



Semanda, Metudau, and Tekhang: Marriage and Construction of Ethnic Identity among Belunguh People's in Tanggamus, Lampung

Bartoven Vivit Nurdin¹, Fuad Abdulgani^{1*}

¹ *Departement of Sociology, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, University of Lampung, Indonesia.*

* *Correspondence Author: : fuad.abdulgani@fisip.unila.ac.id*

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

ethnic; identity;
marriage; local politics

How to cite:

Nurdin, B. V. &
Abdulgani, F. (2024).
*Semanda, Metudau, and
Tekhang: Marriage and
Construction of Ethnic
Identity among Belunguh
People's in Tanggamus,
Lampung. ETNOSIA:
Jurnal Etnografi
Indonesia. 9(1): 70 - 83.*

DOI:

10.31947/etnosia.v9i1.221
73

Article history:

Received: August 19, 2022

Revised: June 23, 2024

Approved: June 26, 2024

ABSTRACT

The Reformation era in Indonesia has resulted in changes in local politics, particularly in relation to ethnic-based groups or *adat* politics. However, previous studies that have focused on the rise of *adat* or tradition in local politics have paid limited attention to the dynamics of cultural expression and representation. This article aims to shed light on the reconstruction of ethnic identity among the Belunguh people in Lampung within multiethnic society. To achieve this, an ethnographic inquiry was conducted with the Belunguh people of the Lampung Sai Batin sub-ethnic group, specifically exploring their marriage patterns and rituals. The data collection methods consisted of interview, focus group discussions (FGD), and observation involving twelve informants from traditional leaders (*penyimbang adat*). The findings of the study highlight the significance of marriage systems and rituals in the construction of Belunguh ethnic identity. While intra-ethnic relations are shaped by marriage practices and rituals of *semanda* and *metudau*, the practice of *tekhang* emerges to facilitate inter-ethnic marriages, particularly with the Javanese. The Belunguh people strive to enhance their awareness of identity by modifying marriage rituals, which reflect their social status, hierarchy, and cultural adaptation in a multiethnic society.

1. Introduction

The Lampungnese are an unpopular ethnic group in Indonesia's ethnicity-related discourse; people always think of whether the Lampungnese exist? There are stereotypes that the residents of Lampung Province are Javanese and it appears

that this representation has been a historical product. Since the early 20th century, Lampung has been the first destination of the *Kolonisatie* program or the migration from Indonesia's densely populated islands (Java, Bali, and Madura) initialized by the Dutch colonial government as part of the Ethical Politics (Kingston, 1987; Levang & Sevin, 1989). From that time to the independence of Indonesia, Javanese (including Madurese, Balinese, and Lombokese) migrated to Lampung in droves. At the turn of the millenium, the 2000 population census stated that the Javanese population in Lampung was 64%, and the rest was divided into 10 other ethnic groups, where the proportion of Lampungnese was 11% (BPS, 2000). The demographic policy of migrating residents from such a densely populated island as Java, which had started in the colonial era, in turn, brought about the representation that Lampung region is the "other province" of Javanese¹.

The indigenous Lampung marginalization emerged due to the national and local historical and political changes. Before *Kolonisatie*, all land in today's Lampung Province belonged to the Lampungnese, who practised swidden agriculture as their means of subsistence. The Indonesian transmigration programme further caused the Lampungnese ethnic group to be demographically, socially, economically, and politically sidelined on their own land, primarily related to natural resource control (Elmhirst, 1999). The coming of transmigrants was accompanied by a new patterns of livelihood whether it was related to state-supported transmigration scheme or practices brought by spontaneous migrant (Levang, 1989); for instance, irrigated paddy farming (*sawah*), a kind of cultivation practice perceived better than the Lampungnese's slash-and-burn techniques (swidden) by both the colonial government and the government of the Republic of Indonesia.

