

NARRATIVE OF THE OLDEST ART WORLDWIDE : ROCK ART AS CULTURAL IDENTITY OF MAROS-PANGKEP GEOPARK

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Abstract

This article explains the impact of narratives built by rock art research on prehistoric caves located in the Maros-Pangkep Geopark area on local cultural identity. The history of recent research on rock art in Maros-Pangkep has concluded that the oldest art in the world was found in a prehistoric cave in this area. However, preserving rock art has its own challenges. This is related to the decreasing population of people who support the rock art tradition. The description of the narrative's impact is based on literature studies of rock art research and field observations of local community activity related to it. Then it will also be explained how the results of ethnoarchaeological research on rock art are related to local community culture using Mary Jane Collier's theory (1980) regarding cultural identity. In relation to this, observations were made from the pre-research communication process to the post-research impact and ultimately can produce an understanding in the local community of their cultural roots which are the pride of their cultural identity. The results of the study show that through narrative produced by research, it revealed strong relevance between archeology and community education at the rock art site. First, regarding the symbol of progress in archaeological research which is more oriented towards building collective memory and the involvement of local communities today. Then the second is about the benefit of archaeological remains in prehistoric sites for the lives of people now and for the future. This can be seen from the efforts of local people to commodify rock paintings in other media. Such as the handprint motif of rock paintings which is a decorative variety of local batik textiles and as a typical Maros-Pangkep souvenir for tourists.

Keywords: Narrative, Rock Art, Cultural Identity. Local Community, Archaeology.

A. INTRODUCTION

How the impact of a research is still a topic that is discussed among the scholars. About the impact and measurement of research affection to society, researchers have to ensure that its research has both effectivity in process and capable of embracing new theories applied to the betterment of society (Greenhalgh et al, 2016 : 1). Society improvement does not always have to be assessed in the quantitative stage, for example increasing economic value or decreasing people suffering from diabetes. But it also may be applied in qualitative explanation. For instance, how research could produce a cultural narrative. Narrative is a description related to a certain chronology and identity which is told as a form of validation of a phenomenon or event.

In cultural historical reconstruction and research topics, the context between art and people's spouses is not forgotten. Interrelations between culture and humans are very contextual and valid. Without humans, culture is just a myth, this actually what is spoken by an American anthropologist and archaeologist, James Deetz (1967) refers that culture is the idea of the human behavioral system carried by the environmental factors as the actors of their adaptive responses (Deetz, 1967 : 9). The hints behind culture ideas, come as the broad form of manifestation to its element. Koentjaraningrat, as one of the well-known Indonesian anthropological figures has stated, there are 7 shapes of cultural elements (Koentjaraningrat, 1986) The presence of art has rotated its shape over decades, but still contains the same respective output which is strongly related to reflect human expression and religion. As in pre historical context, whereas human capability and knowledge are still restricted, they have found out that beliefs towards what happens in the environment has evolved as their response to cultural and nature evolution. This phase is mostly known by archaeologists of the "*epi-paleolithic era*" (Leihitu, 2019 : 1). Means when human's living instinct has progressed to be more civilized, they shifted from "robust" or moving living to hunter and gathered at an advanced level. In this order prehistoric humans had known how to domesticate crops and hunted animals, they already knew how to live in a small troop and how the system worked in a group. They transform from nomad lifestyle to niche cave shelter settlement. This new way of life has brought cultural trace in a new identity, that called "Neolithic" era, The trace of neolithics, actually had proven by profound finding of artifacts, fitur or ancient settlement pattern. But the one that is really indicating neolithics remain is the finds of rock art (Tanudirjo et all, 2011). In archaeological research, rock art is categorized as religious archaeology (Whitley, 2016 : 27-28). Since the method and the interpretation of rock art direct the scholar to penetrate the perspective of prehistoric human reconstruction more complex rather than hunter culture. How is not to be wondered, inside of one panel of rock art objects frequently found not only in one shape, but also contain the accumulation of complex shapes and figurative or non-figurative motifs. In relation to that, the fact that objects and motifs of rock art showed a lot of variation, many scholars gathered a conclusion that each area based on geographical area has its own characteristic of portrayal.

