

Megalithic Research In Indonesia Yesterday and Tomorrow *)

I Made Sutaba

Abstract

Megalithic research in Indonesia was carried out since the beginning of the 19 century. On the early stage, research was entirely depend on the report given by the local people, and based on typological approach. When the evidences became increasing, megalithic problems became more complex covering its homeland, typology, diffusion and background.

During the last two decades, research have covered nearly the whole areas of Indonesia and succesfully discovered a great number of evidences, namely menhirs, dolmens, sarcophagi etc. Unfortunately research on the main specific problems covering the social dynamic of the megalithic society in Indonesia have not yet done systematically. It is hoped to do more research in the future on certain aspects on the social life of the megalithic society, and as well as on the changes continuity of the tradition along its history to learn the dynamic role of the local people within their cultural frame.

Research on the megalithic tradition in Indonesia was started since the beginning of the 19 century by the Dutch prehistorians based on the report that came from the local people. On this early stage, research was done in a general view and based on technological approach (Heekeren, 1958 : 44-79). When the evidences was increasing gradually, the megalithic problems became to be a very large and complex matters, namely its homeland, typology, diffusion and background. Having such problems, further research was done carefully in Indonesia from sites to another sites. Answering the homeland problem of the megalithic tradition, McMillan Brown (1907) have pointed out that the megalithic tradition was distributed by the Caucasian race through Mediterranean areas and then to South Asia. The same matter was studied also by W.J. Perry and supported by ethnographical material, he declared that the megalithic tradition was originated from Egypt. He also proposed that the Egyptian is **The Children of the Sun** who delivered the stone

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technology and the worship to *The Sun God* (Perry, 1918; 1927). Further research in Indonesia did not proved it (Mulia, 1981: 2; Sutaba, 1996).

Later on research was done by H.R. von Heine Geldern (1945: 126-260) in connection with South East Asia. Then he concluded that the megalithic tradition was brought here by the Austronesian speaking people through India and Malaka. There are two kinds of megalithic waves arriving in Indonesia, namely the older megalithic tradition produced dolmens, menhirs etc. The other one is the younger megalithic tradition consisted of sarcophagi, stone chamber etc. Actually, it is impossible to separate both elements carefully, because both of them were found together in a single site. More attention was paid to a limited area, but very rich of archaeological remains, such as research in Pasemah, South Sumatra by A.N.J. Th. a' Th. van der Hoop. He has done a deep study and succesfully discovered a large variety of megalithic monuments, namely menhirs, dolmens, stone statues etc. These valuable remains have made Pasemah to be an important megalithic tradition development center. Beside that, research was done also in another megalithic center namely in Nias by Rumbi Mulia (1981) that preserved a great number of megalithic remains e.g. menhirs, decorated stone seats etc. It is remarkable that in this small island living megalithic tradition is still alive and play an important role in the religious life of the local people. Then research was done also in oth-

er areas of Indonesia, but on a specific megalithic elements that was found in a certain limited areas. Among them it is important to mention here such as, the research on *waruga* in Minahasa, North Sulawesi; on *kalamba* in Central Sulawesi and on *pandhusa* in Pekauman, East Java.

The above mentioned research seems to pay more attention to the type of the megalithic remains than to the social life of people, except the research done by van der Hoop in Pasemah and research in Nias by Rumbi Mulia. Research on the megalithic tradition in Indonesia then turned to the social life basis for learning the inside life of the megalithic society. Among the researches, for instance, done by R.P. Soejono (1977) on a great number of sarcophagi found in the whole of Bali. He has studied not only the type and distribution of sarcophagi, but he went also into the social life of the local people. In this line he discussed the social dynamic of the Balinese people which was performed by the local type and the decoration patters on the knobs of sarcophagi.

The other research was done by Haris Sukendar (1993) on the function of a big number of the menhir-statues found in some places in Indonesia, mainly in its connection with the religious life of the megalithic society. He came into the social dynamic of the megalithic society based on the archaeological remains and ethnographical data that did not only derive from Indonesia, but also from South East Asia, Oceania, Pacific and

other. Research was done also by I Made Sutaba (1995) on more than a hundred stone seats discovered in the megalithic center in Bali. It is remarkable that most of these findings are an important living monuments and only a small number of them have lost their sacred function. He has spent his research not only to the technological and typological matter but also he paid more attention to the social dynamic and religious life of the megalithic society as well.

It is known already that the megalithic tradition was worldwide distributed and ancestor worship was the main element of the tradition (Bellwood, 1978; Loofs, 1967). It is very lucky that Indonesia has a large number of the rich megalithic tradition centers and among them there are a number of living megalithic tradition centers in some places. Research on the megalithic tradition is ongoing in progress to complete our present state of knowledge on the tradition. In the near future, research should be well integrated and planned to cover not only the archaeological data, but also go into the inside of the social dynamic of the megalithic society. In such matter, a very special attention should be put in the first priority to the living megalithic tradition or to the living megalithic traditional villages, because the social dynamic of the megalithic societies preserved the tradition along its history up to the present days, Here continuity in changes could not be stopped at all, but the dynamic role of the local people has successfully built a strong megalithic society within their

cultural frame. Learning the social dynamic of the megalithic society in Indonesia seem to be in emergency condition before the valuable cultural heritage disappeared from the people's life, due to the high speed of globalization, and the other reasons.

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