






Social and Religious Functions of Megalithic Culture in Sangihe Island, North Sulawesi

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Abstract. Sangihe Island is one of the large Islands located at the northern tip of Sulawesi Island which has several forms and types of megalithic culture spread both on Sangihe Island and the surrounding small Islands. Each type of megalithic culture certainly has a social and religious function in people's lives on Sangihe Island, social functions, especially cooperation, cooperation, and religi. The aim is to find out the social and religious functions of this scattered megalithic culture, using an ethnoarchaeological approach by conducting a comprehensive survey of the megalithic relics scattered on Sangihe Island. Interviews were conducted directly with people who still use and know the function of megalithic findings in their area. Several types of megalithic remains on Sangihe Island, namely, dolmens, stone graves, pit market stones, menhirs, and stone mortars, are scattered on the coast and hills. Research on dolmen megalithic remains and test stone graves dating analysis provides evidence that burial cultures have been known since 1920 ± 30 BP.

Keywords: social function · religion · dolmen · stone grave · menhir

1 Introduction

Megalithic in Indonesia became known towards the end of prehistory and continued to develop until the time of history. Various forms of monumental buildings were created adapting to the environmental circumstances of each region. Various forms of megalithic buildings known in Indonesia include; stone mortars, stone vat (*kalamba*), pit market stones, stone statues, dolmens, menhirs, stone altars, stepped punden, scratched stones, stone cist (*waruga*), sarcophagus, stone chests, circular stones, stone chairs, stone chambers, and stone boats. The distribution of megalithic types and sites in Indonesia has been believed by experts to be one of the cultures brought by Austronesian speakers. The idea that believes this is explained by Bellwood (2000) through the Out of Taiwan theory which says that the distribution of Austronesian-speaking people originated in southern China and then spread to Southeast Asia including Indonesia. According to this theory, Austronesian speakers have been included in the Indonesian Archipelago since 4000 years ago (Prasetyo, 2015).

The megalithic traces on Sangihe Island are scattered in several locations, with various types and shapes. These cultural remains from the megalithic period that were found give an idea of how the people on Sangihe Island in the past have begun to know technology. Although it is still very simple, they have been able to create a means to get closer to their creator. Until now, archaeological remains related to megalithic cultures spread across Sangihe Island include; stone mortar which is found on a large boulder with an irregular shape with 4 holes and 1 small hole (pit market stone). Located in Pensu hill, Pananekeng Village, West Tahuna District. Pit market stones in Kauhis Village, Tamako District, and 2 menhirs in Mala Village, Manganitu District (Sriwigati, 2017).

Archaeological remains distributions are dolmens and stone graves. As of 2021, there are 40 sites with 683 stone grave findings spread across two districts, namely South Manganitu District including Lapango Village and Lapango 1 Village, and Tamako District in Makalekuhe Village, Bebu Village, Kalinda Village 1, Mahumu Induk Village and Mahumu II Village is located on Mahumu Island (Sriwigati, 2021). In particular, stone grave artifacts and dolmens, there is a process of taking materials until the lifting to the grave reveals the social value of mutual aid because it involves many people in the process of lifting (Fig. 1).

Social stratification is a system of distinction of individuals or groups in society, which places them in different social classes hierarchically and provides different rights and obligations between individuals at one layer and another. The system of social stratification is the distinction of the population or society into classes in a stratified manner, which is embodied in the high class, medium class, and low class. The basis and core of the system of stratification of society is the imbalance of the division of rights and obligations, as well as the responsibilities of each individual or group in a social system. The classification in these classes is based on a certain social system into