The portrayal of past human behavior or manifestation also sometimes recorded properly in rock art paintings. For instance what is found at Leang Petta Kerre, is when a babirusa (*Sus celebenis*) is portrayed with the arrowhead in its left chest area. Van Heekeren (1953) implies this scene depicted more than a hunting scene, it also as a part of hunting rituals. When human are made visual spells to make sure that their target is fulfilled. This idea is actually supported by the interpretation of the rock art model by Whitley (2016), that they made art as the bridge of religious beliefs called "hunted magic". In hope that what they manifested is harvested through these beliefs. Beside that, what also matters is how they portrayed their local animals naturally in

the rock surface at Leang Petta Kerre cave. Many upgraded research and fresh topics in rock art studies have improved over the years. This also affected the research prospect in Maros-Pangkep, since the era of Heekeren (1953) research, Maros-Pangkep region has developed its area as a potential arena of karst exploration either for nature tourism or historical preservation. Beside the wonderful panoramic view, Maros-Pangkep region actually saved the record of the oldest art in the world. This finding is brought up by the collaboration of BRIN's (National Agency of Research and Innovation) and Griffith University (Oktaviana et al, 2024) that obtained the most updated dating result of a pigment layer at Leang Karampuang rock art in Maros. This finding simultaneously shifts the narrative of the oldest rock paintings found in Europe. As we are very familiar with the narrative the creativity explosion starts from the Europe region. But since the current rock art research increased in Indonesia, especially in the Maros-Pangkep region, it has revealed many prehistoric human life's dynamic and their culture. But after the research result was announced, many researchers missed to capture how the effect of their research exposure has affected local people's perspective towards their identity. Even though the origin of people who support the rock art tradition no longer existed. But still, the presence of rock art now can still be a part of nowadays people who live around the sites. So this is how the research question from this paper is arised, about how the narrative of oldest worldwide rock art is affecting the cultural identity of nowadays Maros-Pangkep's people?

B. RESEARCH METHOD

This qualitative research aimed to explain the impact of how the narrative from rock art research in Maros-Pangkep produced culture identity by affecting local perception and behavior about their cultural identity. To embrace that goal, this research uses a combination of literature review and observation methods. Literature review is to collect rock research data from the past 5 years in Maros-Pangkep. There are two articles used to help this study analyze post- research narrative production. First is the research of Oktaviana et al (2024) "Narrative cave art in Indonesia by 51,200 years ago" and second is Brum, et al (2021) "Oldest cave art found in Sulawesi". Meanwhile other research remains a reference for enriching scholarly source, for example Permana et al (2017) "Mabedda bola ritual in South Sulawesi: the relationship between handprints in traditional houses and hand stencil in prehistoric caves" and Marwoto (2019) "From Rubbish to Cultural Identity : Making archaeology relevant for the contemporary community". Direct and indirect observation used to collect information about local behavior that is related to the oldest art origin place's narrative. Direct observation is through the behavior forms of Maros-Pangkep people in the dimension of social media and daily activities. Maros-Pangkep people are categorized by its governance, geopark administrator, local community and the peoples. In other hand indirect observations are done by literature tool's and media records related to this topic. To clarify how the narrative from the rock art research is able to produce local identity, is by exposing the process of narrative rock art research shifting local perception and manifested to be a behavior using Collier's theory.

