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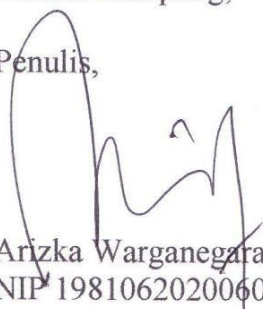
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ARTICLE



The political legacies of transmigration and the dynamics of ethnic politics: a case study from Lampung, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the political legacies of transmigration in local elections in Indonesia. Lampung province has an unusual ethnic make-up because in the past 100 years both the Dutch colonial administration and Indonesian Government have been implementing a transmigration programme. Transmigration has therefore changed the demographic pattern of Lampung. Since 2005, the mode of local election has been changed from indirect to direct. As a consequence of this, there is a revival of ethnic identity politics in local elections. In this paper, we focus on a transmigration affected area where the descendants of Javanese transmigrants are numerically dominant and correspondingly powerful in local politics. This research leads us to argue that ethnicity has become an important factor in local elections and that in transmigration affected areas it has led to the political domination of Javanese transmigrant descendants in local politics. We further to show how, in response to this, native Lampungese elites have adopted a number of strategies to help them retain a role in local politics. Our argument runs contrary to that of some scholars who have claimed that ethnicity is playing a diminishing role in Indonesian local elections.

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Introduction: transmigration and local politics in Lampung

This paper connects one of the most important social phenomena in Indonesian history, one that is now largely in the past, the transmigration programme, with the contemporary state of ethnic politics in Indonesia. We set this in the context of the decentralisation of power with all of its ambiguous consequences. Our own interest in this subject was given specific focus by what we argue in this paper is a tendency in the literature to downplay the role of ethnicity in subnational elections and in particular to write transmigration out of the story altogether. This is not to deny that ethnic sentiment plays a role in some parts of Indonesia, especially in divided regions such as in Kalimantan and Sulawesi. However, the legacy of transmigration in Lampung has resulted in a different narrative compared to other parts of Indonesia. Most notably in specific parts of Lampung where they form an overwhelming majority, transmigrant descendants have become particularly powerful in local politics.

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We argue further that an important part of understanding the long-term impact of transmigration on electoral politics is to explore the political strategy deployed by the Lampungese as they seek to maintain their position in local politics in those areas with a majority of Javanese transmigrants. Thus our objective involves analysing local Lampungese political experiences in transmigration affected areas. We do this by examining local elections in areas with a majority of Javanese transmigrants and by investigating the political survival strategies used by the Lampungese minority in dealing politically with Javanese transmigrant descendants in subnational elections.

There are two central events – or perhaps we should say projects – that frame our discussion in this paper: transmigration policy and political reform. The first is the transmigration policy, which, while not unique to those years, was certainly a very prominent feature of the New Order government of President Suharto (1966–1997). This was an intensification of a longstanding policy, dating from the years of the Dutch colonial administration, to move people out of densely populated Java and Bali to the so-called outer islands. Six transmigration programmes were implemented between 1969 and 1999, in which over six million people were relocated from Java and Bali. While the official government line under Suharto stressed that the transmigration policy was designed to strengthen national unity, critics and commentators saw it as a blunt instrument to enhance Javanese dominance of the country.¹ In the Suharto era, ethnicity and religious affairs were categorised as a sensitive and fragile issue; ethno-politics and political Islam were marginalised in the name of building national integration.² The role of ethnicity vis-à-vis religious and patronage politics in local Indonesia became a major issue after the political reforms of 1998.

The second is the political reform era in Indonesia, which started in 1998 and changed Indonesia's political system. As a result of the political reforms in 1998, Indonesia has slowly transformed itself into a democratic country. In 2004, the national government adopted Law 32/2004, enabling direct elections of political leaders at local and regional level. In this sense, elections at subnational level have become more democratic and dynamic.³ In contrast with the Suharto era, transmigration is no longer on the political agenda. As a result of these legislative changes, direct elections have been held since 2005 for provincial and local leaders – governors, heads of regency and city mayors – and for provincial and regency assemblies. One consequence of this proliferation of elections has been that the size of ethnic groups within an administrative circumscription has become an important factor in local elections. But, as Chandra reminds us, demographic shifts within a country can affect electoral results.⁴ The democratisation of the early 2000s resulted in political processes that hinge on ethnic identities and belonging. This was particularly the case in Lampung. Before the implementation of local elections in 2005, ethnic relations between Lampungese and transmigrants and their descendants had been relatively harmonious, with only very occasional minor ethnic conflicts. Indeed, according to a World Bank report published in 2004, Lampung is 'not typically associated with identity based conflict'.⁵

Lampung's politics have been dynamic, and in many senses the narrative of local politics is similar to other parts of the Indonesian archipelago, for example in the role of natural resource politics giving rise to a business-driven political climate and the domination of a particular family in local politics. The Sjahroedin family dominated local politics in Lampung between 2003 and 2014. Business-driven politics continue to influence local

conditions in Lampung today. Lampung's politics appear to have been moving toward a strong business orientation. Having said that, as a result of the impact of the transmigration programme politics in Lampung remain strongly influenced by ethnic sentiment especially in transmigration affected locations such as our case study locations, East Lampung and Metro.

The transmigration programme has had several consequences – political, cultural, environmental and social. By focusing on the impact of transmigration on local elections in East Lampung, a regency in Lampung Province in the south of Sumatra with a strong presence of transmigrants, this paper aims to show how the transmigration programme left political legacies that still influence the mode of campaigns and results of local elections today in transmigration affected areas. It examines in particular the strategies that native Lampungese undertake to retain an element of political influence and concludes that the ongoing effects of the transmigration programme mean that ethnicity remains an important issue in local Indonesian politics.

This paper is organised into four further substantive sections. The following section provides a literature review and discusses the conceptual approaches underpinning studies of ethnic politics and patronage in the contemporary Indonesia. Section three discusses the methods used in this research. In the fourth section we present the empirical findings, beginning with a general overview of power relations in majority Javanese East Lampung. It then identifies four ways in which Lampungese elites seek to retain power and influence, expanding on each of them in turn. These consist of forming coalitions with Javanese running mates, taking up positions as local party leaders, appropriating Javanese language and cultural symbols and regarding all local residents as Lampungese. However, the last strategy can work both ways, as we show using experiences from neighbouring Metro, where the discourse is reversed and the descendants of Javanese migrants appropriate local sentiment. We conclude by arguing that ethnicity should not be written out of the script of local politics in Indonesia and that indeed in those parts of the country where transmigration has created widespread demographic change ethnicity is a paramount factor.

