

The Story of Perantau in Nusantara (#02)

Description



The life of perantau initially struggled. An informant told how a perantau community was built in the interior of Papua. He jokingly said that initially, the village is established because there were perantau from Java who worked on a project. They then settled there. Build a house. The family came from Java. The market happens by itself. After that, the government administration came later to the place. Finally, there was a community of nomads. In the past, the term most frequently used was transmigrant, one of the New Order government programs to move Javanese to several islands in the archipelago.

However, the government's intervention began when they departed from their hometown for the transmigration program. On the other hand, the pattern of village development described above is pure because there is a new area development project in the interior. When we headed to Boven Digoel, we had the wrong direction, heading to an unknown village. We met a resident who works as a traveling salesperson who has lived in the area for decades. The migration pattern due to a new project is interesting to observe, where those who live a life full of adventure every day. Distant market. Unfriendly roads. Then, the internet network sometimes does not exist. This is where the mental resilience of the *perantau* is tested. When visiting tourist attractions in Musamus, almost all of the sellers are Javanese *perantau*, who has lived in Merauke Regency for decades.

When entering this village, there is a feeling that was being in the land of Java, where the music of *Dangdut Koplo* attracts visitors to dance. The Javanese language is used for the communication between visitors and locals. The visitors brought their families along. They did not feel they were far from their hometown in Java. Sometimes they say that it is rather difficult to return to Java due to economic conditions that do not support their lives. When we met one of the families, he said that his son was in one of the districts in Papua. They made a video call to each other to treat homesickness.

The *perantau* adjusted themselves to a new life and new relatives. One of the sellers said they did not want to get into trouble with the natives. Usually, the problems that occur do not make sense because, in the end, it is to find income through shortcuts. For example, when we stayed at Boven Digoel, the owners were a husband and wife who had lived in the area for almost three decades. Her husband works in a government office. They then opened a homestay at their residence.

Their homestay is often full, even if they only provide a fan in the room. The owner said that at 11 pm, the gate would be closed because the natives were often drunk and looking for trouble. They warned that drunks would mill about on the roadside every night and often bring trouble. This condition was confirmed when I met a police officer who told me that the most problems they encountered were drunks who always disturbed the community. If they are found on the side of the road in the morning, they are usually drunk at night.

When we were in Munting, we were told that that night there was a woman who was constantly raped by drunks. A woman who is mentally ill on the street. Here the drunkards do not think about the face. The important thing is that they can express their lust. That night a not mentally healthy woman was sleeping right in front of our homestay. Sometimes she was so weak because he served the drunkards who met her. This story was obtained from the drivers of Munting – Merauke, who were *perantau*. The same thing happened when we were in Merauke. Hotel staff said that if someone looked for a room in the middle of the night. It was ensured that the room be fully booked. So the drunk did not stay at the homestay. When we were at a homestay in Merauke, at 2 or 3 in the morning, almost all of the room doors were banging on. The receptionist said that it was drunks looking for lodging or looking for trouble.

The condition of the residents who did not improve due to the arrival of the nomads was sarcastically stated: “they came with stoves (*kompor*) they came home with suitcases (*kopor*).” This is the daily scene of the local people who cannot compete with the newcomers. The same thing was also found in several cities controlled by *perantau*, such as Sulawesi. Usually, they have the power and an extensive network to take care of each other. When we arrived in North Kalimantan, just as we arrived, one of the Paguyuban of Makassar immigrants was holding a meeting to elect its leader. The name of the organization is KKSS (South Sulawesi Family Harmony). The influence of this

organization is quite strong, not only in the economic field but also in politics. They can regulate the political system through a network of family harmony that comes from various backgrounds.

Our nephew, who married in Makassar, has relatives in Ternate who is the chairman of KKSS. He has a network with all the *perantau* from South Sulawesi. No official does not know him. In several meetings, when they saw this man, everyone acknowledged that the influence of KKSS was influential in that area. This person becomes an essential person for anyone who wants to be a leader in the area. In Kaltara, for example, every time there is an election, one of the leaders chosen is certainly from South Sulawesi.

When we were in Nunukan. A resident said that all residents in Nunukan are *perantau* who have lived on this island for a long time. So, if there is a regional head election, ethnicity issues often arise secretly because most of the population wants their figures to become regional leaders. Nunukan is also the entry point for goods from Malaysia, not to mention the migrant workers returning from overseas. Nunukan Island, adjacent to Sebatik Island, is a gathering place for various ethnic groups in the archipelago.