Despite the opposition to and rejection of the *Kolonisatie* program from indigenous Lampung (Kingston, 1987), it eventually turned out that Javanese's migration to Lampung did not face any significant interethnic conflict. At the beginning, Javanese came as people hoping for lands, so Lampung was called "Land of Hope", and those who had migrated then told their relatives in Java to also come to Lampung (Levang, 2003). The Lampungnese with their *nemui nyimah* ethics, which means "holding guests or migrants in high regard", respected and accommodated the Javanese migrants by involving them as agricultural workers. Nowadays, in the interethnic relation, Lampungnese are even able to speak Javanese well with the Javanese. However, there is growing concern that the Lampungnese language is on the verge of extinction because it is used less and less in daily conversation. The native speakers are in the minority throughout the province.

In the New Order period, the 1980s, Javanese's transmigration to Lampung outside the official government transmigration program (called "spontaneous transmigration") increased sharply (Abdoellah, 1987). Spontaneous

¹ For example, from French researchers' perspective, Lampung can be analogized to "Northern Java Province" (Levang & Sevin, 1989), similar to the perception of an Indonesian researcher, who deemed the historic process "the making of little Java" while reconstructing the history of Lampung (Kusworo, 2015).

transmigration was part of the survival strategy of Javanese migrants, which mainly begin with working in Lampungnese's coffee, pepper, and rice fields. They were "subordinate" to the Lampungnese and lived in their farmhouses as the residents or groundskeepers.

Gradually, shifting orientation for occupation for new generation of Lampungnese to work at government bureaus rather than farming, while Javanese expanded their lands by buying lands Lampungnese did not want to deal with anymore bit by bit. Javanese kept cultivating farms. Land transaction between Javanese and Lampungnese took place through the norm of relation, "brotherhood," meaning Javanese migrants were regarded as "relatives" by Lampungnese.

It can be said that Lampungnese and Javanese relationship in agriculture were harmonious. Javanese were highly trusted by Lampungnese to cultivate and take care of their lands. When Lampungnese were no longer willing to deal with their lands, especially those of the young generation, they chose to sell their lands to Javanese at low prices and allowed them to pay for the lands in installments. In the 1980s, marked by soaring land prices, major changes in the land ownership pattern took place. This was caused by the entrance of plantation corporations, accompanied by a new economic role of lands, being investments. This made Lampungnese turn to the lands they still had, which often underlay family internal conflicts in the Lampungnese.

The local political changes conditioned by national political changes in Indonesia significantly influenced the local identity articulation. When the New Order fell apart and Reformation was ongoing with the application of the decentralization regulation throughout Indonesia, the "local son" (*putera daerah*) issue and ethnic cultural revitalization came to the fore (Tahara, 2013; Thung *et al.*, 2010). In the context of Lampung, such condition sets the stage for Lampungnese elites, through the claim of being "a native", in the competition for the elite positions in the bureaucracy and government previously dominated by Javanese figures. Ethnicity serves as the basis for the emergence of the claim that "tradition" is a crucial element of local political dynamics (Davidson & Henley, 2007).

The emergence of the "custom" (*adat*) claim is often related to the historical context of repression and marginalization encountered by a particular ethnic group, which have ground their economic and political power due to the construction process and political pressure in the country. The *adat* claim often comes to the fore with its associate claims, such as "our land /resources," as the re-emphasis that their ancestors' resources heritage—which another party has owned, whether it is a country, privately owned corporation, or migrants—has always been theirs. In the interethnic relation, the expression of "tradition" emerges as the reemphasis of the power, as reflected by the term "local son (*putra daerah*)" or "native". This expression comes up in various fields and is the most popular or is used the most obviously in electoral politics. In accordance with the study conducted by Warganegara and Waley on the context of Lampung, ethnicity is an essential factor of electoral competition in a region handed on by transmigration (Warganegara & Waley, 2021).

Many studies on the revival of tradition in local politics after the New Order tend to focus attention on the roles of local elites contesting in local electoral politics or how the *adat* claim is used to reclaim resources (see Davidson & Henley, 2007; Warganegara & Waley, 2021). There has limited attention to understand ongoing ethnic identity articulation within intra-ethnic and inter-ethnic relations. Reformation and decentralization not only give space to particular native ethnic group to attempt to reclaim their resources, and economic and political positions, but also cultural expressions such as rituals.