Portrait of Data : Previous Rock art Research and Social Life of Maros-Pangkep

The historical record of rock art research in Maros-Pangkep has developed in multidimensional topics. For example in cultural conservation, art, archaeology, ethnoarchaeology and so many others. In sub chapters of those research studies, branches of each unique topic, especially in archaeology, to reconstructed dynamics of neolithic human's living patterns used in

chronology is equally important. So dating chronologically applied in some prehistoric cave at Maros-Pangkep region, and found a long journey as the proof of oldest art production narrative in Indonesia. In 2021 Leang Tedonge is narrated as the oldest rock art, after Brum, et al conclude that through uranium series analysis from the limestone surface sample of the motifs it has a range age of 46.400 years ago (Brum et al, 2021 : 7). It briefly showcase the dating of Leang Bulu Sipong rock art, that depicted activity look alike happens between a figurative motifs of human, local animal such as anoa (*Bubalus sp*) and woods pig (*Sus celebensis*), but also there is a painting of hand stencils. Its panels which was originally dated using the previous approach to a minimum of 43,900 thousand years ago (ka)³, has a minimum age of 50.2 ± 2.2 ka, and so is at least 4,040 years older than thought (Brum et al, 2021). Besides chronological research, there are other researchers who are interested in ethnographic and interpretative research of rock art. This research has a bigger opportunity to interact with local people. For example, the research of Permana, et al (2017) that used the ethnographical model to figure out the symbolic meaning of hand stencil paintings. It compares the sustained tradition of hand stenciling at South Sulawesi called “Mabedda Bola” that is still done by the traditional people of Buginese (local ethnic spread in Sulawesi including at Maros-Pangkep) to their newly built or renovated home.

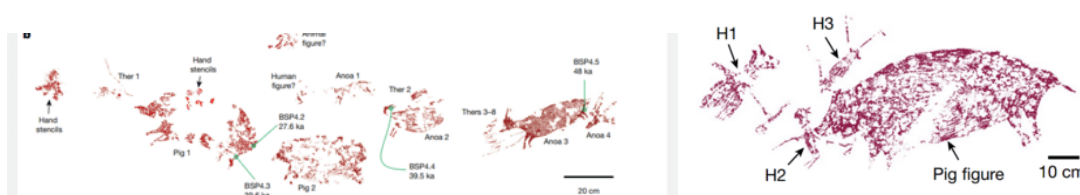


Figure 1. Tracing of the dated rock art panel showing the results of LA-U-series dating Leang Bulu Sipong (left), Leang Karampuang (right)

Source: Oktaviana et al, 2024

The people of Maros-Pangkep occupied various occupations. According to the Statistic Centre Agency (BPS, 2024) Maros has a population of 353,121 people with a population density of 218.09 people/km² in mid-2024. Meanwhile Pangkep has 357,846 people of population (2023). About 75% of the both regions' total average rely on nature resource sector occupation. For instance farming, fisher, breeder and others. While the rest work in the private and governance sector. Including working as administrator of Geopark Maros-Pangkep or privately managing tourism accommodation like tour guiding and homestay leisure. So this research also observes the people of Maros-Pangkep behavior. As their natural habits stick to nature and ethnic tradition, the cultural activity is quite considerable. For example, the tradition of releasing a boat for the first time named Anyong Lopi, or the tradition of post harvesting the crop name Manempu' Wette and many other traditions. This research also acknowledges how Maros-Pangkep itself is already enriched by their fabulous cultural tradition. Instead this research tries to find a link between the sustain cultural tradition and root of local culture through narrative after the rock art research.

Collier's Cultural Identity Theory

Previous culture identity research has many of its own character of approach to prove the hypothesis made, using various theories. The sample is Marwoto (2019) research entitled “From Rubbish to Cultural Identity” that elaborate how the fragment poetry from Banten Lama Sites were able to be utilized by the present community using “Rubbish Theory” by Thompson. The presence of theory is not only for scientist decoration. Theory is the tool of the logical system to define a phenomenon systematically. Sugiyono (2018) theory has 3 functions. First to explain the phenomena, second is to predict afterward impact might happen, third as a controlling tool. To explain how the narrative of oldest rock art research affect and further potential impact to the people of Maros Pangkep, this paper used Collier theory of cultural identity shaped,

Mary Jane Collier et al (1994 :36-44) explains that formulation of cultural identity using the compilation of ethnographic communication and social construction. According to Collier’s theory on Cultural Identity(1994) this research try to analyze the process of research, narrative production towards the cultural identity behavior; see the application of the theory in my research in Figure 1.

