



## New Media and Cultural Strengthening in Exploring Old Tombs, Heritage of East Sumatran Civilization

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**Abstract:** *The old tombs left by the Malay kingdom of East Sumatra are an interesting study. In a historical context, it is part of the heritage in the form of artifacts with distinctive tombstone motifs. In parts of the world, the culture of visiting old graves is often called pilgrimage tourism or popularly called the rihlah of civilization. Several Islamic countries routinely carry out this, such as Iran, Pakistan, Türkiye and Sudan. Apart from the tourism aspect, this activity also contains spiritual and religious elements. The existence of old graves can be accessed easily due to information spread on YouTube media. It also helps when searching for these places and locations when using Google Maps. Using smartphone media technology, such as smartphone applications, can increase the involvement of the younger generation in learning history.*

**Keywords:** *New Media; Cultural Strengthening; Heritage*

### I. Introduction

Social media, which includes YouTube and Google Maps, has provided space for those interested in history in the legacy of civilization in East Sumatra. The existence of old graves can be accessed easily due to information spread on YouTube media. It also helps when searching for these places and locations when using Google Maps. Using smartphone media technology, such as smartphone applications, can increase the involvement of the younger generation in learning history. Technology can provide a more dynamic and enjoyable experience of exploring civilization, while facilitating accessibility and flexibility in searching for historical relics (Nuryatin, 2020).

The old tombs left by the Malay kingdom of East Sumatra are an interesting study. In a historical context, it is part of the heritage in the form of artifacts with distinctive tombstone motifs. Likewise, there are some people who think that dealing with old graves should not be too excessive. Because he has dealt with the creator, so too later when he discusses excessively about sainthood in the tomb it is considered shirk (Nurhadi, 2018). This is unique, as if some people think history enthusiasts only need to visit and pray. Without having to dig into who and how the pious person in the tomb did good deeds.

Furthermore, some people think that studying history means thinking backwards. This opinion often represents millennial youth, the realistic argument is that the past is over. So this also requires enlightenment for young people, the importance of history as a subject for learning and wisdom. In particular, the remains of the graves of the aulia, many of whom also fought for the nation from attacks by colonial countries. So in the context of accommodation for historical and cultural heritage in the Malay community of East Sumatra, this must be encouraged, the aim is for the community to be in a position of historical awareness.

## **II. Review of Literature**

This research uses qualitative analysis principles, namely by using research procedures that produce descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from historical activists spread across media such as YouTube, Facebook and TikTok, whose attitudes and behavior can be observed. Qualitative research requires sharp analysis, objectivity, systematicity, so that accuracy in interpretation is obtained, because the essence of a phenomenon or symptom for adherents of qualitative research is totality.

Descriptive research is research intended to investigate circumstances, conditions or events. According to this approach, social reality is formed from the social construction of knowledge and meaning in the nature of inter-subjective exchange. Reality is also referred to as a social artifact and a product of the historical exchange of meanings of a group of people. Phenomenological research uses symbolic interactions because of previous human memory experiences.

## **III. Results and Discussion**

### **3.1 Mass Media and Cultural Strengthening**

The city in East Sumatra or sometimes called a historical heritage city is one of the big cities in Indonesia. This city is also known as the city of sites because of the many remains of old tombs. This has led to many new immigrants from various regions in Indonesia coming to North Sumatra to continue their search for traces of civilization. This area also has many interesting historical tourist attractions to visit, this is what makes the city visited by many tourists, both domestic and foreign.

The obstacles faced by tourists or new arrivals are ignorance and lack of information about the locations to be visited and the roads in this city, so many of these things make these tourists or new arrivals often get lost. Therefore, the City Guide mobile application was created to make it easier for newcomers and tourists to explore historical cities in East Sumatra and easily find locations to visit. This application runs on the Android operating system.

