Issues in Photographic Representation

Recognizing the need for trustworthy representation to circumvent a similar issue from arising, I informed the village representative during initial dialogues that the information collected from conversations within the village is subject to discretion and are used for educational purposes or at academic events for only a closed circle of scholars and specialists. However, the images themselves will be used for a wider audience and may appear in exhibitions, art festivals and book publications. The assurance of discretionary use of the information and images guarantees future access and sustained trust from the participants.

Also, my visual strategy is processed through the methodology matrix and derived from a careful deliberation of the emic perspective of the participants. This deliberation includes the process of reviewing past pictorial and textual reports of the Tenggerese and to put into images the knowledge and understanding gained through new research. When visualizing the ritualistic practices of the Tenggerese, existing pictorial materials were examined for negative and positive significance so as to decide what has not been visualised and what must be re-visualized in the approach toward the photography project. The images from this photography project represent the culmination of what I understand about the Tenggerese and their responses to these understandings. The concept of each potential image is carefully studied before physicalizing it into a presentation of a specific aspect of Tenggerese ritualistic practices.

My visualisation process also aims to produce images that can go beyond mere technical practice to also bring forth vital discussions about the Tenggerese ritualistic practices. In other words, the documentary process is free from any direction from media or photography agencies. In this way the photographer, who is also the researcher, can have the opportunity to strike a balance in illustrating the Tenggerese ritualistic practices in all their dignity and limitation, while also reducing any potential overwhelming ‘social desirability biasness’.

With the deliberations above, the photographs produced from the photography project are a response to the accumulated understanding of the ritualistic practices of the Tenggerese in Ngadisari village, including the unfavourable aspects, framed within an artistic backdrop. This was achieved by balancing both the positive and negative aspects of the Tenggerese ritualistic practices through artistic practice. Within each image, I present 3 elements consisting of the villager, their environment, and a religious article or item.

The juxtaposition of the three different elements within each image suggest the intrinsic relationship established by the Tenggerese with their environment and ritualistic practices. In some images, it was intentional to present just a small religious article in order to illustrate that though the community actively embraces rituals in their daily life, their understanding of these rituals remains minute. The children depicted in this series of images are the generation needed to carry on Tenggerese tradition and beliefs.

At the end of the fieldwork, I gathered that several cultural issues are embedded into Tenggerese ritualistic practises that are not immediately apparent. For example, the results show conflicting information on whether everyone in the village partakes in major ritualistic observances like the Nyepi, which is not the case. Even though the participants continue to practice their rituals, they have little knowledge of the implication of these rituals or the underlying theological reasons for them. These emic realisations could only have been achieved after spending a significant time engaging with the community.

4.6 Conclusion

In a world where objectivity and fact are in constant tussle with subjectivity and individual perspective, this research paper proposes the use of a methodology matrix for

approaching photography-based documentary works. The proposed enhanced process is composed of three pillars:

1. Establish a common ground between the participant and the photographer in the form of a partnership. This includes ethical considerations.
2. Co-contribution as a means to enhance the documentary process.
3. Adopting an empathetic approach when engaging participants.

The enhanced process is constructed to take into account multiple perspectives from different sources while at the same time limiting the influence of bias from narrative inquiries manifesting from literature and reference materials, the researcher-photographer's own reflexivity, and the Tenggerese community's 'social desirability biasness'.

The advantage of this enhanced process is the potential to connect different input from the participants, the photographer, and literature or references to achieve a balanced outcome made possible by amalgamating all feedback and information to produce a series of images representative of the specific ritualistic practices of Tengger and endorsed by the participants themselves.

If a visual product can be interpreted freely, it becomes art in the eye of science; art can be seen as only a cultural product that can be used as a material for ethnography, again, not ethnography by its own accord (Faris, 1992).

At the completion of the research, it is understood that to accurately represent any specific social practice of a community is no easy feat. The most challenging task encountered was gaining the trust of the participants. There is no standard formula to earning the privilege to an insider perspective, and each community is known to differ. However, it is important to observe the opinions of the participants and offer them an avenue to co-contribute in the documentary process.

As the medium of photography evolves along with ever-changing advances in media technology, this proposed enhanced process must be revisited periodically to ensure it remains relevant. As such, the enhanced process is not meant to be conclusive, but serves as a reference point for further experimentation and future discourse.

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