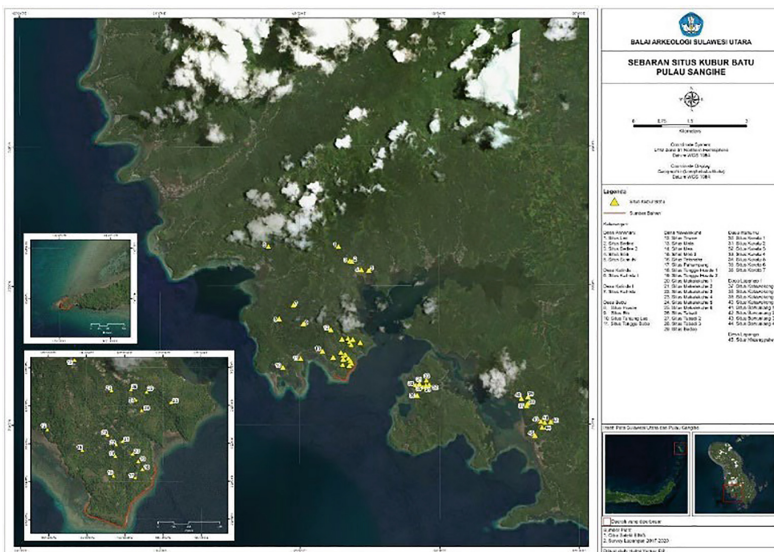


Fig. 1. Map of the distribution of dolmens and stone graves

a more hierarchical layer according to the dimensions of power, privilege and prestige. It is an important determinant of social class due to its role in providing an overview of a person's family background and way of life.

Social stratification occurs due to the division (segmentation) of social classes in society. A social class is a layer (strata) of people who have equal standing in a unitary series of social statuses. Social class is an important social reality, not just a theoretical concept, but also grouping them into; First, wealth and income. Wealth and income are important determinants of social class due to their role in providing an overview of a person's family background and way of life. Second, work. Work is one of the best indicators to know a person's way of life, so indirectly work is the best indicator to know a person's social class. Third, education. Education is considered more important because it not only gives birth to job skills but also gives birth to changes in one's mentality, tastes, interests, goals, ways of speaking, and changes in the overall way of life. In addition to the known existence of social classes in society, some elements make up the layers of society. The two elements are status and role.

The structural theory of functionalism in megalithic research on Sangihe Island is closely related to society. The culture of the use of dolmens and stone graves is an integrative need for customs and customs, religion, and social status in the community at the site of the distribution of the site. The custom in Sangihe society of using dolmens and stone graves has been going on for a long time, because of the nature of this structural theory of functionalism that emphasizes order and ignores conflicts in society, the culture still survives today. The culture of burying deceased relatives using dolmens or stone graves became a tradition (custom) for generations. Sangihe people believe the relationship between the living and the deceased will never be broken for the relatives of the deceased should be treated as well as possible, especially at the time of burial, the burial site is deliberately placed close to their dwelling. The size of dolmens and stone graves shows social status, large dolmens are intended for traditional figures, religious figures, and people with good economic levels. Medium-sized dolmens are for most people, while small-sized dolmens are usually used for people who are located at the bottom.

2 Method

The process of understanding the social and religious functions of megalithic remains on Sangihe island is carried out by qualitative methods that are descriptive with an ethnoarchaeological approach, with the path of developing interview data and examining in detail the existing archaeological findings to prove whether the explanation is in context with the findings and how people behave now to the findings.

The collection of archaeological data carried out in this study was conducted by survey, including mapping the site and distribution of dolmens and stone graves using the Total Station, detailed measurement of artifacts one by one, depiction of findings, photo documentation of dolmen artifacts and stone graves, taking coordinate points using GPS and describing the environment of the site. This series of activities also conducted interviews with speakers who knew about stone graves.

In addition to survey data collection techniques, data collection is also carried out through excavation. Excavation is one of the techniques of collecting data through systematic excavation to find an or set of archaeological remains in situ. Through excavation, it is hoped that information will be obtained about the form of findings, relationships between findings, stratigraphic relationships, chronological, natural, and human relationships after the findings are deposited (deposition context).

3 Results and Discussion

3.1 Social Systems on Dolmens and Stone Graves

The dolmens and stone graves present in Sangihe as a whole are in the estate area of the inhabitants and were found along with the newer graves. The custom of placing dolmens and stone graves in the garden and yard of the house is carried out by the community because of strong ties with deceased family members so that the surviving family always remembers their deceased ancestors and makes it easier for them to send prayers or offerings. Another reason is limited land, which is common in the cemetery area, deliberately planted crops that are necessities such as sago and other crops.

Dolmen is generally described as a stone table, which is a large stone that is worked on or not that functions as a roof or table, supported by several stones that function as its feet (Prasetyo, 2015). Dolmens are found in the regions of Sumatra, Java, Kalimantan, Sumba, Maluku and Papua (Fig. 2).