Google maps is a free virtual service provided by Google, displays an image of a map of the earth's surface that can be dragged, enlarged, reduced according to our wishes and can show the location of an area or it could also be said to be online GPS. The map displayed on Google Maps is a map produced by aerial photography, satellite imagery and GIS processing, so that the map surface image on Google Maps covers the entire surface of the earth. For user satisfaction, Google Maps frequently updates the maps displayed, especially if something important happens in a certain location.

The heavy flow of information from YouTube media will in such a way form an opinion as desired by the message designer so that it gets widespread support from the public. The mass media has a very determining role in forming public opinion on an issue. Something that is actually not very important but can become important as a result of public opinion generated by the mass media.

The most important innovation contained in social media is the ability to provide information about the remains of old tombs when you want to explore them. Social media as

a mass media functions as informative, educational and easier. Broadcasting voices and images from history activists on social media indirectly raises public awareness about historical heritage so that they can share in the events that occurred at that time.

The communication system is able to change culture, therefore in every society, from the least knowledgeable to the most knowledgeable. Therefore the communication system performs four functions. Three of them are defined by Harold Lasswell as observation, correlation of parts in society to respond, and transmission of community heritage from one generation to the next.

Schramm stated the function of the media using simple terms, namely as a guard, forum and teacher.

In the development of mass communication theory, the concept of mass society has a strong relationship with mass cultural products which will ultimately influence how the communication process in the context of mass society shapes and is shaped by existing mass culture. MMedia is able to shape people's tastes or form a certain way of viewing reality.

### **3.2 Remains of an Old Tomb in East Sumatra**

In parts of the world, the culture of visiting old graves is often called pilgrimage tourism or popularly called the *rihlah* of civilization. Several Islamic countries routinely carry out this, such as Iran, Pakistan, Türkiye and Sudan. Apart from the tourism aspect, this activity also contains spiritual and religious elements. Likewise with the theme of the journey of civilization above, it is accommodating to local culture with the aim of preserving culture from extinction. It is a cultural mirror that gives birth to nationalism and pluralism.

Furthermore, East Sumatra previously consisted of the Sultanates of Tamiang, Azizi Langkat, Deli, Serdang, Batubara, Asahan, Kualu, Panai and Bilah. For example, the tomb in Tamiang Langsa, namely the Meurah Gajah site in the interior of Aceh Tamiang. Ancient tombs are scattered throughout East Sumatra, such as the Kota Rintang tomb, the Martubung tomb, the tomb of Datuk Blood Putih, the tomb of Gotcah Pahlawan, the Kuta Chinna tomb and so on. This has quite high value in the tomb as a sign of the community and its social status at that time. He proved that the cupola and *jirat* clusters could be grouped into family relationships. (Soekmono, 1981: 83). This can also prove the existence of trade relations with the outside world, because each of the old tombs is located on the coast which used to be a place for mass mobilization.

The ancient Martubung tomb complex is located in Martubung Village, Medan Labuhan District, Medan City, North Sumatra. This area is thought to have enormous archaeological and historical potential because in the past it was one of the early locations for the development of civilization, especially Islamic civilization on the East Coast of North Sumatra. Several ancient tomb complexes that have been identified are the ancient tomb complex in Rintang City, the ancient tomb complex in Pulau Kampai, and several ancient tomb complexes in Medan City.

From the analysis of the typology of the tombstones, it shows that almost all of them are Acehnese style tombstones (Hartini, 2011:15). This is in line with the theory of the entry of Islam in East Sumatra put forward by Tengku Lucman Sinar, namely the entry of Islam into North Sumatra, through Aceh (1971:21). Based on the *Hikayat Raja-Raja Pasai* and *Malay History*, it is stated that the Haru Kingdom, whose territory covers Tamiang to Rokan, had converted to Islam (Sinar, 1991:4). It is possible that this Islamization began to occur in the

mid-13th century AD, at that time Marco Polo visited Samudra Pasai and met Malikul Saleh who was a Muslim.