Ethnicity and patronage in contemporary Indonesian local politics

The process of decentralization has made Indonesian local politics dynamic, especially after the implementation of local elections. Under the Suharto regime, ethnic-religious sentiment was banished from the political arena, including elections. Now, however, ethnic-religious sentiment is widely used as one of the major issues in local elections. It is not, however, the only issue, although in this paper we argue that it is an important one, and one that has been largely neglected. As we will demonstrate in the following paragraphs, a bundle of issues around patronage, family and clientelism has formed the focus of much discussion and research, and while peripheral these are issues that figure in our own case study here, as does the question of Putra Daerah, under which so-called 'native' populations were favoured in political posts. We will, however, make only passing reference to the literature that focuses on money politics, gangsterism and the role of local power brokers.

We preface our discussion of the ways in which ethnicity and more specifically ethnic politics have been treated in the literature with a brief reference to our interpretation of the term ethnicity itself. In the context of Indonesia, we support the position that ethnicity is a socially ubiquitous category, as described by Goebel.⁶ This enables us to argue that ethnicity

is related to culture and language: it is defined by analysing the language spoken, customs and habits associated with a particular ethnic group. Further, we have used government data as provided in the official ethnic population survey by the Indonesian Government in 2010. According to this survey, which is conducted every ten years by the Indonesian Government, ethnicity is simply defined based on patrilinealism and self-identification at the time the survey is conducted.⁷ In this sense, most respondents provide an ethnic identification that tallies with their father's ethnic group (patrilinealism). If a child is born to parents of mixed ethnicity – a Javanese father and a Lampungese mother, for example – she or he will almost certainly identify him or herself as Javanese in the national ethnic survey. It is precisely the ossification that results from the state's definition of ethnicity that has given rise to what we argue is the continuing relevance of ethnic politics.

In reviewing the literature on local politics and ethnicity in Indonesia, it becomes clear that most of this work fails to consider how a focus on processes of transmigration (or even migration more generally) can provide a new outlook on ethnic politics in Indonesia. Despite the various foci and perspectives of this body of research, no one has sought to analyse what the political legacies of transmigration are in the context of local elections.

Most of the research differentiates between the issue of ethnic politics and transmigration in Indonesia; there has been a failure to elaborate on the intersection between transmigration and Indonesian local politics. The current literature on ethnic politics in Indonesia is not able to provide a comprehensive understanding of the unforeseen legacies of transmigration on contemporary local elections. In agreeing with Côté's claim that 'large-scale population movements have always affected the local political landscape in Indonesia', this paper endeavours to analyse local elections in the context of transmigration in Lampung Province by highlighting the political legacies created by prolonged transmigration on local elections.⁸

Research on Indonesian politics includes work on democratisation and ethnic politics,⁹ on the role of religion and ethnicity in local politics,¹⁰ on the role of brokers,¹¹ patronage and clientelism in local politics,¹² on ethnic politics in West Kalimantan¹³ and on ethnicity and local politics in Kendari.¹⁴ At the centre of this work is the issue of ethnicity vis-à-vis religion, patronage democracy and vote-buying in the context of the weakness of Indonesian political institutions in local politics.

Aspinall's research into ethnic politics leads him to claim that the issue of ethnicity is of lesser importance in subnational elections due to the political compromises that take place amongst the elites in Indonesia.¹⁵ He finds that political bargaining is not based on similarity between party manifestos but on more pragmatic factors. However, this research fails to highlight the context within which political compromises are made, compromises that mask the role of ethnicity in the bargaining. Consideration of what lies behind these compromises is needed in order to refine Aspinall's findings.

Van Klinken's research bears similarities to Aspinall's work in that he puts forward the idea that ethnic clientelism plays a limited role in contemporary Indonesian politics, emphasising the diminishing role of ethnicity in local politics.¹⁶ Van Klinken concludes that ethnic organisations such as the South Sulawesi Family Association (KKSS) fail to mobilise their members in support of particular candidates in subnational elections due to a lack of internal consolidation caused by a polarisation of interests among its members.¹⁷ However, his findings do not provide strong evidence that ethnicity is playing

a diminishing role in local politics as his research is based on a limited number of ethnic organisations in a specific location. Further research is needed with a greater number of ethnic organisations to produce a comprehensive analysis of the influence of ethnicity in this context.

Research on the importance of ethnic patronage and political networking has been conducted by Davidson and Henley, who studied the role of *adat* (customs) in local politics.¹⁸ They argue that *adat* is one of the most important elements for an understanding of the current dynamics of Indonesian local political. The idea of an *adat* community became a more overtly political movement in the reform era. For instance, the political networks associated with *adat* communities became a trigger for the revival of the exclusive political role of Putra Daerah (literally, 'sons of the region') in the local politics of Indonesia. This was advocated by *adat* communities across Indonesia as part of the process of political bargaining in an attempt to reduce the revival of ethno-nationalist sentiment during the early years of political decentralisation in the reform era.

Côté and Mitchell claim that the issue of Putra Daerah is essential to an understanding of local politics in Papua and the Riau Archipelago.¹⁹ Taking a comparative approach between the case of Putra Daerah in Indonesia and in West Africa, the authors argue that the exclusive narrative of Putra Daerah becomes one of the electoral strategies deployed by local politicians to mobilise voters. But this also creates a greater chance of inter-ethnic conflict between locals and migrants. While this research is comprehensive in the way it relates Putra Daerah to subnational elections and conflict over domination of local politics, it fails to provide an understanding of the influence that the process of migration can have on inter-ethnic political conflict and competition in Indonesia, as shown in the case of Lampung's local politics.

Studies of the impact of decentralisation on contested inter-ethnic power and ethnic conflict in Indonesia have been conducted by Indonesianists such as van Klinken, who has researched communal violence in Kalimantan and its distinctive nature when compared to conflicts in Sulawesi and Maluku.²⁰ He argues that the conflict in Kalimantan can be characterised neither as civil strife, as occurred in Ambon (Maluku) or Poso (Central Sulawesi), nor as a prolonged religious-based conflict, but is rather a conflict based around contested political power between two dominant ethnic groups – the majority Dayak and minority Maduranese people. In this context, Brown and Diprose have argued normatively that the ethnic-religious conflict in Poso should be dealt with through subnational elections.²¹ They claim that local elites should 'promote local civic identities' in an effort to 'bridge ethno-religious cleavages' during the local election process, and that collective peacebuilding could then emerge from the grassroots level of society.