This study is intended to depict the ethnic identity reconstruction performed by the Belunguh people in Lampung, which is expressed by their marriage rituals. Belunguh refers to a chiefdom (*kepaksian*) and its territory in Tanggamus Regency, Lampung. Belunguh people are a community bound to a particular traditional (*adat*) system, i.e. Sai Batin or Lampung Peminggir who live mostly in the coastal region of Lampung. The Lampungnese ethnic group generally is divided into two *adat* groups; Sai Batin and Pepadun. To Belunguh people, marriage is seen not only as a transitional phase in life but also as one's status symbol and identity. Since local identity is gaining space for reemphasis in post-New Order decentralization, marriage systems and rituals have been important elements in ethnic identity construction.

The differences of customs (*adat*) in Lampungnese ethnic group have become an interesting subject to observe and discuss related to claims and contestation in an ethnic group, especially when we look at the context of local political dynamics following national political changes (Reformation and its implications), which provided space for ethnic groups to struggle to find and emphasize their cultural identities. Driven by all that, this research was aimed at analyzing Lampungnese traditional contestation in marriage rituals, as reflected in the traditional marriage rituals, which experience a lot of reduction, discussion, and agreement.

2. Method

This qualitative study uses ethnographic methods (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). These methods were employed since ethnographic methods can provide thick description of a phenomenon or occurrence (Geertz, 1973). Fieldwork was conducted in Kota Agung, Tanggamus Regency where population of Belunguh people settled. The research was conducted within a period of three months (between June and August) in three consecutive years (2017, 2018, and 2019).

The data collection methods involved interview, observation, and focus group discussion (FGD). Twelve traditional leaders were interviewed through semi-structured interviews in order to collect data on the livelihood and socio-economic patterns, inter-ethnic relations, marriage practices, rules of the wedding ceremony, and the significance of ritual elements. Additionally, the food exchange and eating practices of the Belunguh people was also explored. The wedding party and the associated eating practices were observed, while casual interviews were carried out with numerous attendees, including adult men and women. The FGDs were conducted twice in 2017 with male traditional leaders (*penyimbang adat*) in order to discuss the history of the Belunguh people

(FGD-1) and the customary rules of marriage of the Belunguh people (FGD-2). Each FGD involved six traditional leaders, including the head of *buay* Belunguh (*suttan*).

The analysis techniques in this research consists peer review, member check, and triangulation. The process of data analysis was performed in an inductive manner, involving the categorization, clustering, and interpretation of various topics within the data. The primary data was subsequently examined within the historical and social context, which was obtained through literature study. The research results were re-discussed with the informants and experts in their fields. The data validity was checked through reconfirmation with the informants. To analyse and interpret the data, Giddens (1991) and Banks' (1996) conceptual framework on identity was utilized.

In terms of ethics, the data collection process during fieldwork was conducted in accordance with the relevant administrative procedures. The selection of informants for the study was based on recommendations provided by the Tourism and Culture Office, as well as local traditional leaders. All informants provided verbal consent to have their interviews and FGDs audio-recorded. In the case of FGDs, participants completed an attendance form using their actual names and signatures. Nevertheless, neither the real names nor the pseudonyms of the participants are mentioned in this article.

3. Result and Discussion

• Ethnic Identity in Local Politics Dynamics

In the context of Giddens' identity theory, identity is actually not merely something inherited from generation to generation and then inherent in individuals and their group, but something deeper than that (Giddens, 1991). Identity is dynamic, divided, and constantly evolves in certain contexts. Giddens depicts identity as the past, present time, dan the future, which is often called "identity of hope." This is because identity changes in time and space dimensions. Every individual and group has their own way to describe or portray and perceive or even define themselves in certain contexts. What they think of themselves and the change in the thought from time to time and space to space explain identity dynamics.

Giddens's idea is that what we think is something we create by ourselves, full of dialectics, always in progress, and ever-changing towards the future. The meaning and nature of identity are not static. They change in every space and at every time. For that reason, identity does not belong to the past. Nor does it stay stagnant in the future. It changes at the present time and stays in progress for the future, so the "identity of hope" comes into existence (Giddens, 1991).

