

## Photography and its Significance: Ethnomethodology Visual Analysis on Bateq Tribe Community

Mohd Shariful Hafizal Aminuddin, Fadli Abdul Razak<sup>1</sup>,  
Norfadilah Kamaruddin<sup>1</sup>, Nik Nor Azidah Nik Aziz<sup>1</sup>, Norol  
Hamiza Zamzuri<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Photomedia Creative , College of Creative Art , Univesiti Teknologi MARA, Selangor, Puncak  
Alam Campus, <sup>2</sup>Faculty of Business and Management 42300 UiTM Cawangan Selangor,  
Selangor Darul Ehsan

Corresponding Author Email: sharifulhafizal@uitm.edu.my

To Link this Article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v13-i6/17563> DOI:10.6007/IJARBSS/v13-i6/17563

**Published Date:** 12 June 2023

### Abstract

Photography is identical to language or the written word, also considered as the medium of instruction. There are many types of photography, including their functions, and it is usefully considered to operate in relation to some explanatory, interpretive, and theoretical linguistic claims. As a result, the indigenous communities in Peninsular Malaysia have been exclusively documented through documentary photography, focusing on the Bateq tribe. Documentary photography offers a straightforward and accurate photograph of people, places, objects, and events and is often used in reporting and research activities. Therefore, the main objective of the research is to develop a broad understanding of cultural traditions and sustainable living values documented in a systematic study. The lack of structured visual data obtainability in the Bateq tribe prompts this research to use qualitative data methods. This research used ethnographic methodology and ethnomethodology that required spending a whole day interacting with the community. It is expected to produce a comprehensive documentary about the way of life of indigenous sustainability through visual analysis.

**Keywords:** Bateq Tribe, Ethnography, Ethnomethodology, Systematic Documentary Photojournalism

### Introduction

Pahang, particularly in the Jerantut district, holds the treasures of human civilization, unique natural treasures identified as the many tropical rainforests in Peninsular Malaysia. The Orang Asli comprises one of 95 subgroups of indigenous people of Malaysia, the Orang Asal, each with their distinct language and culture. Retrieved from the Indigenous World Malaysia (2020), as of 2017, the Orang Asli accounted for 13.8% of the 31,660,700 national population

and is collectively known as Orang Asal. The Bateq tribe is the original Orang Asli (numbering about 1,519 in 2000); it belongs to the Semang group. It means "native people" or "orang asal" in Malay and has probably been first used to identify these people by the British.

Their language of transmission is Bateq, and the history of the origin of this speech is the Eastern Jahaic sub-branch of Aslian languages, which is part of a wider Mon-Khmer language family. Batek is primarily an oral language with few written records, but it is usually written in a modified Latin alphabet (Bradley, 2007). The Malay Empire of Srivijaya met the Negritos, who lived in the rainforests of the Malaysian peninsula. As a result of the invasion, they now mostly populate Taman Negara National Park. The Bateq tribes are nomadic hunters and gatherers, so the actual location of their settlements varies within the general boundaries of the area they inhabit (Hashim, 2010).

Based on a disclosure statement from Malay Mail, 15 May (2020) posit that "Bateq Tribe" is an undersized group of Orang Asli in Malaysia since the COVID-19 pandemic. Nevertheless, they also had to move deep into the forest, not because of their traditions but because of the presence of poachers and illegal loggers who invaded their area (Endicott, 2015). This may cause difficulties and challenges in approaching the Bateq tribe in understanding cultural traditions and sustainable life values to be recorded in a systematic study. The photograph is essential to interpret by examining three types of contextual information: internal, native, and external (Barrett, 1986). The photographs have beneficially been seen as functioning analogously to certain language statements namely explanatory, interpretive, and theoretical.

As stated in Mustaffa's (2013) argument in "Emphasis", photography is analogous to language or written words, considered the primary communication method. There are numerous types of photography, each serving a distinct purpose. The photography industry, mainly digital photography, which is currently leading the world, is a combination of art and technical competence that contributes to other sectors such as commerce, science, the arts, sports, and medicine, among others. It is feasible to give continuity of their ancestor's stories (storytellers) of their folks, complementing to the availability of reference resources such as video and print media, hence eventually keeping the originality of their visual arts (Fadli, 2013).

This study highlights the documentation of sustainable development and changes to the Bateq indigenous tribe. Some aspects are observed and studied individually with respective Bateq tribes, including clothes, customs, influences, conversations, thoughts, social culture, food, socializing, and some aspects, all of which can be seen from the naked eye through documentary photography.