Buehler and Tan analyse the dynamics of local politics in Indonesia in terms of the influence of the local democratisation process on ethnicity and clan politics in several subnational elections in South Sulawesi, focusing on the relationship between party and candidate.²² They argue that local politics in South Sulawesi have been captured by the Limpo family, one of the most powerful clans in South Sulawesi. Aspinall and As'ad's research has a similar concern to that of Buehler and Tan.²³ Their work, which focuses on Central Kalimantan, seeks to explain the revival of family politics in Indonesian local politics in general and in Central Kalimantan in particular. Their findings in Central Kalimantan indicate that domination of politics by powerful families is also

a phenomenon in Central Kalimantan. Aspinall and As'ad attribute the strength of family politics to the weak socio-economic conditions of Indonesian society, as a result of which money and ethnicity have become the medium for vote casting in subnational elections.²⁴ In this sense, as Tomsa argues, the lack of party institutionalism also becomes the main problem and challenge for democratic consolidation in Indonesia.²⁵

Specific research on clientelism and voting behaviour in Indonesia has been conducted by Allen.²⁶ Allen claims that patron-client relations between the voter and candidate exist in areas where the state plays a dominant role in the economic sector, especially with regards to the distribution of goods once a particular candidate has been elected in a subnational election. Similar research has also been conducted by Aspinall and Rohman.²⁷ Although their research is more focused on identifying the typology and role of political brokers in local politics in Indonesia, it nevertheless also examines how brokers and their political networks become vote-getting machines for particular candidates.

The studies introduced above focus on the importance of political networks and clientelism in local politics in Indonesia. Even research on patronage is largely concerned with the study of political networking and clientelism. Blunt et al. focus on similar issues, but their work relates to a different narrative on political patronage in Indonesia.²⁸ They analyse the impact of patronage on the bureaucratic process of government, arguing that patronage has affected the performance of services delivered by local government.

Currently, the main debates among researchers working on Indonesian local politics revolve around money politics, gangsterism and the role of local power brokers in controlling state agencies and resources. The contested elites and their behaviour – such as the domination by local mafias over resources, networks and clans in local politics – are the central themes of Sidel's work on Indonesian local politics.²⁹ In their studies on the role of money in Indonesian local politics, Aspinall and Rohman have drawn attention to the significant role played by money in electoral contests.³⁰

The democratisation of local elections has undoubtedly changed the nature of local politics. Ethnic politics were weakened by the Suharto regime in the name of integration and nationalism. The situation in much of Lampung, with its larger discrepancy in the size of ethnic groups, is different to that in some other areas of Indonesia. In West Kalimantan, for example, where political competition mostly occurs between the largest and second-largest ethnic groups, no one ethnic group is able to form a majority in local government. As a result, minority migrant groups, mainly Maduranese and Bugis, act as a complementary political power to native ethnic groups.³¹ Here the rivalry between the ethnic Dayak and Malays contrasts with the approach adopted by the Lampungese elite, who, as we have seen, tend to form political coalitions with the Javanese majority. In fact, the small size of the Lampungese proportion of voters rules out head-to-head rivalry and invites political coalitions given the centrality of ethnicity in voting choices.

Researching ethnicity in Lampung politics

As will already have become clear from the above discussion, Lampung is distinctive compared with other regions and closer to one end of the spectrum in relation to the range of transmigration patterns in Indonesia. As a result of the occurrence of prolonged transmigration programmes in this province, Lampung provides plenty of material for

a study of the intersection between local elections and transmigration in Indonesia. It is also nonetheless very useful because it relates in interesting ways to other provinces and because it represents well the issues that have arisen as a consequence of transmigration. Lampung is chosen in part because the patterns it provides of subnational elections and their consequences in a transmigration area can be used to analyse other areas in Indonesia.

Demographically, the Lampungese in Lampung are a small minority compared to the descendants of Javanese migrants, the result of the prolonged transmigration programme and of spontaneous migration. According to the latest population survey, the Javanese constitute 64% of the total population; the remaining 36% are distributed across more than 10 ethnicities.³² East Lampung is one of the pivotal locations of transmigration in Lampung. The total population in East Lampung in 2015 was 1,008,797 people, which makes it the second most populated regency in Lampung.³³ Meanwhile, the Javanese make up 80% of the population according to the latest government ethnic population survey in 2010 (compared with 72% in Metro, see Table 1).³⁴ Geographically, the total area of East Lampung is 5,325 square kilometres, 15% of the total for the province of Lampung³⁵ (see Figure 1). The prolonged transmigration programme has resulted in some minor but not insignificant differences in transmigration-affected locations in Lampung. For instance, Metro has better resources compared to East Lampung; Javanese transmigrants in Metro are better off economically than those in East Lampung. East Lampung is predominantly rural, with more people working in the agricultural sector and as labour in plantations.

There is no in-depth Indonesia-wide research on the correlation between transmigration and the poverty rate. However, this also indicates that the different handling of the transmigration programme resulted in characteristics that differ between particular transmigration-affected locations. Metro was well prepared and established by the Dutch colonial administration as the central location of the transmigration programme. As a result, the city is more developed than East Lampung. Poverty in Metro has a lower index than in East Lampung – 8.68% for Metro and 15.24% for East Lampung in 2019.³⁶ This disparity is reflected in the Human Development Index, which stands at 75.10 for Metro, and 67.10 for East Lampung in 2015.³⁷

Table 1. The ethnic make-up of East Lampung in 2010.

Ethnicity	Number	Percentage
Javanese	772,915	81.2
Lampungese	80,000	8.4
Sundanese	36,975	3.9
Bantenese	20,618	2.1
Balinese	15,747	1.7
Ethnic groups from South Sumatra	7,959	0.8
People of other ethnicities	6,733	0.7
Bugis (South Sulawesi)	3,845	0.4
Minangkabau (West Sumatra)	3,761	0.4
Batak (North Sumatra)	1,966	0.2
Chinese	752	0.07
Unanswered	368	0.04
Total	951,659	

Central Statistical Bureau of Indonesia, 'Penduduk Provinsi Lampung hasil Sensus Penduduk 2010.'