Identity can be interpreted in various forms: personal identity, collective identity, and social identity. This study looked into the collective identity conceptualized as "ethnic." Referring to Barth (1988), ethnic identity is inherent through biological blood and then collective life with mutual traditions. This approach looks into ethnic origins and why ethnic differences exist all over the world. Of

course this definition of ethnic identity tends to neglect the changes and dynamics of the identity itself. What is taking place now is that ethnic identity is changing a lot on account of many factors. For example, mixed marriages, modernization, and changes in social life. Viewed from the aforementioned idea of Giddens, ethnic identity constantly changes in the context of dynamic time and space.

Belunguh people in Lampung experience of historic and political processes like transmigration, centralization, decentralization, and modernization, which highly influence the change in the identity itself. Lampungnese have experienced many dimensions in the historic and political processes. How Belunguh people currently view themselves and think of themselves, and how they will change in space and time in the future; they define themselves in the context of time and space dynamics. Their definition in certain time and space dimensions is different from the definition in other time and space dimensions.

Giddens's conception is in line with Marcus Banks' idea of the concept of ethnic identity relativity (Banks, 1996). According to Banks (1996:16), ethnic identity is the perception of an individual or a group of themselves, how they define themselves and their change in time and space that keep moving forward. It means that ethnic identity does not always mean the identity is inherent without any change. Nor does it mean that ethnic identity must be based on biological blood relationship without any flexibility and relativity. In the context of Lampung, we find Javanese, in turn, defining themselves as "Lampungnese." I am Lampungnese, but I came from Java; that is how Javanese define themselves in Lampung.

Lampungnese define themselves differently from time to time and space to space. In the early period of the transmigration, Lampungnese defined themselves as masters, and Javanese were regarded as subordinates. Javanese came as 'subordinates' since they just stayed on Lampungnese's lands. In the New Order period, the definition of Lampungnese appeared to be vague and they did not highlight their identity amidst the domination of symbols of statehood on a national scale because, at this time, Javanese held political power in Lampung. Lampungnese kept defining themselves Lampungnese, but they acknowledged Javanese as the rulers. Lampungnese ethnic symbols seemed to fade more and more, hidden, and marginal.

In the period of reformation and decentralization, Lampungnese defined themselves in a different way. With the spread of the "local son" sentiment throughout the country, the "native Lampungnese" view emerged not only in the field of local politics, but also in daily life. Lampungnese symbols were shown and used on numerous occasions, as marked by the emergence of the Local Regulation No. 27 of 2014 on Building Architecture with Lampungnese Ornaments, which encouraged the use of Lampungnese cultural symbols on buildings, or the use of the Lampungnese greeting "*tabik puun*" (greeting to all) in formal events. This thing signified the process of Lampungnese identity reconstruction.

Believing that the ethnic concept is identity is relative and situational (Banks, 1996), Banks supports the concept of ethnic identity relativity approach. This shows that identity experiences dynamics in every society and culture because change is a certainty, so identity is always in connection with the ongoing situation at that certain time. Political and economic influence also highly affects the identity of a community.

The emergence of identity is interpreted according to the situation and interest at the certain moment. It is no wonder that, in the current field of local politics, identity is used for political interests. In the period of Regional Autonomy/decentralization, local identity emerged. The same went for Lampung. It seemed that Lampungnese were reconstructing their identity, which had been fading for a long time due to the national political changes. It can be seen from the fact that, at that time, since Lampung had started to be a province, there had only been one Lampungnese governor. All the others were Javanese. Since the reformation, Lampungnese have been the governor of Lampung.

On the contrary, it was apparent that the Javanese really adapted to the local politics. They interpreted identity in a very dynamic and adaptive form. In the period of Regional Autonomy, they identified themselves as "Lampungnese from Java."

It seems that the identity relativity theory that identity sometimes depends on the situation, political change, dynamics, and interest at the certain time appears to apply in this situation. This is in agreement with the ethnic political demographic conception of Bustami *et al.*, that ethnic demography is influenced by the political dimension (Bustami *et al.*, 2006).