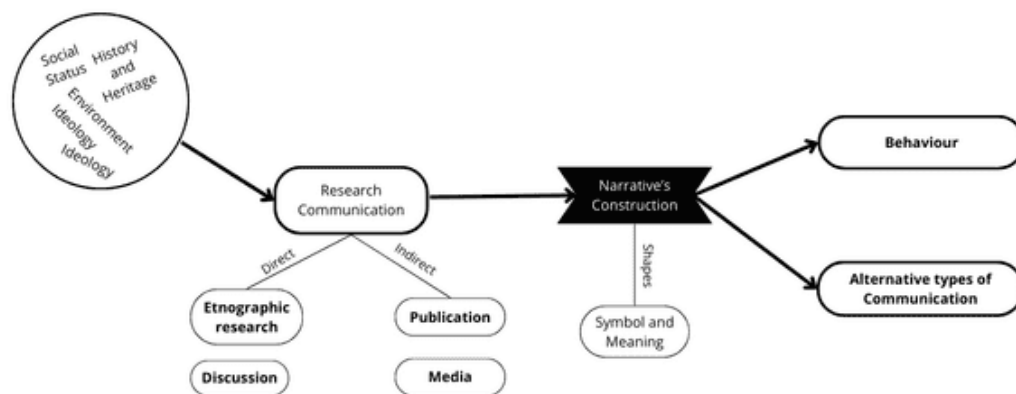


Figure 1. From research communication to cultural identity based on Collier’ theory

Source: Safinatunnajah, 2024

C. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Narrative of The “Home of The Oldest Rock Art” as The Alternative Branding

The availability of the white print of cultural history research also contributed to the Geopark Maros-Pangken Unesco nomination. It is about criteria of local acknowledgment toward their environmental sites, including natural and historical information. Through this process, a societal approach, one of which is by acknowledging local people about how Maros-Pangkep is containing the oldest art production trace worldwide. After all, since 2022, Geopark of Maros-Pangkep has been officially nominated as a world heritage of Unesco Global Geopark (UGG) In the UGG Council Meeting held in Thailand. This level has a significance to raise Geopark Maros-Pangkep tourism. That led to an impact both for research and practical action to reveal the untapped potential of the geopark. Especially for karst and cave exploring. The richness of nature

combined with the powerful cultural historical remains have become the golden magnet for both domestic and international tourists. Branding of Geopark Maros pangkep, this far divides into three, which are; 1)Geological sites, 2)Natural Heritage, and 3)Cultural Heritage. .

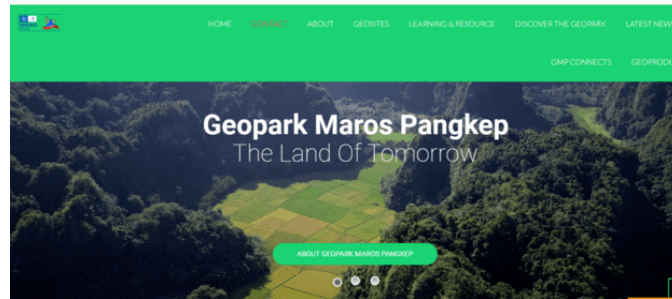


Figure 2. Website and Instagram’s reels homepage preview of Maros-Pangkep Geopark
Source: geoparkmarospangkep.id, 2021

The headline “The Land of Tomorrow” implies the geoparks Maros-Pangkep and its significance for the future as a gallery of nature and history of human evolution. This headline appears at the geopark’s homepage website. However, the presence of rock art as an archaeological learning experience at Maros-Pangkep cave, actually used as the influential branding geopark. Even though the state is still not massive, not every rock art site is able to be visited considering the conservation aspect. But rock art existence could be the alternate narrative to tell the history of the ancient Maros-Pangkep civil, how they are capable of wonderful art making in cave surfaces.