This fact is reinforced by the discovery of Malikul Saleh's tombstone dated 1297 AD. This shows that the Aceh region had become Islamic first, several centuries later exerting influence or spreading Islam to North Sumatra. The existence of Acehnese typology tombstones in ancient tomb complexes around the East Coast of North Sumatra at least supports this data.

Martubung Village, Medan Labuhan District, Medan. Medan Labuhan subdistrict borders directly with Medan Deli subdistrict to the south, Medan Belawan subdistrict to the north, Medan Marelan subdistrict to the west, and Deli Serdang district to the east. From the observations made, it was found that two tomb complexes were still intact, namely 1) the Datuk Tongah tomb complex which is on the north side of the Mukarramah Mosque and 2) the Datuk Payung tomb complex which is in the middle of the Chinese cemetery.

Tomb complex I is on Jalan Teluk Haru or Jalan Cing Huan and grave complex II is on Jalan Kuburan Cina, Martubung Village, Medan Labuhan District. Headstones from several other cemeteries, such as Datuk Hitam, Datuk Dadi, and Datuk Hasan, have not been found so the background of the figures buried is unknown. However, looking at the connection between several of these tombs in people's stories, it is estimated that they come from periods that are not that far apart.

In other words, these grandfathers were several figures who came from periods that were not much different. The three tombs are the tombs of figures with tombstones that have similarities to figures from Aceh so it is likely that they are figures who had close ties to the Aceh kingdom during the heyday of Aceh Darussalam.

It is not known how these tombstones are related to the early history of the Deli sultanate before the royal palace was finally moved to the Maimun Palace. It is very likely that the two are related considering the two (the Deli Sultanate Palace and the tomb complex of the Datuk-datuk). Apart from that, both come from a period that is not too far away. As is known, the origins of the Deli Sultanate in history are said to come from Aceh or at least received strong influence from Aceh which was marked by the conversion of the Deli kingdom which previously came from the older Deli kingdom. In local history, the Deli Sultanate is said to have been influenced by Aceh after the conquest by Gocah Pahlawan.

In line with Sartono Kartodirjo "in the context of nation building, teaching history does not merely function to provide historical knowledge as a collection of historical factual information, but also aims to raise historical awareness." Furthermore, history is not only a medium for transferring ideas but also a medium for historical awareness. According to Zuhdi, history functions as substantive material in national awareness and character development. (Cakranegara 2020)

Social media can be used as an innovative learning media, (Abdulloh, Fahmi, and Siswanto 2019) for example on TikTok and Facebook you can access various historical information on accounts that upload everything about historical heritage material in East Sumatra, such as historical accounts. Malay Indonesian which contains various events that occurred in Indonesia, the Pond 5 Media Group account which contains videos of the past, North Sumatran History Lovers which contains the history and culture of the people of East

Sumatra, in this case it can increase interest in learning and curiosity because memes become fresh teaching materials, and easily accessible to Gen Z.

#### IV. Conclusion

The Rihlah of Civilization is important to disseminate to the public, because apart from having historical educational value, it also acts as a medium for preaching to convey that the bodies in the tombs were pious people. Many of his good deeds have become mauizhotul hasanah for the people around East Sumatra. Furthermore, the spirit of civilization can also be of economic value for the surrounding community, if many visitors are immediately offered merchandise. Recently, many people have visited old graves, making it a tradition in itself. This is also a cultural and religious practice that society has not completely abandoned. As if to refute Geertz and Riaz's theory which states that the more modern a society is, the more it abandons traditional religious practices (Arifudin 2013).

From the research results it can be concluded that digital social learning has succeeded in increasing the attraction and interest of Gen.Z and the younger generation in general, this can be seen by the many positive comments from historical videos posted by social media account owners. Many people become interested in studying history more deeply because their assumptions about studying history being boring are not true. In this innovative presentation of history, they begin to think that history is fun because the story they watch is not a fictional story but a fact that actually happened.

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