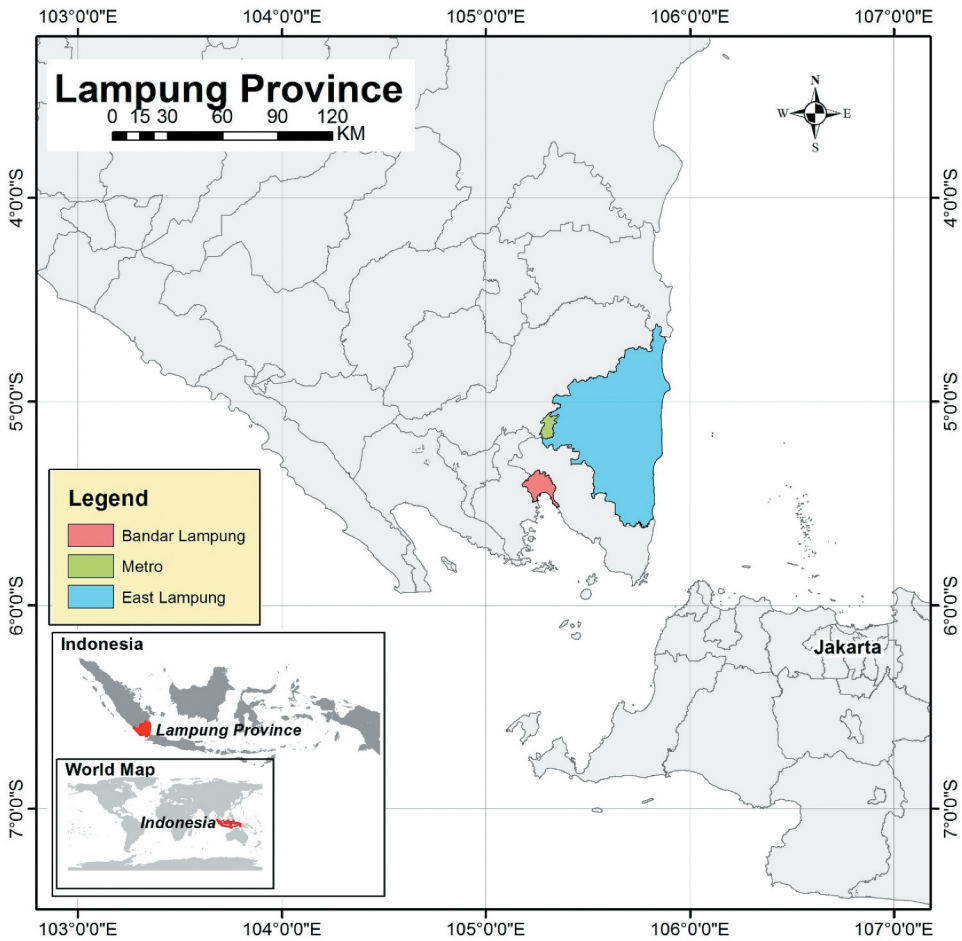


Figure 1. Map of East Lampung. Badan Informasi Geospasial Indonesia, “Map of Lampung.” Source: Badan Informasi Geospasial (2020), adapted by the authors.

There are 20 sub-districts in East Lampung, which are divided into 264 rural villages. The agricultural sector is the leading sector, employing almost half of the regency’s population.³⁸ Sukadana, the capital of East Lampung, was an important area for transmigration in the Dutch colonial period prior to the creation of Metro, about 30 kilometres to the west, in the 1930s. Metro had in fact been part of Sukadana and was established by the Dutch as a city for transmigrants. The Dutch relocated 200,000 people from Java through *kolonisatie* (the colonial-era transmigration programme), of whom Sukadana received 47,000 between 1935 and 1941).³⁹ Metro differs considerably from all other cities or regencies in Lampung in that it was founded in the early 1930s by the Dutch colonial authorities as a destination for transmigrants. The city is the smallest in Lampung, with an expanse of only 68.74 square kilometres and a population of 158,415, of whom 72% are Javanese and 10% Lampungese⁴⁰; indeed, the population pattern is similar to other areas characterised by transmigration, including East Lampung.

This research relied on in-depth interviews with numerous people who can be categorised as belonging to the local elite of East Lampung. Participants have been selected purposively. We selected interview participants based on their role and the position that they held, on their occupation and their work and on their knowledge and experience of specific issues that formed part of our research. Interviewees in East Lampung and Metro included politicians (some who had run successfully for office and others who had not been elected), campaign managers, members of ethnic organisations and other descendants of transmigrants. The process of approaching participants involved two mechanisms. The first was to use our existing personal contacts. The second was to go through an intermediary; this was especially useful when approaching transmigrant descendants; one of our acquaintances, himself a descendant of transmigrants, assisted us in making direct contact with a number of other transmigrant descendants. Initial contact with potential interviewees was made by email, telephone or face-to-face contact between July and August 2015. The interviews themselves were mostly conducted from October 2015 to March 2016. The data that came out of the interviews was analysed thematically, although the disparities between the interviewees led to some unevenness in the application of the themes.

Power relations in majority Javanese East Lampung

The following two sections discuss the local politics of ethnic identity in the regency of East Lampung through an analysis of the domination of Javanese transmigrant elites. The core theme focuses around two important narratives in subnational elections in East Lampung: the domination of local politics by Javanese and the political strategy applied by the minority Lampungese during elections. This section concentrates on the results of the local elections of 2015. The results of the 2005 and 2010 elections are also brought into play so as to provide a reflection on the current situation on the ground in East Lampung. We start this section with an introduction brief history of transmigration narrowing the focus of discussion to the context of ethnicity and transmigration in East Lampung, bringing it into an analysis of local politics in this Javanese-majority area. We follow in the succeeding section with a review of the political strategies adopted by the Lampungese elite in dealing with the Javanese majority.

The democratization process in Indonesia led to more open competition among elites during the first phase of democratisation from 1998 to 2005. The increase in political demands for 'exclusive' political treatment of indigenous people spread across the nation. Natives demanded priority in local politics: thus the landscape of local politics in Lampung changed from a Javanese hegemony to domination by native 'Lampungese'. However, in the years since the advent of direct elections in 2005, local politics in East Lampung have seen the majority Javanese population establish political domination. The domination of local politics by Javanese transmigrants in East Lampung in three consecutive regency elections is due to a number of factors including demographics, political networks and ethnic sentiment. However, Javanese dominance is reinforced through ethnically based political coalitions with the Lampungese minority. This situation finds an echo in the points made by Chandra, who argues that:

Democracy requires fluid majorities and minorities in order to survive. Ethnically divided societies, however, tend to produce 'permanent' majorities and minorities, based on an ethnic census. Consequently, democracy in ethnically divided societies is threatened. The threat, according to these arguments, can be mitigated by 'cross-cutting' or 'multipolar' structures of ethnic division or by institutions that limit the power of the winning majority.⁴¹

The narrative of local politics in this area can be described as contest and compromise among the majority and minority ethnic groups, predominantly therefore between the Javanese and Lampungese. Local politics in East Lampung provide a lesson in the importance of the impact of ethnicity on local election results.