Dolmens as one of the types of megalithic remains, and their distribution is very wide, throughout the world dolmens are found from the Atlantic Coast to the Ural Mountains, from the borders of the Russian Region to the Pacific Ocean, from the Siberian Steppe region to the Hindustan Plain. It has the same shape and characteristics and is built in the same way (Kasnowiharjo, 2017).

Stone graves consists of flattened stones (sheet joints), flat, and not too thick arranged in the shape of a trenches, two sides short and the other two sides walls (Fig. 3). In Indonesia, the distribution of stone grave includes in the Pagaralam (South Sumatra), Buning (Cirebon), Cibuntu, Patalagan, Ragawacana, Cirendang, Rajadanu, Cigadung, Cigugur, Cipari and Citangtu (Kuningan), Kajar, Bleberan (Wonosari), Cepu and Bukit Pontang



Fig. 2. Dolmens

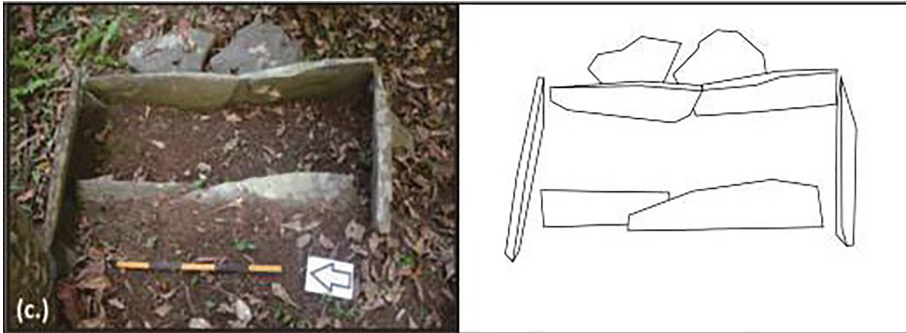


Fig. 3. Stone graves

(Blora), Kawengan, Kidangan, Gunung Mas (Bojonegoro), Mount Sigro (Tuban), and Bah Kalalan the border between Serawak and East Kalimantan (Prasetyo, 2015).

The distribution of stone graves in the Southeast Asian region is in Laos and Thailand with the name slab trenches stone. The date results for the age of the slab trenches stone in Thailand were 2350 BP until the 4th century. In other regions are Malaysia, stone graves known as slab graves are distributed in the west Malaysian, Sabah, Sarawak, and Perak. The date for stone graves in this region is 200 BC (Hasanuddin, 2015: 72). Pacific region, the distribution is in the central Melanesian region (Prasetyo, 2015).

The source of dolmen material and stone graves in geological terms is known as sheet joint. A joint is a fracture (crack in a rock) that relatively does not experience a shift in its fracturing plane, caused by tectonic and non-tectonic symptoms (Ragan, 1973). A sheet joint group that is roughly parallel to the ground level. Sheet joint occurs mainly in igneous rocks. Sheet joints are formed as a result of the removal of eroded rock loads. The removal of the load on the sheet joint occurs due to a) The igneous rock has not completely frozen completely; b) Accelerated erosion processes on the top of igneous rocks and; c) The presence of superficial concordant (sill) intrusion events. The sheet joint on Sangihe Island is at two distribution points namely; Makalekuhe sheet joint in Makalekuhe Village is located along the coast from west to east, starting from Kohase Beach, Tatonaha Beach, Pedatole Beach to Pahampang Beach, with a beach length of 1172 m. Kekar Nagha in Nagha II Village is located on the Lelapide beach which is a cape with a length that comes to the surface is 100 m with a height of 24 m above sea level (Fig. 4).

The stage in the process of using stone graves and dolmens for a single death begins at the moment after the dead are buried, the family gathers to talk about when to retrieve the grave material. Usually, the family's agreement to retrieval of materials is carried out a week after the body is buried. Material retrieval is carried out by piercing a boulder with an iron tool tapered at the end, after the iron enters the part of it in the boulder, given oil, the boulder will break following the groove. Based on the narrative of the traditional elders of Pananaru and Lapango Villages, lifting large stones requires as many as 50 to 100 people to do it by relay. The burly rocks that have been taken from the coastal cliffs are arranged in the middle of the wood (using resin wood), then clamped with wood and tied using ropes from straight tree roots. The larger the sheet joint stone chosen, the



Fig. 4. Dolmens and stone graves material

greater the cost required to transport. As more and more people are involved in lifting and the time it takes longer because the rocks are so heavy, it usually takes a week.