The Application of The Motif

As the collier consideration towards how the cultural identity after communication has built, the society will adjust to the spectrum and create alternatives by themselves to handle it. This is how the phenomena are portrayed in the application of alternative usage to the rock art’s motifs in the local textile industry. The motifs found on rock art sites casually reflect their own environment. The figurative of faunal motifs is redrawn and blend perfectly with the pattern of local batik(see fig. 3 & 4 for sample). As the aspiration of art and acknowledgment of cultural heritage narrative, I assume there has built a strong bond from current society and past people support of rock art painting tradition.



Figure 3&4. Motif of faunal diversity (butterfly) of Maros-Pangkep batik textile (left), Anoa’s head in motif of Sulawesi’s batik wear (right).
Source: [ana.azura \(2024\)](#), [fakhry_batik \(2022\)](#)

New Tourism Adventure at Maros-Pangkep

After increasing publication of the existence of rock art research in the media, people are more likely exposed to the knowledge of rock art. This phenomenon creates a new trend as the effect of popular objects. At the same time the trend of global tourism has also turned to adventure tourism, responding properly with Geopark Maros-Pangkep and its local community. The availability of natural landscapes and the strong narrative of historical resources, this collaboration is utilized by local tourism organizers to attract international tourists to do cave tracking. Not only non- non-rock art cave, the rock art cave also belongs to the list to-go for the tourist, but there are some restrictions about the direct interaction with the art panel for the tourist. This adventure service may be found at an online application by booking system that is empowered by the individual or collectivism of the local community (Pokdarwis).

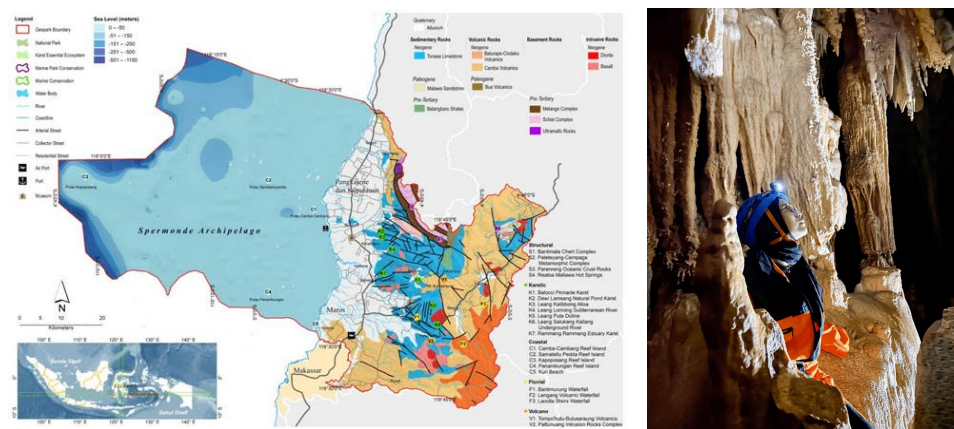


Figure 5&6. Geosite map of Maros-Pangkep (left), caving activity at Maros-Pangkep Karst Cave (right).

Source: geoparkmarospangkep.id, 2021

This interesting view, has also create significant number for reconsiliation tourism sector after deadlock phase due to Covid-19 impact in 2019-2021.

Table 1. Ration Between Number of Tourist Visits (International and Domestic Tourist) in South Sulawesi (Maros-Pangkep Geopark area) in 2022– 2023

Year	Number of Tourist Visits		
	South Sulawesi		Total
	International Tourist	Domestic Tourist	
2021	0	0	0
2022	897	335	1.232
2023	1.888	1.231	3.119

Source: BPS South Sulawesi Province in Figures 2021, Maros Regency in Figures 2022- 2023, (reprocessed)

Arisen of Local Community Concern to Preserve Rock Art Site

Since the upscale trend of rock art research since 2014 above in Maros-Pangkep, a lot of tourists voluntarily would like to visit the rock art sites. This is like two blades of the sword, it is

good for economic and tourism supply, but inbarely tolerable for site preservation issues. Those local people who are touched by the knowledge of rock art, either directly or indirectly encapsulate this issue in a level of awareness. Peoples who directly have touched the knowledge, are some involved in rock art research. How? The answer is related to the approach taken by the researchers. For example, the research done by Permana, Pojoh and Arifin in 2017. They take a sample of ethnic tradition experimentally compared to the rock art hand stencil motifs.