In a broader context, the implementation of the local election system since 2005 has led to an increased airing for ethnic-religious issues, a narrative that is examined by Aspinall et al.⁴² Thus, the new subnational elections have contributed to a situation where ethnic composition within a region plays an important role in political competition in local politics. Huber⁴³ has studied the impact of electoral systems on electoral outcomes. He argues that various electoral systems lead to the saliency of ethnic group sentiment.⁴⁴ In other words, different systems have different political consequences. For example, the first-past-the-post system currently in use in Indonesia in subnational elections may lead to a greater dominance of the majority ethnic population than a proportional representation system.

As a consequence of the prolonged forced migration programme both in the era of Dutch colonial rule and in post-independence Indonesia, the demographic make-up of the population has shifted radically within East Lampung. As we have seen, more than 80% of the population of East Lampung are ethnic Javanese, with the remaining 20% distributed across 10 ethnicities (see Table 1). This minimises the opportunity for inter-ethnic power struggles but means that the Javanese have dominated the last three regency elections, starting with the decade-long administration of Satono in 2005 and continuing with the administration of Chusnunia Halim. The imbalance between the population of Javanese descent and other ethnicities is an important factor that leads to the political weakness of the Lampungese in the local politics of East Lampung. The majority Javanese voters have dominated every local election in East Lampung, including elections to the local regency assembly; indeed, as Côté has argued, the migration process has always impacted on politics.⁴⁵

An alternative position was taken, however, by a member of the ethnic Javanese elite, who argued in our interview that: 'This is the era of decentralisation, so at this stage, the Lampungese obtain many more advantages than Javanese transmigrant descendants'.⁴⁶ This argument is supported by Tirtosudarmo, who claims that Javanese sentiment cannot be mobilised for political advantage in elections in Lampung because the basic rivalry between the Lampungese and Javanese is based on 'various economic [issues] especially land ownership' rather than ethnicity.⁴⁷ Tirtosudarmo's point rings true to some extent: in some other parts of Lampung Province such as the provincial capital, Bandar Lampung, economic issues are one of the most important aspects of electoral competition, but in transmigrant areas such as East Lampung ethnic sentiment is still the favoured way of obtaining political support.

However, the picture has not always been so clear-cut, as suggested by the view expressed by the member of the ethnic Javanese elite quoted in the previous paragraph.

Between 2000 and 2005, as a result of policies promoting the political interests of Putra Daerah in local politics, the Lampungese elite temporarily found themselves in a strong position in the local politics of this regency. Indeed, Côté and Mitchell have argued for the importance of the role of Putra Daerah in understanding local politics.⁴⁸ But Javanese political domination in East Lampung's local politics resumed when a powerful ethnic Javanese figure, Satono, won in 2005 in the first electoral contest for regent by capitalising on issues facing the Javanese in East Lampung. Satono, a member of the Javanese elite, was a symbol of the political resistance of Javanese transmigrants against the political rights granted to Putra Daerah in the early years of political reform between 2000 and 2005. However, the changing mode of election from election through the local assembly to a direct system of election – a one-person one-vote system – created the political domination of Javanese transmigrants over the local politics of East Lampung. Three consecutive elections to the post of head of regency, in 2005, 2010 and 2015, have provided evidence of the political domination of Javanese transmigrants in this regency. The direct election system has also resulted in a diminishing role for the Putra Daerah (in this case, ethnic Lampungese) in local politics particularly in the transmigration affected location. A senior politician and campaign manager expressed the situation thus:

This was a consequence and a blowback response to the Putra Daerah policy [of the early 2000s]. The rise in Javanese sentiment brought political advantages for Satono. He received massive support from many Javanese groups such as [the transmigrant descendant organisation] PATRI. The campaign tagline was also clear at that time: Javanese must vote for the Javanese candidate.⁴⁹

This victory by a member of the Javanese elite represented a comeback for Javanese in local politics and in the bureaucracy – a return, albeit under different circumstances, to the situation in the Suharto era, when the majority of local bureaucrats and politicians were Javanese.

Dealing with the majority: the survival strategies of the Lampungese in local politics

Strategies of the Lampungese elite: political coalitions with the Javanese

To cope with their political weakness, the Lampungese elite deploy a number of strategies to counterbalance the majority Javanese. First, they create inter-ethnic political coalitions with the majority ethnic group itself. Secondly, they attempt to occupy leading positions in political parties. Thirdly, Lampungese candidates try to win over Javanese ethnic sentiment by using Javanese culture and symbols in local election campaigning material. Finally, they implement an inclusive political strategy by claiming that all residents of Lampung are Lampungese. This latter strategy, however, can cut both ways, as the example of neighbouring Metro shows.

According to information obtained from the interviews, inter-ethnic coalitions, particularly with the Javanese, are the preferred strategy used by the Lampungese elite to maintain their political influence in the local political arena. On these inter-ethnic coalitions, one campaign manager explained that, 'We have to be more realistic as we [Lampungese] are a minority in this regency, so forming an ethnic coalition probably

increases our opportunity to win in this election'.⁵⁰ Indeed, the use of ethnic coalitions is a common strategy in some regions such as West Kalimantan.⁵¹ However, Lampung is different as these coalitions are formed not only on the basis of ethnicity but also of a candidate's transmigrant origins.

We can see this at work by looking at three examples of running pairs elected as regent and deputy regent of East Lampung since 2005, made up of one Javanese and one Lampungese, with the Javanese candidate standing for regent in each case: Satono and Bahusin in 2005, Satono and Erwin Arifin in 2010, and Chusnunia Halim and Zaiful Bukhori in 2015. In the local politics of other parts of Indonesia, it is common that inter-ethnic coalitions drawn from both the majority and minority elite seek political support from a wider range of ethnicities. In the context of East Lampung, however, ethnic groups other than Javanese and Lampungese represent only 3% or less of the population and so tend to get left out of the picture.