- **Marriage Rituals and Lampungnese Traditional Contestation**

Lampungnese traditional society consists of two traditional groups, Sai Batin and Pepadun. These two traditional groups live in geographically different regions. Sai Batin people live on the coast and Pepadun people live on rural land. Another difference lies in the traditional systems. Sai Batin people adopt the hierarchical system based on blood (family relation). In the tradition of Sai Batin people, there is only "one king" in one *paksi* (*kepaksian*), who then has such members as courtiers (*punggawa*) and tribes (*suku-suku*) (Hadikusuma, 1989). There is no system of achievement status in the Sai Batin tradition because once someone has the *king* social status, they will always be *king*. In contrast, the Pepadun traditional system refers to achievement status and positions with certain requirements.

Lampungnese also live in groups in the form of *buay* (ancestry groups). In its process, the concept of *marga* began to exist as a construction heritage of the colonial government, which was then adopted by Lampungnese. It is said that the term "*marga*" was adopted from the classification of Batakese by the colonial government in order to form and mark administrative borders by sub-ethnic group (Perret, 2010). For that reason, the term *marga* tended to highlight the administrative border rather than the ancestry group. Even to make the construction of *marga* easier, *marga* names were taken after *buay* names. In turn, many Lampungnese themselves regarded *marga* and *buay* as the same. They even

often called them *marga* and *buay* at the same time as they could not differentiate them.

Lampungnese lived in groups and led nomadic lives because they earned a living through land, practising swidden agriculture, called *nguma* or *ngumo*. *Ngumo* was a subsistence-oriented agricultural system. *Ngumo* even had rituals very close to local wisdom, with value and norms concerning how to adapt to nature and the environment. Not only *ngumo*, there were even many other local wisdom values Lampungnese embraced in the process of their adaptation to the environment (Nurdin *et al.*, t.t.).

Looking for fertile land and farms to cultivate were Lampungnese's main jobs in the past. So, it was completely normal for them to lead nomadic lives, seeking fertile land, and it is no wonder that *buay* possessed large lands. The width of a possessed land was an important identity element for Lampungnese in the past, but then, the intensive execution of transmigration and the massive establishment of large privately owned plantations in the 1970s forced Lampungnese to let go of their possession of their lands. These phenomena caused Lampungnese to have a slimmer chance to earn a living and pushed the aspiration of working as a government official (bureaucracy) to the next generation. The cultural change in language use was pretty obvious. The Lampungnese language lost its speakers sooner rather than later since Lampungnese spoke with Javanese in the Javanese and Indonesian languages. These series of phenomena and social changes went on intensively in the New Order period.

It is reasonable that observers then questioned the fading of Lampungnese culture. It was not only because the population was smaller than Javanese, but also because of the fundamental changes in their economy, social, and culture during the construction and modernization in the New Order period. In this period, Lampungnese's identity seemed to be vague amidst the rapid integration with Indonesian (through construction and modernization) and Javanese (through Javanese's social and cultural domination in daily life) values. Lampungnese identified themselves as "natives", who had been integrated with Indonesian values. Lampungnese cultural symbols did not appear in the landscape of city life. Traditional occasions were not exposed much and were done merely in the capacity of Lampungnese's daily activities. Many cultural elements reduced in the ritual processes.

Major changes, starting with the Reformation, turned up with the end of the New Order regime, paving the way for previously repressed societies to declare their interests. Decentralization enabled fertile environments and the reconstruction of ethnic identity. Lampungnese acquired the new identity "natives" and highlighted their difference from Javanese, Madurese, Balinese, and Lombokese migrants. Highly situational and dynamic identity relativity applied. At this point, Belunguh people, part of Sai Batin on the Tanggamus coast, could represent how Lampungnese could adapt to numerous changes and how Belunguh people could define themselves and others; how they perceived the outside world and themselves.

As part of the Sai Batin traditional society, which acknowledges one king (*batin*) only, this traditional group has a hierarchical structure. The highest level is called *Paksi*, or *Kepaksian*, i.e. king. It is followed by *Punggawa*, *Suku Balak* and *Suku Lunik*. This hierarchy is not subject to change as *kepaksian* is a king and it will always be. Only the descendants can inherit the kingship.

