

The Continuity of Megalithic Culture and Dolmen in Indonesia

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In the some Indonesian's ethnic groups until now, still found activities to make simple statues and megalithic monuments also, example is dolmen. Actually that activities is to continued tradition what ever to do by the ancestor of Indonesian people, in the ancient time, in prehistoric age.

According to analogy etnografi study to some ethnics who still simple living in several Indonesian's island, and also those ethnics never accept influence from strange culture (like India, China, or Dutch), knowed that the making simple statues and megalithic monuments activities is to dedication in ancestor worship ritual.

The reasoning in ancestor worship ritual is process to appreciation to the eldest of group, or the eldest of village in prehistoric society. At that time the eldest of group or village is someone who very appreciated by his followers because he was have many abundances, example in fighting, hunting, have a large planting, many pastoral, many wives and children. If someone had that superiority, he was chosen to become the eldest of the group or village (*primus inter pares*). The duty of the eldest beside to govern his member, he must made the *fiest of merit*. In that party the eldest must give many food and drinking to the villager with free. The party can made in more than one day, one week or more, it is depend to the property of the eldest. Because the eldest hold many parties, so he can add his power and authority. After the eldest died already, in memory of the eldest the people made a figure from stone or wood. The menhir image is static figure similar with

died body, the concept of menhir image start to begin. It made with a simple form, static figure, without legs. The other characteristics are:

- Details only in face, eyes, nose, ears, and lips made with shallow line.
- The Statue have a genital symbol
- Statues used in religious ceremony as a symbol of the ancestor.
- Usually find in the slope of mountains, plateau, and in the top of hills.

The menhir image and then to erect near with the holes stone and dolmen (in Indonesia dolmen is a flat stone with several little menhir in bottom to supported).

On dolmen in Indonesia actually found in many prehistoric sites, in Sumatra, Java, and also Nusa Tenggara (Southeast Islands). The form of dolmen is various, in the simple and little form and many of them have impressive measurement. Dolmen is the “stone table completely with menhir as legs” (Soekmono 1973: 72), this is a simple definition. In the different explanation dolmen as a flat natural stone support by several upright stone (menhir), three or more.

At the some prehistoric sites in Indonesia can found little dolmen, the flat stone as “table surface” is not too wide, and only support by short menhirs. The little dolmen of course similar with the short offered table (altar), often build near main menhir. Appearance is used in a ceremonial to ancestor worshipped, the offer things put on surface dolmen near main menhir, and then the shaman to reading magic sentences for call the supernatural power would “to stay” in menhir. At that time the people and supernatural being made interaction and shaman as mediator. Dolmen as offering table among other things can found in Cipari site, in Kuningan, West Java and also in Kosala, Banten

In Sindangbarang site, near Bogor, West Java, the dolmens can be found too. The interesting point those dolmen always lie in the bank of pyramid stage monument. The form of dolmens is natural stone, egg-shape, 2 m long, and 30—100 cm thick, support by several little stone as supporter (20 cm high). The Sindangbarang dolmens have function as component of pyramid stage monument, those dolmens to make solid terraces.

In Besuki region, East Java, the dolmen by villagers call *pandhusa*, below of the flat stone in *pandhusa* actually is stone burial. In beneath of burial found remains bone of human, beads, the broken terracottas, and metal things. In one of *pandhusa* is content China ceramic vessel (vas), was dated from 9th Century AD. The experts have conclusion that *pandhusas* build in history period, from Hindu-Buddhist era in Java (Soekmono 1973: 75).

