

ABSTRACT

Indonesian megaliths vary greatly in type, date and extent, but occur in most parts of Indonesia. Research on Indonesian megaliths has remained typological, descriptive, fragmentary and speculative. The role of megaliths has usually been interpreted in terms of their ceremonial function and religious significance.

My research moves beyond speculation regarding the 'meaning' of this class of monument to consider the role that megaliths might have played in establishing and maintaining the corporate identity of groups, establishing rights to use of resources, in integrating different cultural aspects of society, and as material assets in the processes of negotiation and political dispute.

To this end I have undertaken an ethnoarchaeological study of a modern day megalithic culture (Ngadha villages in Flores) to provide detailed ethnographic information on use of megaliths. This aim of this work is to generate ideas for exploring the significance of Indonesian megaliths in an archaeological as well as contemporary context.

My research has produce the first comprehensive description of Ngadha megalithic villages in Flores. This work involves detailed description of the way in which megaliths, other structures, and areas in and around Ngadha villages serve to create, reinforce and maintain Ngadha ideology, social organisation, authoritative structure and patterns of resource use. The most important result of this study is development of an understanding of the functional relationship between megaliths and other aspects of Ngadha culture. This provides as an essential foundation for future research on their cultural significance.