To the Sai Batin sub-ethnic groups, just like the Pepadun, traditional wedding ceremonies are considered to be very important rituals. Traditional ceremonies are part of Lampungnese's identity symbols. Marriage is not only about the meeting of two people committed to their promises, but also about the emphasis of the identity of the society. Marriage functions as the representation of ethnic identity since the symbols in marriage rituals describe how Lampungnese identify and define themselves.

The Lampungnese marriage tradition on the Tanggamus coast is different from the Pepadun tradition in hinterland areas. In the Sai Batin tradition, marriage is based on "who takes whom". Lampungnese relation system is categorized as patrilineal and patrilocal, but if we look at the practice of the marriage tradition in more detail, we find flexibility in the execution. This flexibility is shown in the two marriage practice systems of Belunguh people, i.e. *metudau* and *semanda*. *Metudau* is the marriage system in which the man takes the woman, while *semanda* is the system in which the man is taken by the woman or her family. The system is applicable to the context of the marriage between Sai Batin Lampungnese.

In the *metudau* marriage, there are a lot of requirements and rituals. The prospective groom has to give *jujukh* (a dowry) to the prospective bride's family. The requirements and rituals are called *sebambangan*, *ngabakhtahu*, *bunut*, *nyusi tapak/hasok*, and *ngebayan*. *Sebambangan* is done when the man "kidnaps" the woman. The term kidnap here does not refer to a crime or something against the social norms. It just symbolizes the determination to get married when a couple have agreed to be committed to a marital bond. This commitment is called *bukhasan*. The process of this commitment is comprised of three, i.e. *nguwakhi*, *setunggaan*, or *tandang*. These rituals are done with the knowledge of the woman's family. After the woman is "kidnapped" by taking her to the man's home, the man immediately reports to the elders (*penyimbang adat*) or the traditional leader of his home. The woman is then left in the house of the traditional leader, or in the man's house on condition that the man's family have known and agreed. In this "abduction", the woman sends a letter with a sum of money to her family, especially her father and mother.

Following this, *ngabakhtahu* is held. It is the notification from the man's family to the woman's family. At this moment, several agreements concerning the wedding are also made. In the process of *ngabakhtahu*, there is a ritual called *bunut*. It is a ritual of asking the woman whether it is true that there is no compulsion in the marriage arrangement, whether she was kidnapped forcefully or of her own free will. This symbolizes openness in the traditional marriage system, that there is no compulsion in the woman's marriage arrangement in the Lampungnese tradition because there is a possibility that the woman has

changed her mind and lost her intention to get married to the man. *Nyusi tapak/hasok* is afterwards done when the families meet to talk about the next steps to confirm the couple's determination to lead a marriage life.

Next, *ngebayan* is performed. The woman's family fetch the woman from the traditional leader's house in the man's residence, to which the woman was taken. At this point, the woman is kept in the house, waiting for the wedding day. In *metudau*, there are two fees; *bandi lunik* (the fee for the discussion) and *bandi balak* (the fee requested by the woman's family), which is a sum of money that the man's family have to give to the woman's family. This sum is a result of the agreement made in the discussion between the two families.

Different from *metudau*, *semanda* is performed if the man will live with the woman's family. It is usually done due to a certain case. For example, the woman's family has no son. In this case, the man is taken and included in the woman's family clan. If it happens, it has certainly been agreed to by both families, so the requirements applicable to *metudau* are inapplicable to *semanda*. For instance, there is no need for *jujukh*. As for the cultural implication, the traditional title for the man or the man's *adok* will be given by the woman's family. From the viewpoint of the social role, given that the man is taken by the woman's family, the man holds a son's responsibilities and duties in the woman's family.

If *metudau* and *semanda* apply in the context of the marriage between Sai Batin Lampungese, Belunguh people also know *tekhang*, the marriage practice where "who takes whom (whose family)" does not apply with the implication of a neo-local residence pattern. This practice happens when a Belunguh man gets married to someone of another ethnic group. In most cases, Javanese having come to Lampung through transmigration. The various terms and requirements in *metudau* and *semanda* are not applied to *tekhang*, let alone the agreement resulted from the family discussion functioning as the basis for the wedding.