The process of transporting using a boat if the grave location is on another island is carried out using a selected stone lifted near the boat, then tied under the boat. When the burly stone taken is large, use two boats in a burly way the stone is tied to the bottom of the boat. The fastening of the rocks is carried out at low tide, then after the tide, the group returns to their destination. Before the removal or after the source of the grave material will be used there is no work process on the dolmen lid or stone grave. It seems that aesthetics does not take precedence.

After the stone is ready to be lifted using human labor, one person is standing/sitting on the rock as the giver of command, this person holding a tagonggong (type of drum, typical Sangihe musical instrument). Along the way, tagonggong was hit continuously as an encouragement for the people who lifted the stone. While carrying the stone, the strength fight is also carried out, it seems that the strength fight is carried out by pushing each other's heads like a bullfight, and the legs kick each other, this is done out of consciousness because it is under the influence of liquor (arak/saguer) (Fig. 5).



Fig. 5. Transport of dolmens and stone graves

Upon arriving at the burial site, the grave material has not been immediately installed, and the family will again agree on when is the right time to lay the stone. There is no feast in this burly installation of stones, only preceded by a brief worship as a Christian before the stone is set. The supports are first installed, the way the soil is dug up a little, then natural stone or burly stones are arranged after which a cover is installed on it. Menaka Batu procession concluded with a thanksgiving party in the form of feeding all workers (interview Mr. Hino Patindaheng).

3.2 Religion in Megalithic Culture Dolmens and Stone Graves

Belief or religion is the understanding of all aspects of the universe that are regarded as truth or absolute. Religious sistem can exist as system beliefs, and ideas about God, gods, spirits, hell, paradise and others but also as various forms of ceremonies (both seasonal and numeral), as well as sacred and religious objects.

The religious activities of the Sangihe people in the past knew several religious rituals such as the *mesundeng* ritual. *Sundeng* as a community in which there is a cultural life and a social system that has a relationship with a force that is considered more powerful than that community. This community regulates the existence of religious leaders called *ampuang*. *Ampuang* acts as the highest-ranking person in his community. In carrying out its activities, *ampuang* is assisted by the *tatanging* and the *bihing*.

The determination of position in the *sundeng* community is carried out through the process of discipleship or *bawihingang*. The main activity of the *mesundeng* ritual is *menale* or offering offerings. At first, the giving of offerings was carried out in the form of sacrifices that sacrificed man to the ruler of nature. The *sundeng* ritual is not carried out in each village but is carried out in a worship center called *penanaruang*. The place where the *sundeng* ritual is performed is in Manganitu, Pananaru, Mahumu Island, and several other places. The largest worship center is located in Pananaru Village, Tamako District.

The *sundeng* ritual was attended by the smallest *sundeng* community envoys from each village. Not all *sundeng* communities have *ampuang* or *tatanging*, most small communities only have a *bihing*. Broadly speaking, the procedure for implementing *menale* activities starts from the gathering of members of the *sundeng* community. Sit in a circle based on position and role in worship activities. Preparing someone who will be sacrificed. Ask for instructions from the realm lord. After being stabbed, one person was stabbed who had been prepared with a tool called *kenang*. It is believed that the victim's soul went to another realm. The transfer of victim lives is ushered in cultural processions such as *lide dance*, wasps of *oli* instruments" accompanied by *tagonggong* and *nanaungang*.

After all the activities were completed, all the participants had a meal together. The *sundeng* community believes in a power that exceeds their strength, for which they offer sacrifices as a form of relationship between humans and the ruler of nature. The power that exceeds the power of man in the *sundeng* community is the power of the invisible or the spirit. The power consists of three spirit elements that are distinguished from the people who worship it, namely *ghenggonalangi*, *aditinggi* and *mawendo*. *Ghenggonalangi* is a sky-high power that rules the entire earth. *Aditinggi* is the highest, worshipped by people

in the hills. *Mawendo* is a force based in the sea that is worshipped by the people of the sea and on the coast.