## **Literature Review**

### **Indexing Visual Information**

Visual analysis of the past either still or moving images in context of documentaries are the electronic media to record and show activity in visual media activities. They emphasize that data visualization is an effective way to research and collect data. Visual documentation can be used in several ways for research, including participatory videography, existing data interviews and elicitation, and based fieldwork (Jewitt, 2012). This statement is supported by Hariss (2015), who stated that visual (moving images) is multi-perspectival. The greatest strength of choosing is traceability which has almost limitless potential for gathering, analyzing, writing up and disseminating the research findings.

Furthermore, the visual analysis as the method in teaching and learning resources and visual aids is unique (Bishop & Verleger, 2013). This visual documentation is able to provide footage and visuals that can explain a more in-depth understanding of the data collection. For compressing the storyline and information on the research topic, Lorang (2010) stated that it is crucial to exploit and examine the subject through visual adaptation in interpretive and theoretical documentation through photographs. Hence, this research attempted to embark on utilizing this method for further work.

### **Visual Documentary as a Research Method**

Due to their comprehensive element, documentaries have proven to be more accurate at persuading audiences and portraying reality (Nichols, 2010). Factual documentaries are currently being used more frequently in academics to spread knowledge. In recent years, documentaries have been helpful in the field of research to focus exclusively on social justice issues and existing injustices in public education and to disseminate research, according to an emerging theory (Friend & Caruthers, 2016). This indicates that the processes used in established qualitative approaches can be used in documentary filmmaking, encompassing site selection, participant selection, consent, investigation, significance, and reporting of discoveries (Friend & Caruthers, 2016).

To support this statement, in considering ethical issues, documentary photography involves many regular thoughts on the part of the researchers, preserving the integrity of both the photograph and the participants. Researchers who use narratives as a research instrument might consider a few other factors. According to Barrett (2020), in the definition of interpretive photography, the object must be depicted in a favourable, artistic, startling, or compelling manner. In addition to the literal representation of the topic being photographed, it is intended to convey a message to the viewers. To provide the spectator the opportunity to form their interpretation and to feel whichever they like when they are in front of an image, it can be abstract but does not necessarily have to be at the same time. In addition to conducting focus groups or interviews, data collection involves methodically planning scene composition, lighting, and interviewing techniques. Nichols (2010) stated that to provide context, it includes capturing the surrounding area; how to frame the photographs is crucial for data collection because the data influence the message conveyed to the audience.

### **Ethnography and Ethnomethodology Participant Observation**

The term "ethnography" can refer to a philosophical paradigm that one fully embraces, or it can refer to a procedure that one employs only when necessary. However, there are situations between these two categories. This ethnography usually refers to social research methods that are widely used. According to Rouncefield (2014), a qualitative research method called ethnography emphasizes the close examination of individuals in their natural environments. It is derived from anthropology. The participant observes people's behaviours and interactions while experiencing a similar climate to the occupants of that environment (Ajayi, 1994).

Ethnography is an observational approach that looks at work as it is practised in a naturalistic environment and that ethnomethodology is an approach to analysis that prioritises the actors' organizational strategies for work rather than attempting to analyze this using a theoretical framework. Laurier (2020) reiterated that the study of social life through the lens of ethnomethodology offers a unique perspective on how people in certain situations create social order through routine behaviours. The connection between actions and narratives is a

topic within ethnomethodology. It presupposes that participants are interested in producing different activities and treat the action as always accountable. Whether the methods used are from the social sciences or other areas of social activity, ethnomethodological studies aim to treat members' approaches in a non-ionic manner.

## **Method**

### **Research Methodology**

This research will use ethnographic methodology and ethnomethodology in spending a whole day interacting with the Bateq tribe community in Kuala Tahan, Pahang. It involved an execution through participant interview, observation, and visual documentary documentation. A detailed research design was developed by presenting specific research questions to meet the research objectives, mainly to conduct a visual analysis of the Bateq tribe community that would be thoroughly documented, including the perspective of how this community is in a specific situation by creating social order through routine behaviour.

### **Data Collection Phase 1**

To further understand the behaviour and features of the Bateq tribe community, a group of researchers and photographers (SS & S&T) gathered the secondary data for the first phase ahead of the study. All secondary data were obtained and reviewed with literature and journals regarding the Bateq tribe.