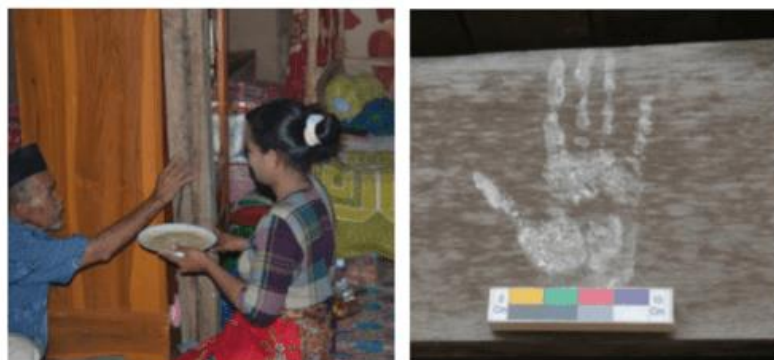


Figure 5. Mabbeda Bola the tradition of hand stencil print on traditional house

Source: Permana, Arifin, Pojoh (2017)



Figure 6. Hand stencil print on rock art, Leang Lambatorang I (left), Leang Karama (right)

Source: Safinatunnajah (2024)

This research is known as the ethnographic approach of rock art research. When researchers are tossed down with layers of local community during the stage, it will give a new perspective to people through pre-research communication during the session. This is also interesting, the engagement of society is very important. So instead of telling everyone in the village about the rock art, we need to tell the link between the rock art narrative to their culture and beliefs and inform this to the most capable or the headman of the village related to rock art potential in their area. The headman will become the bridge to inform their relatives, and it will let the local community construct the information by itself. And most of the case, the willingness to preserve the rock art not because it is important as an archaeological site. But in the other way, it is because they believe while they preserve the site, it means they protect their own ancient heritage.

D. CONCLUSION

It is visible that rock art research can be relevant to the contemporary community. The concept of research narrative is synthesized and reworked in the frame of cultural identity.

Research narrative is not only produced by the researcher, but also could be inventory by media, public, or the local people itself. So the availability of the platform of communication is equally important. In this paper, the study also tries to figure out how the connection is built by the local tradition and culture with the narrative's research about the oldest rock art discoveries in Maros-Pangkep Geopark. Evidently the finding shows us how the people partly try to adjust with the existence of the narratives. The process aligns within what Collier says, that internally they build interrelated communication amongst related to the narrative's topic. Subsequently, the people construct the knowledge through the meaning and symbol finding to link the point behind the narrative of the oldest rock art culture toward their existing culture. What is interesting is also the way they alternatively act to practice the narrative after becoming a part of their cultural identity. Is by making a branding and the rock art tradition as part of their future reflection. It can be seen how they try to commodify the rock art motifs into a textile motif, and according to the observation it is not only for economic purposes. But the local beliefs, translating the rock art motifs to the textile is one of the ways they guard now and future generations of forgotten history. For example the existence of anoa or babirusa. But for archaeologists, this a progressive form of a heritage conservation, first it is about how the memory of the heritage is still carried on by the people and second about the engagement of the local community to preserve cultural heritage.

This study has figured out some of the interesting findings of people's behavior that is affected by the rock art research's narrative. I hope for further development of applied archaeological research like cultural resource management (CRM) or public's archaeology is considering taking the prehistoric site as the potential field of the researcher placement. Moreover the calculation data transferred to the quantity method are also very welcome to be done. Since science also has to consider the percentage of the matrix of public perception toward the issues.

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