When the *sundeng* ritual was still carried out in a *sundeng* community, a ritual called *medaroro* appeared. The essence of this ritual is to search for and find clues from the spirits of dead ancestors. The *medaroro* ritual was still performed in Pananaru until 1976, and in Manganitu until the 1960s. The concept and procedure for implementing the *medaroro* ritual is still adapted from the *sundeng* ritual including its location.

The difference between *sundeng* and *medaroro* is that sacrificial offerings no longer use humans but use pigs. Human sacrifices were replaced with pigs, beginning at the time of the entry of Europeans into the Sangihe Islands. In the end, the sacrificial offerings in the *medaroro* ritual were replaced with offerings of yellow rice offerings. The meaning of the power worshipped in the *medaroro* ritual is no longer to *ghenggonalangi*, *aditinggi* and *mawendo* but to *himukudě*. In addition to the *sundeng* and *medaroro* rituals, there are still other rituals that have been performed by the Sangihe community in the past such as the rituals of *menahulending banua*, *menondo sakaeng*, *mendangeng sake*, *melanise tembonang*, *menaka batu*, and others.

The ritual of *menaka batu* (covering the grave with stones) is a ritual related to the event of death, this ritual is performed sometime after the burial of the corpse. *Menaka batu* ritual shows the social status of the community, the graves that have the largest stone covers come from the upper class while the graves that have small stone covers from the lower circles (interview Mr. Alffian Walukow, 52 year, May 24, 2019). The ritual of lifting stones like in Sangihe is also known in the Sumba area as *tengi watu* (Handini, 2019).

When Christianity come to Sangihe in 1857 brought by zendelings from the Netherlands including E.T. Steller, traditions that had been carried out and not by religious teachings were also prohibited. Steller and his colleagues immediately made efforts to improve the congregation. They want all members to have a righteousness of heart and chastity of life. They eradicated superstitious beliefs, drinking, and polygamous marriages that are prevalent among Christians (End, 2001). Related to this teaching, the use of stone burly began to decrease because the rituals in the process of rapture and burial were considered inconsistent with the teachings of Christianity. In addition, the lifting process requires a lot of human labor, a long time, and a lot of costs. Without realizing it by the community, the impact of the ban, namely unity, and cooperation, began to disappear slowly.

3.3 Contextual Findings and Chronology of Megalithic Culture on Sangihe Island

Data collection by the survey of the distribution of dolmens and stone graves in the southern part of Sangihe Island in two sub-districts, namely Tamako District and South Manganitu District, located in eight villages and 45 sites with two material source locations. Several site locations found artifacts related to grave provisions or cult media. The artifacts are pottery, ceramics, and metals.

Pottery fragments found in the study area are derived from excavation findings and surface findings. The findings from the excavation came from two sites, namely from the TP1 trenches of the Tatonaha Site and the TP1 trenches of the Makalekuhe Site. The

surface finds come from Makalekuhe Site, Bio Site, Tabadi 1 Site, Tabadi 3 Site on Sangir Island, and Kareta 7 Site on Mahumu Island. Pottery fragments on excavated trenches were found to a depth of 20 cm or Spit 2 at Tatonaha Site and Makalekuhe Site. The entire pottery fragments found are plain pottery fragments. Some of these fragments are red slip pottery, and the rest are pottery fragments without slips.

Ceramics are surface finds obtained around the grave site, and ceramics are found in fragmentary conditions. The data on foreign ceramics is evidence of a relationship with foreigners from outside, to come to trade with Sangihe Island, traders enter the island marketing foreign ceramics which are not local products. The existence of the port is one of the places of trade activity that allowed this place to have been successful in the past so that objects in the form of foreign ceramics prove the chronology of the place and may have been advanced in its time. Overall chronology of ceramic finds at stone grave sites in Sangihe from the 15th – 19th centuries..

Sangihe people are quite familiar with the metal culture, although with technology that is still traditional for generations they make various daily necessities from metal materials, including tools used in fishing (spears), knives, machetes, sickles, and other metal tools.