In this context, by accommodating the Lampungese elite into local power structures, the Javanese elite appears to be eager to achieve political stability within the regency. The desire for political coalition with the Lampungese is not only based on political motives; cultural legitimation is now a very important reason behind these kinds of coalition. One of our interview participants, a local politician of Javanese origin, said of the phenomenon that, 'Indeed, actually we are confident that we can win local elections without a coalition with the Lampungese, but we prefer to sustain political stability within this regency; by accommodating the Lampungese elite, we believe that we get cultural legitimation as they are the locals and they historically provided the land for us'.⁵²

According to an unsuccessful Lampungese candidate for regent, from the point of view of the Lampungese elite, an inter-ethnic coalition with the Javanese was part of a political strategy to win the 2015 election. This is the most effective way for them to maintain their power in the regency. 'In the early stage of my candidacy,' he told us, 'I wanted to form a coalition with the Balinese candidate, but most of my supporters rejected the idea. They [the Balinese] are also a minority population, and [this person] is also not a Muslim. It would be better to have a coalition with a Javanese'.⁵³ This comment reflects the reality of grassroots political dynamics in Indonesia where religious adherence sometimes becomes tangled with ethnic identity in ways that require discussion that is beyond the scope of this paper. We should note in passing, however, that the mode of election through a one-person one-vote system never provides an advantage for minority groups whether of an ethnic or religious nature, or indeed a combination.⁵⁴

Lampungese heads of local political parties

Attempting to fill vacant positions as local head of a party is another strategy used to reinforce the Lampungese political profile. This strategy derives its effectiveness from the centralised nature of the mechanisms of political party decision-making in Indonesia. Decisions made by officials at lower levels need to be approved by those higher up in the organisational hierarchy, bolstering the importance of local party leaders specifically and the patron-client relationship more generally. In this context, the patron-client relationship in Indonesian party politics can be seen as a symptom of the political system as a whole, with four levels of governance within any political party: national, provincial, regency and sub-district.⁵⁵ Although the election system for local party leaders is, in

theory, totally democratic, local party leaders still depend on the ‘political blessing’ of the central political party chairperson.

This raises the question as to how the Lampungese dominate the top positions of local political parties in East Lampung. First, in the early 2000s, as a consequence of policies designed to support Putra Daerah, Lampungese enjoyed the right to occupy the post of local political party leader in East Lampung. Lampungese were subsequently able to maintain their position within local political parties, much as occurred in other parts of Indonesia. As a result, almost all of the current political party leaders in East Lampung are Lampungese. In the words of one local politician, ‘You can see that almost all of the local political party leaders are Lampungese here . . . This is a strategy by Lampungese to retain their power; they can get it as a consequence of the exclusive political rights of Putra Daerah in local politics’.⁵⁶ The hierarchical structure mentioned above helps to maintain this situation both in district and provincial level, the head of local political party have dominated by Lampungese (see Table 2). If the provincial party leader is Lampungese, they tend to choose a Lampungese person as the leader of the political party at lower levels, as the higher level of political parties plays an important role in appointing the lower level party leadership. The weak nature of parties as institutions also contributes to the strength of party patrimonial relations,⁵⁷ with patron client relations based on economic interests between party elite and voters.

By installing Lampungese as heads of local political parties, the Lampungese minority are seeking several advantages. The leader of a local political party has considerable authority in choosing a fellow Lampungese as a candidate in local assembly elections. This has led to a policy of ethnic patronage for the Lampungese elite and also means that there are more Lampungese appointments. Table 2 shows the ethnicity of the various heads of local political parties in East Lampung and Lampung Province as a whole.

However, Table 3 shows a different picture: 29 elected regency assembly members are Javanese and 14 are Lampungese. While the Lampungese dominate the top ranks of political parties, other areas of political activity reflect approximately the ethnic composition of the regency, even if Lampungese have a proportionately larger share of assembly members. It is worth noting, however, that assembly members have been elected from a range of minority ethnicities. The ability of the Lampungese to win a larger share of local assembly seats also relates to the strategy deployed by the Lampungese themselves. There are two possible

Table 2. Local political party leaders in East Lampung and Lampung Province based on ethnicity in 2015.

Position	Ethnicity (East Lampung District)	Ethnicity (Provincial Level)
Head of PDI-P	Lampungese	Lampungese
Head of National Demokrat Party	Lampungese	Bantenese
Head of PKB	Javanese	Lampungese
Head of Prosperous Justice Party	Javanese	Javanese
Head of Great Indonesian Movement	Lampungese	Lampungese
Head of PAN	Lampungese	Lampungese
Head of Demokrat Party	Lampungese	Javanese
Head of Golkar Party	Lampungese	Lampungese
Head of People’s Conscience Party	Lampungese	Lampungese

Local political party leaders in East Lampung and Lampung Province based on ethnicity in 2015, compiled by the authors.

Source: Authors’ research.

Table 3. The constitution of the East Lampung regency assembly in 2014 based on ethnicity.

Position	Ethnicity	Number
Local assembly members	Javanese	29
	Lampungese	14
	Balinese	3
	Batak (North Sumatra)	1
	ethnic groups from South Sumatra	1
	Minangkabau (West Sumatra)	1
	Bugis (South Sulawesi)	1
TOTAL		50

The constitution of the East Lampung regency assembly in 2014 based on ethnicity, compiled by the authors.

Source: Authors' research.

reasons why the minority Lampungese were able to gain a bigger share of seats in the regency assembly. Firstly, as Lampungese politicians have dominated the position of local political party leader in East Lampung, they have been able to prioritise Lampungese candidates in local assembly elections. Technically, political party leaders have tended to put the favoured candidates in positions lower down the ballot list because 'voters will be more likely to choose candidates with low list positions regardless of whether or not they are incumbents'.⁵⁸ Secondly, it is probable that ethnicity is a lesser factor in legislative elections than it is in elections for executive positions. As a result, even though the Lampungese are a minority ethnic group, they still have a chance to be elected and win seats in the regency assembly. Further, this is symptomatic of the patrimonial – not to say clientelist – state of political parties in Indonesia. Indeed, patronage politics condition the nature of party politics and party institutionalism in Indonesia; those who want to be nominated in subnational elections must have a strong personal connection with central party officials. This reflects the institutional weakness of parties in Indonesia.⁵⁹

Javanese culture and symbols as an elite Lampungese strategy

Using Javanese culture and symbols is a strategy employed by the Lampungese elite in order to obtain wider support from Javanese voters. The use of the Javanese language during campaigns and the holding of cultural and Javanese shadow puppet events are just some of the ways by which the Lampungese elite can stay close to the majority Javanese voters. One Lampungese candidate pointedly remarked, 'You are asking me why I am speaking in Javanese and using a [Javanese] cultural approach? Indeed, this is based on the reality that they are in the majority and, politically, I want to win their hearts' (see [Figure 2](#)).⁶⁰ It can thus be presumed that the application of Javanese culture is another pragmatic strategy deployed by the Lampungese elite to obtain the sympathy of Javanese voters.