### **Data Collection Phase 2**

The researcher obeyed the subject's interaction behaviour and features during the second data collection phase. Photo documentary is a method to interpret by examining internal, original, and external contextual information in explanatory, interpretive, and theoretical statements. All processes are satisfactory with all the instruments of photographic tools, which are documented in a daily time frame in connection with visual storytelling.

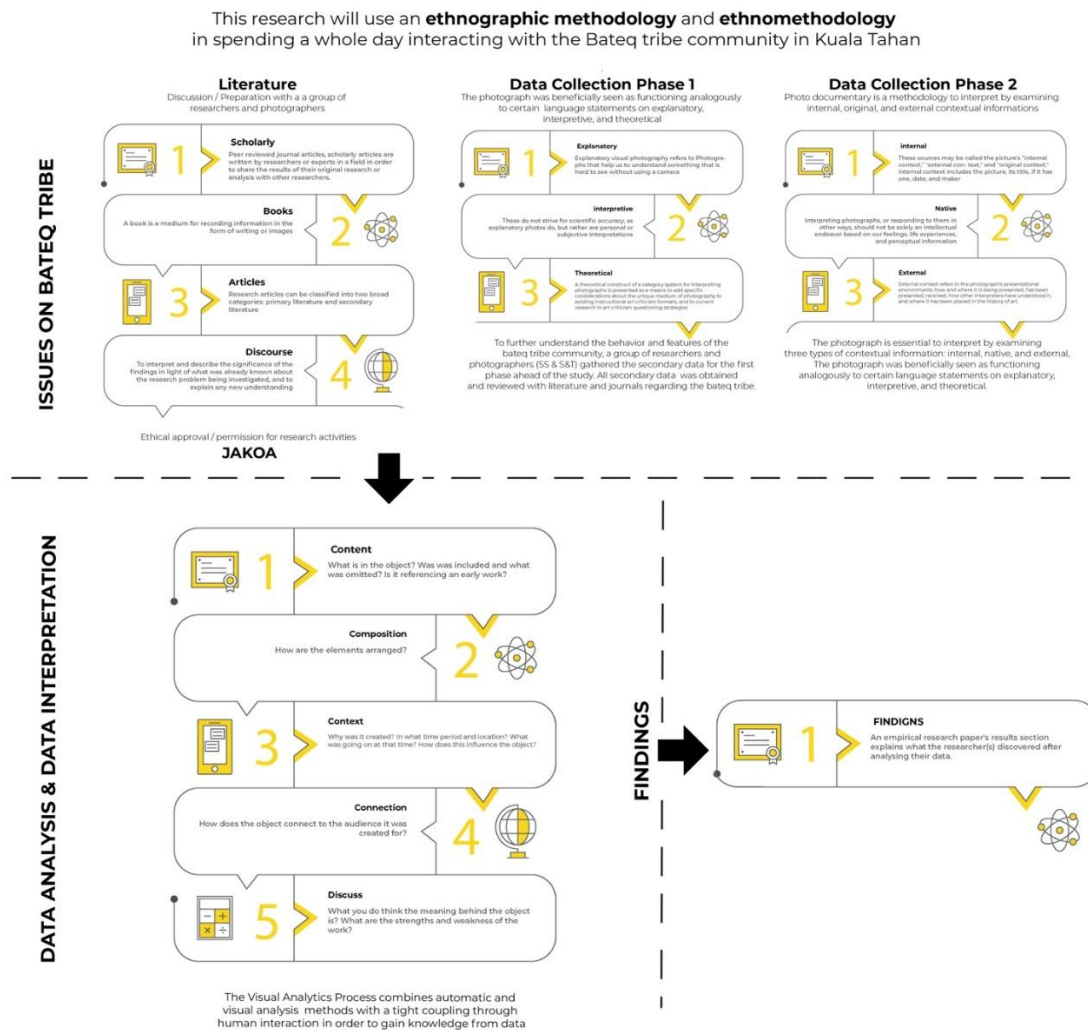


Figure 1: *Ethnomethodology Visual Analysis on Bateq Tribe*

## Results and Conclusions

Indigenous people have a profound connection to the land and the natural world. Their distinctive cultures, dialects, and traditional wisdom reflect this relationship. However, globalization and modernization are putting pressure on these cultures, and they are increasingly at risk of disappearing. The ethnomethodology approach has been proposed to help document and preserve the Orang Asli culture. It is a way of studying communication and social interaction that focuses on how people make sense of their everyday lives through structured research.