The dolmen as burial monument was build also in Pasemah site, South Sumatra, the experts often named “stone chamber”, for example the stone chamber in Tinggi Hari. Stone chamber is similar with dolmen, but in the one of long side had build to lean on lower segment of hill, the two short sides both were supported by slab upright stone, and in the another long side is covered by slab stone with to leave a space of entrance. The structure of Tinggi Hari dolmen like house building with stone material, according to that condition the dolmen named stone chamber. The villager were reported that in the stone chamber ever found remains of human skeleton, so the function is same with *pandhusa* in Besuki site. Still in Pasemah many dolmens can be found in plain area, example in Gunung Kaya site, it use the big stone materials in the top and supported by short menhirs in the bottom (Kusumawati & Haris Sukendar 1999/2000: 187, Foto 131)

In Nias Island, west Sumatra, include North Sumatra Province, the further dolmen still make there. Material of dolmen is monolithic, only from one piece stone what carved to shaped “stone table” with rectangular or circle “surface table”, the leg (only one leg in the middle or 4 legs in every corner of surface) is connected with part of surface because the material is one piece stone. The villager called the dolmen like that with *Niogadi* as offered table for dedicated to women ancestor, and for man ancestor they were erected the pillars of stone (Mulia 1981: 9—15).

In Sumba island, Southeast archipelago province, people activities to erected menhir and dolmen continue still present-day. The surface stone part of dolmen was further made and the shape like a slab box stone, the menhirs as supporter pillar were made like poles of

stone with cube shape, the poles supporter tall is about 1,50—2,5 m or more. The form of Sumba's dolmen is similar with traditional granary architecture in several ethnic groups in Indonesia.

The granary architecture in Bali and Sasak Ethnic is a platform building in upper part, support by 4 poles in corners, in lower part have a second platform as a place for peoples sitting and make conservation. The upper part is the chamber with content rice stock with shape of roof in step curve. Peoples put rice in the chamber in upper part of granary with use bamboo stairs what can moveable. The Granary architecture with platform building are knowed in Poso society, Central Sulawesi, and also in Toraja village, South Sulawesi. The Granary in Minangkabau ethnic group have same architecture too, but the shape of roof is unique, because similar with the horn of buffalo, named atap *begonjong*. So the differences among them are only in detail of architecture, especially in the roof shape, ornament, and size.

For the agrarian society with main food is rice, the rice cultivation is very important, rice is to honour, sacrefied, and have mitology itself. In Javanese and Sundanese ethnic group rice mytology has acculturated by Indian mitology. The goddes of rice is Śrī, she is wife of Wisnu, the god of prosperity. The place of rice as a symbol of Śrī goddes usually the platform building named *lumbung* (granary), but the platform is not too high. In ethnic groups of Bali, Sasak (Lombok), and Toraja where the influnce of Indian mitology was not accepted the granary building have high platform similar with dolmen. Actually found similarity function between dolmen and granary, both is sacred building and have association with the supernatural power.

The interesting case found in existence of Daya ethnic group in Kalimantan, they have simple building called *sandung*. The *sandung* is platform building from decay material (wood, bamboo, tied of leafs) function as to put the skeleton of the died body in the upper chamber in top of structure. Perhaps *sandung* is another type of dolmen, can be concluded that *sandung* to believed is sacred building too same with dolmen. Finally if

dolmen is sacred stone monument from megalithic period, *sandung* and *lumbung* (granary) is also sacred monument from megalithic tradition in the later time after megalithic period. Several argumentations about similarity in sacred concept between dolmen and granary are:

- Dolmen in Indonesia can found in ethnic groups who know rice cultivation.
- Dolmen is sacred megalith because associated with ancestor worshipped.
- Rice is important plant, rice is main food in some ethnic groups, rice is sacred plant, it believed came from supernatural power (hyang, dewata, nenek moyang, totem, gods)
- Rice must put not direct in lower area, in the earth, but in platform structure like traditional granary.
- Granary is dolmen in the wood or decay material.
- The dolmen and granary have same function, sacred function for dedicated to supernatural beings.

Actually the basic of religion system in megalithic culture is believed to concealed world with the holiness. Fritz A.Wagner was declared that the basic of megalithic tradition was not erected the huge stone monument only, but to worshipped the ancestor. The little stone monument if associate with ancestor worshipped activity is megalithic tradition too (Wagner 1995: 12). Megalithic culture as continuity tradition still improved in many ethnic groups in Indonesia untill now, but the traditions is follow the change of the new influences culture in the modern world.

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