According to this approach, the use of Javanese symbols and culture provides political help for the Lampungese because it helps them become better associated with the Javanese community. The effort of the Lampungese elite to use Javanese culture and symbols relies upon the important role of ethnic features in a patronage society.⁶¹ To attract Javanese voters, the Lampungese candidate was not only advertising himself in newspapers and on



Figure 2. The Lampungese candidate for regent, posing beside Javanese shadow puppets during his political campaign. Picture obtained from candidate successful team. Source: The candidate's team.

local television wearing Javanese clothing (Javanese traditional hat and customary dress), he also hired a popular Javanese singer to release a Javanese music album containing some of his campaign materials, and the video was made available on YouTube.⁶² These are among the ways that Lampungese candidates try to come closer to the majority Javanese voters.

To appeal to Javanese sentiment, electoral teams produce political taglines in the Javanese language. Among them are the following: Javanese vote for Javanese (*wong Jowo pilih wong Jowo*); for a woman, the important [thing is to be] Javanese (*wedok o sing penting Jowo*); Lampungese vote for a Javanese, [so it looks] strange if Javanese do not vote for a Javanese (*Lampung pilih Jowo, mosok wong Jowo ora pilih Jowo*). According to a campaign manager whom I interviewed: 'The political tagline is so important in raising awareness among Javanese voters, especially the elderly. This reminds them that a Javanese candidate is competing in the local election'.⁶³ Another campaign manager told me that, 'Ethnic symbols such as language and traditional costumes . . . are essential in reassuring voters from a particular ethnic group. At any rate, we attempt to convince them [by appealing to their] ethnic sentiments'.⁶⁴

All residents of Lampung are Lampungese

Another important strategy involves the inclusive political approach used by the Lampungese elite, and reflected in the position adopted by Lampung Sai, the biggest Lampungese ethnic-religious organisation, that all of those living in Lampung are Lampungese no matter what their ethnic background. This inclusive political strategy is useful for reducing Javanese ethnic sentiment in local politics because it encourages political cooperation rather than competition, especially in areas where Javanese migrants have a large majority, as in the case of East Lampung and neighbouring Metro. The former provincial governor of Lampung, himself Lampungese, told us that,

'It is our strategy to reduce ethnic sentiment in local politics; we know we are a minority and it is beneficial if we [Lampungese] are more inclusive in many areas'.⁶⁵ This can be seen to spring from the set of Lampungese customs and norms known as *maware*, which act as a sort of welcoming umbrella under which all are invited to shelter as long as they see themselves as Lampungese. In this sense, *adat* plays an essential role in local political development, as argued by Davidson and Henley.⁶⁶

Furthermore, in Metro this sense of all in Lampung being Lampungese is given a very different twist. Here, the contribution of Javanese transmigrants to the construction of Metro has resulted in the idea of being '*asli wong Metro*', a Javanese expression meaning 'native of Metro'. According to one of our respondents, 'Our parents established this city. So in short, we feel we have failed if we cannot do our best for the city. In contrast, non-natives of Metro do not have this emotional link to the city'.⁶⁷ A third generation transmigrant adds:

My grandfather was a transmigrant during the Dutch colonial period in 1938. He was from East Java, and he lived in Metro from 1938. My father was born in 1947, and I am the third generation. I was born in 1973. Although most of us are third generation, if you asked about the influence of transmigration, I am sure that the feeling of being part of transmigration still exists.⁶⁸

There is no doubt that after many decades of the transmigration programme in Metro, transmigration descendants feel they have transformed themselves into *asli wong Metro*. This sense is qualified by a second generation transmigrant, who told us that, 'Our feelings are that we are Javanese and transmigrants, and this contributes to the domination of this sentiment over activities that are associated with the city including politics. We prefer to elect a candidate who has an ethnic similarity and fate to ours'.⁶⁹ It is open to question therefore to what extent, if at all, the concept of *asli wong Metro* can be considered inclusive and in line with inclusive Lampungese customs.

As a new form of transmigrant identity deployed especially in local politics, *asli wong Metro* can be seen as a continuation of Javanese domination of social, cultural and political affairs. Javanese society is hierarchical as a result of the prolonged cultural and religious influence of Hinduism. It is relatively hard to change status within Javanese society. Lampungese values, in contrast, are more flexible and inclusive, making it possible for people of other ethnicities to be part of Lampungese society.⁷⁰ The domination of transmigrant descendants over cultural, social and political matters has been socially constructed and is a consequence of the widespread and long-term transmigration policy. The sense that transmigrant descendants exercise cultural hegemony over the Lampungese – as seen, for example, in the domination of Javanese language and culture and the establishment of *asli wong Metro* identity – is a significant transmigration legacy.

In summary, the Lampungese apply a number of political strategies to retain a slice of power. First, they use inter-ethnic coalitions with Javanese. Second, they use entrenched positions to take up leadership roles in local political parties. This strategy is deployed to keep the Lampungese close to the mechanisms of local power. Dominating local political parties makes it easier for the local party to make more ethnic-patronage based decisions. Third, the Lampungese elite have been using Javanese culture and symbols as part of their campaign strategy. Fourth, the Lampungese elite attempt to manage growing Javanese sentiment in local politics by

applying an inclusive political strategy, but this is of little effect in Metro, where Javanese see themselves as the 'native' population.

Conclusion

Our focus in this paper has remained on the impact of transmigration on voting practices in local elections as evidence of the continuing role played by ethnicity in Indonesia's local politics. While we are convinced of the importance of these issues, not least in view of a recent tendency to downplay them, we nevertheless remain attuned to a range of influences, each of which has its proponents in the academic literature. The issue of Putra Daerah, for example, is not without relevance to the leading roles retained by Lampungese as leaders of parties, but parties that play a weakened institutional role. Similarly, as we have seen, Javanese elites continue to regard *adat* institutions as important. Furthermore, at the provincial level as well as at a local level, patronage, clientelism and the role of money politics are important features of electoral politics. These considerations, however, are outside the focus of this paper. In this paper, we concentrate on factors relating to the domination of local politics by the descendants of Javanese transmigrants and the consequences for local Lampungese elites.