The position of the grave provision or as a medium in the burial ceremony (ritual). Ceramics, pottery, or metal objects are deliberately placed in the gaps of the dolmens or on the surface of the stone grave. Some of the sites found, in containers in the form of plates filled with betel leaves and betel nuts, are sometimes accompanied by cigarettes.

Based on its shape, burial in Sangihe consists of 2 types with their respective variants, namely:

Type I, consisting of a burly stone slab sheet as a grave cover, is propped up with several stones. The supporting stone generally still uses a sheet joint, both flat and square-section. But some also use other types of rocks. This type consists of several variants:

- **Variant 1**, is propped up with several stones and consists of one sheet of burly stone plate as a grave cover.
- **Variant 2**, supported by several stones and covers consisting of 2 (two) or more sheet burly stone plates.
- **Variant 3**, the grave cover is supported by one or more stones on one side while the other side is pressed on a dirt slope.
- **Variant 4**, is a new variant, which is a stone tomb complete with a cover and supported by several stones as legs, at the north and south ends of the lid using the menhir as a barrier.

Type II, consists of several sheets of burly stone plates in an upright standing position in the form of a rectangular plan.

- **Variant 1**, consists of several sheets of burly stone plates forming a square plan without a cover.
- **Variant 2**, is the shaped stone chamber, and the top is covered by a sheet burly stone slab (Sriwigati, 2020)

Type I with its variants is a description of the current dolmen artifact, while type two is a stone tomb.

Based on their size, the stone graves in Sangihe are classified into 3 sizes.

1. Large, with a size of the floor plan length or cover length between 150 cm to more than 200 cm.
2. Medium, with a size of the floor plan length or cover length between 100 cm to 150 cm.
3. Small, with a size of the floor plan length or cover length between 50 cm to 100 cm.

Bis related to the conditions of the surrounding natural environment both dolmen finds and stone graves are always found together. The number of stone graves in one site area with another is not always the same. The direction of the dolmen and the stone tomb is also not tied to one cardinal direction. There are dolmens and stone graves with a North–South orientation, some are East–West, and some are even Northwest–Southeast.

The results of laboratory tests at Beta Analytic, Miami Florida on samples of charcoal combustion remain as many as two samples each, from the E10 dug trenches at a depth of 73 cm (spit 5). The data obtained from the laboratory test of this sample is 1887–1732 BP (95.4%). The other samples from the D10 dug trenches, each at a depth of 89 cm were charcoal samples. The data obtained from this depth is 1834–1702 BP (93.4%).

4 Conclusion

The social system that developed in the megalithic culture on Sangihe Island is the value of mutual aid at the time of taking, lifting, and placing dolmens as grave covers and laying stone slabs as stone grave walls. Social stratification can be seen in the size and thickness of the dolmens used as grave covers. Large and thick dolmens are intended for someone who is considered a leader, traditional figure, or community leader and also who has a well-off economy because it is considered able to finance the burial procession.

There is no difference in function between dolmens and stone graves, as well as the material of the material from a sheet joint whose shape is flattened (sheet). Material picking is also at the same location. Dolmens and stone graves look different only in shape. The dolmen uses a cover while the stone tomb is only composed of burly sheets as its walls.

Religion as part of their ritual worship of ancestral spirits is strongly felt at the time of the lifting of materials to the burial site accompanied by verses of worship of the dead. The inclusion of grave provisions such as pottery, ceramics, and metal objects is an integral part. The development in the later period was when relatives came to visit the tomb with betel nut, betel nuts, wine drinks, and even cigarettes that were deliberately placed on the ancestral grave them.

Until now, dolmens and stone graves are only found in the southern part of Sangihe Island, namely in Tamako District and South Manganitu District. The use of dolmens and stone graves with a high degree of density is greatly influenced by the availability of sources of material. Sources of dolmen material and stone graves in the form of slabs (burly sheets) are found in Makalekuhe Village and Nagha II Village, Tamako District. Material exploitation in Makalekuhe Village is seen along the coast of Pahampang to Tanjung Pedatole and in Tanjung Lelapide. The chronology of the time of using dolmens

and stone graves from the results of laboratory tests in Beta Analytic began to be known in the early AD, namely the 2nd-3rd centuries.

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