

Highlighting Papua through Cultural View

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Papua is known as a region with abundant natural resources and spectacular sceneries. Another striking thing is the diverse culture of Papua. The close bond between Papuan people and their culture makes cultural approach one key to understand the complexity of problems in Papua.

“Diversity makes Papua unique. This gives us pride but also poses a challenge,” said Vice President for Corporate Communication of PT. Freeport Indonesia, Riza Pratama, in the Talk Show titled *Developing Papua through Culture* on Thursday (2/6) at the Koesnadi Hardjosoemantri Cultural Centre (PKKH) UGM.

An anthropologist from Cendrawasih University, Dr. Johsz R. Mansoben, said how local knowledge and local wisdom deeply rooted in the culture and tradition of Papuan people. One thing they uphold highly is respect to environment. Papuan people correspond the soil with a mother that delivers their birth and raise them. This is seen in the ways they manage nature.

“For example, they have a pattern to preserve the marine environment in Raja Ampat that regulates how marine biota remain to be used. They don’t exploit the sea continuously, but give it a break from time to time,” he said.



These principles, in his opinion, need to be considered in the drafting of development policy for Papua. A policy would not be running well and beneficial to the people if not paying attention to these. “Don’t talk about Papua if you don’t know the people and land of Papua. Even if you have good intentions, but wrong approach will trouble the people instead,” he said.

UGM anthropologist, Dr. Laksmi A. Savitri, M.A., revealed how Papuan people often cannot benefit from development outcomes. “They often feel that they’ve been cheated, promise getting broken. That’s why they don’t care about change,” she said.

She encouraged stakeholders to give more attention to the people to jointly think what’s best for them that also respects their cultural values.

UGM Vice-Rector for Research and Community Service, Prof. Dr. Suratman, revealed the important value of respecting Indonesian cultures, including of Papua, as a value of nationhood.

“Culture is the one thing that bonds Indonesia, and culture can generate the progress of Papua, for example through creative economy,” he said.

The talk show is part of a series of Papuan Days event that last from 2-3 June 2016 with the theme *Highlighting Papua through Cultural View*, organised by Gadjah Mada Papua students community (KEMPGAMA), UGM Papua Working Group, and PT Freeport Indonesia. There are also art exhibitions, documentary films screening and cultural performance.

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