Various strategies are applied by Lampungese to deal with the Javanese majority, this is important to maintain Lampungese political role in local politics of East Lampung. It is clear from our analysis above that being a Javanese transmigrant descendant is beneficial for candidates who run in local elections in East Lampung, as well as in neighbouring Metro. Understanding the residual importance of ethnicity helps us to refine the arguments put forwards by Aspinall and van Klinken on the diminishing of the role of ethnicity in Indonesian local politics.⁷¹

Our findings support their arguments in some respects but not in others. They support Aspinall's argument that 'there are places in Indonesia where ethnicity is now central to local politics'.⁷² Aspinall claims that in areas that are 'ethnically homogenous', especially in the 'Javanese heartland', and places home to 'mixed populations' that are made up of Javanese, Malay and Bugis diasporas in Sumatra, Kalimantan and Sulawesi, ethnicity still counts and becomes a political preference for the voter.⁷³ Our research inflects Aspinall's arguments by adding to his list those areas coloured preponderantly by transmigration like Metro and East Lampung, where ethnicity is a central issue within local politics. The patterns that Aspinall noted for the Javanese heartlands should therefore be extended to areas beyond Java where the majority ethnic population was formed by transmigration. Our research into local politics in transmigration affected areas has provided clear evidence that transmigration and consequent issues of ethnicity remain an important legacy factor in local politics. This has been the case since the introduction in 2005 of one person one vote in local elections.

Notes

1. Elmhirst, "Space, Identity Politics and Resource Control in Indonesia's Transmigration Programme"
2. Hefner, "Civil Islam."
3. Choi, "Local elections and democracy in Indonesia."

4. Chandra, "Constructivist theories of ethnic politics."
5. Tajima, "Mobilizing for Violence: The Escalation and Limitation of Identity Conflicts (the Case of Lampung, Indonesia)," 3
6. Goebel, "The Idea of Ethnicity in Indonesia."
7. Ananta et al., "Demography of Indonesia's Ethnicity"; and Central Statistical Bureau of Indonesia, "Penduduk Provinsi Lampung hasil Sensus Penduduk 2010"
8. Côté, "Internal Migration and the Politics of Place: a Comparative Analysis of China and Indonesia," 116
9. Aspinall, "Democratization and Ethnic Politics in Indonesia: Nine Theses."
10. Aspinall et al., "When Religion Trumps Ethnicity: A Regional Election case Study from Indonesia."
11. Brokers are the persons or groups who mediate the interests of candidates and voters in an election especially in relation to vote-buying activities.
12. Aspinall and Sukmajati, "Electoral Dynamics in Indonesia."
13. Tanasaldy, "Regime change and ethnic politics in Indonesia: Dayak politics of West Kalimantan."
14. Sjaf, "Politik Etnik: Dinamika Lokal di Kendari."
15. See note 9 above.
16. Van Klinken, "The limits of ethnic clientelism in Indonesia."
17. *Ibid.*, 57.
18. Davidson and Henley, "The revival of tradition in Indonesian politics."
19. Côté and Mitchell, "Elections and "Sons of the Soil" Conflict Dynamics in Africa and Asia."
20. Van Klinken, "Communal Violence and Democratization in Indonesia."
21. Brown and Diprose, "Bare-chested Politics in Central Sulawesi, Indonesia," 1.
22. Buehler and Tan, "Party-Candidate Relationships in Indonesian Local Politics."
23. Aspinall and As'ad, "Understanding Family Politics."
24. *Ibid.*
25. Tomsa, "Party Politics and Democratization in Indonesia," 34.
26. Allen, "Clientelism and the personal vote in Indonesia."
27. Aspinall and Rohman, "Village Head Elections in Java."
28. Blunt et al, "Patronage, Service Delivery, and Social Justice in Indonesia."
29. Sidel, "Bossism and Democracy in the Philippines, Thailand, and Indonesia: Towards an Alternative Framework for the Study of "Local Strongmen"."
30. See note 27 above.
31. Peluso and Harwell, "Territory, custom, and the cultural politics of ethnic war in West Kalimantan, Indonesia"; Tanasaldy, "Regime change and ethnic politics in Indonesia: Dayak politics of West Kalimantan"; Kristianus, "Politik dan Strategi Budaya Etnik dalam Pilkada Serentak di Kalimantan Barat"; and Tanasaldy, "Ethnic identity politics in West Kalimantan."
32. Central Statistical Bureau of Indonesia, "Penduduk Provinsi Lampung hasil Sensus Penduduk 2010."
33. Central Statistical Bureau of Indonesia, "Jumlah Penduduk Provinsi Lampung Menurut Kabupaten Kota 2015."
34. See note 32, 33 above.
35. *Ibid.*
36. Central Statistical Bureau of Indonesia, "Persentase Penduduk Miskin Menurut Kabupaten/ Kota 2005–2019."
37. Central Statistical Bureau of Indonesia, "Indeks Komponen IPM (Indeks Pembangunan Manusia) Kota Metro Tahun 2010–2016"; and Central Statistical Bureau of Indonesia, "Tabel Indeks Pembangunan Manusia."
38. Sub-National Level Development Planning, "East Lampung District in Figure."
39. Levang, "Ayo ke Tanah Sabrang," 10–11.
40. See note 32 above.
41. See note 4 above.

42. See note 10 above.
43. Huber, "Measuring Ethnic Voting."
44. Ibid.
45. See note 8 above.
46. Interview with the leader of transmigrant descendant organisation, Bandar Lampung, 7 October 2015.
47. Tirtosudarmo, "The Javanese in Lampung, Stranger or Locals? With The Reference of Chinese Experience."
48. See note 19 above.
49. Interview with a politician and campaign manager, 22 October 2015.
50. Interview with a politician and campaign manager, 21 December 2015.
51. See note 13 above.
52. See note 51 above.
53. Interview with unsuccessful Lampungese candidate, 28 January 2016.
54. Horowitz, "Ethnic power sharing: Three big problems."
55. See note 25 above.
56. See note 51 above.
57. See note 25 above.
58. Dettman et.al. "Incumbency advantage and candidate characteristics in open-list proportional representation systems: Evidence from Indonesia," 114.
59. See above 25.
60. See note 53 above.
61. See above 4.
62. Watch the video on YouTube link <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IbCnCE-pjKc>
63. See note 49 above.
64. Interview with a campaign manager, 27 October 2015.
65. Interview with former provincial governor, 26 October 2015.
66. See note 18 above.
67. Interview with third generation, 6 March 2016.
68. Interview with third generation of transmigrant, 24 January 2016 similar with second generation of transmigrant, 6 March 2016, third generation of transmigrant, 6 March 2016 and second generation of transmigrant, 13 January 2016.
69. Interview with second generation of transmigrant, 6 March 2016 similar with first generation of transmigrant, 6 March 2016.
70. Interview with secretary of the Lampungese organisation, 24 February 2016.
71. See note 9 and 16 above.
72. See above, 310.
73. Ibid., 311.

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