This includes how they interact with each other and their natural environment. Ethnomethodology research can be used to document and preserve indigenous culture through visual data analysis. This involves looking at body language, art, and other visual cues to understand how people interact with their world. It can help us understand the deep meaning behind what people do and see.

Based on this discussion, the study has been highlighted by Laurier (2020) that had studied social life through the prism of ethnomethodology. It offers a distinctive viewpoint on how individuals in certain circumstances establish social order through customary practices. Visual data analysis can be a powerful tool for preserving indigenous cultures because it can help the researcher to understand the rich history and meaning behind what people do.

However, it is essential to remember that each indigenous culture is unique and has its way of interpreting the world. It is crucial to seek advice from an indigenous expert in conducting visual data analysis. This guarantees that the research is carried out respectfully while considering the community's concerns.

This research can potentially be a guideline for future researchers by proposing a conceptual framework for visual data analysis. It helps policymakers to improve (SDG No 4: Quality Education), ensure inclusive and equitable quality education, and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. Besides, it may assist policymakers in devising (SDG No. 1: No Poverty) mechanisms to reduce poverty in the community of Orang Asli. This study can also contribute knowledge concerning indigenous people and the preservation of historical, cultural, and original crafts made by indigenous communities for the Jabatan Kemajuan Orang Asli (JAKOA) and stakeholder.

## **Conclusion**

### ***The Bateq Tribe: How Can Ethnomethodology Help Researchers to Understand Indigenous Communities***

The significance of visual information increases as the world becomes increasingly digitalized. Images and videos can now be captured and stored more effectively than ever before. Besides, this information can be used to discover and understand the world around us.

By using ethnomethodology to explore the tribe, researchers were able to learn about their social and cultural traditions, language, and forms of communication. Researchers discovered that the tribe communicates through various visual signs, such as gestures, body language, and facial expressions. To understand the tribe's communication, these cues are frequently combined with spoken language.

In conclusion, ethnomethodology is an effective instrument for visual data interpretation. It enables us to comprehend how people relate to and interpret their environments. Researchers have gained insight into an indigenous tribe's social and cultural behaviours, language, and communication by using ethnomethodology to examine the community, specifically on the Bateq tribe.

## **Acknowledgment**

The researchers would like to thank the Bateq tribe community of Kuala Tahan, Pahang, the Institute of Biodiversity and Sustainability (IBDS), Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) and Jabatan Kemajuan Orang Asli (JAKOA) for the co-operation rendered. Finally, their immense gratitude is due to the Project Management Centre (RMC) UiTM for providing the fund for this research - *A Sustainable Design Model for Social Wellbeing Among Che Wong Community Towards Photojournalism Roles, 600-RMC/GPM SS 5/3 (092/2021)*.

## **References**

Lankford, E. L. (1984). A Phenomenological Methodology for Art Criticism Studies in Art Education, Vol. 25, No. 3. (Spring, 1984), pp. 151-158.

- Ajayi, O. D. (1994). Ethnography and participant observation. *Handbook of Qualitative Research*.
- Barrett, T. (1986). A Conceptual Framework for Understanding Photographs. *Visual Arts Research*, 12(1), 68–77. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20715614>
- Barrett, T. (2020). *Criticizing photographs: An introduction to understanding images*. Routledge,
- De Lange, N., Olivier, T., & Wood, L. (2008). Participatory video documentary: Just for whom?
- Laurier, E., & Bodden, S. (2020). International Encyclopedia of Human Geography (Second Edition). Filmmaking - is the academy ready? *Mcgill Journal of Education*, 49(3), 561-582. doi: 10.7202/1033547ar.
- Friend, J., & Caruthers, L. (2016). Documentary film: The next step in qualitative research to Teaching & Educational Research, 15(6), 33-47.
- Friend, J., & Militello, M. (2015). Lights, camera, action: Advancing learning, research, and program evaluation through video production in educational leadership preparation. *Journal of Research on Leadership Education*, 10(2), 81-103. DOI: 10.1177/1942775114561120
- Rouncefield, M. (2014) *Fieldwork, Ethnography and Ethnomethodology*, Lancaster
- Nichols, B. (2010). *Introduction to documentary* (2nd ed.). Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press.
- Petrarca, D. M., & Hughes, J. M. (2014). *Mobilizing knowledge via documentary*.