Not every Sai Batin communities on the Tanggamus coast acknowledges *tekhang*. In the context of inter-ethnic relation, the existence of *tekhang* represents how Belunguh people define themselves in their relationship with the "outsiders". *Tekhang* came to the surface as a form of social adaptation and tradition for facing demographic change, which pushes the population growths of other ethnics (Javanese, Balinese, Lombokese), who massively came through transmigration. The existence of *tekhang* demonstrates Belunguh people's position in defining themselves: in the intra-ethnic relation, the marital terms based on Lampungese traditions are still adopted, but in the inter-ethnic relation, terms different from the *semanda*, and *metudau* procedures are applied. The relational dimension of ethnic identity is visible here, that tradition and identity reconstruction issues always experience formation and renegotiation along with the change existing in the context of the society in general, in connection with the inter-ethnic relation in the multiethnic society. Through *tekhang*, Belunguh people accommodate other ethnics with the intention of including them in part of the Belunguh community itself.

The main stage of Belunguh people's marriage rituals lies within *tayuh* or the traditional wedding party. *Tayuh* is held in the context of *metudau*, *semanda*, or *tekhang*. The process of *tayuh* basically follows the applied hierarchy in the Sai Batin cultural system. The traditional party is not the responsibility of the core family only, it is also the responsibility of the entire family including each traditional element under it. If it is *paksi* who holds *tayuh*, the men, courtiers (*punggawa*), and tribes (*suku-suku*) of the king (*paksi*), are obliged to help and be responsible for the traditional wedding party (*tayuh*). Each community member is obliged to be involved in the activities; cooking rice (*nyani mi*), done by all the households in the Belunguh people's traditional community. Besides cooking rice, foods compulsory in that traditional event are *lepot* or traditional cake made of sticky rice, and *gulai taboh* (a type of Lampungnese soup). The couple's families also bring foods for others as souvenirs and symbols of gratitude.

Food is the core of the *tayuh* traditional ceremony and this implies that having a meal together is a mechanism contributing to social cohesion in Belunguh people's community. Food also marks ethnic identity, where food consumption patterns, including food forms and types, are part of the culture which are difficult to change. The distributed food and the consumption mode in the traditional event reflect social status and community members' role division. For example, *kelama*, special food for maternal relatives, and special food for unmarried men and women in such event.

Other ethnic identity symbols appearing in *tayuh* are such attributes and types of decorative cloth as *lalidung*, *tikhai* and *laluhuk*. The three types of decorative cloth in the house are for the seats of kings, guests, and the groom and bride. Apart from those, there is an instrument called *juli*, something for carrying a king while sitting on it. Another instrument, called *awan gemesehk*, is for carrying the king's relatives also while they are sitting on it. Yellow, white, and green umbrellas are also there to symbolize someone's position and status according to the traditional hierarchy. If a king or *paksi* holds *tayuh*, then the two important roles of *punggawa* (courtiers) and *suku-suku* (tribes) are *hihnik* and *pemapah* or being the king's guards staying on their left and right.

The Belunguh traditional wedding party reflects how an ethnic group articulates its identity, represented by symbols for showing the status and social roles of the community members. In the context of the marginalization in relation to the construction and transmigration processes encountered by Lampungnese, traditional ceremonies and rituals have found their meaning for the ethnic group, which is being a means of cultural identity declaration amidst the changing economic and socio-cultural situations, including the fields of inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic relation.

Through Belunguh people's marriage mechanisms, cultural flexibility and relativity can be seen (ethnic identity). While Belunguh people on the Tanggamus coast adopt paternalism, the two marriage mechanisms, i.e. *metudau* and *semanda*, imply that paternalism is not always expressed by the prospective groom's family's taking the prospective bride. In the context of inter-ethnic relation, Belunguh people accommodate the possibility of inter-ethnic marriage through

tekhang. Although the decision on *tekhang* is based on the discussion between the families of the prospective groom and bride, the existence of the traditional wedding ceremony or *tayuh* indicates that Belunguh people's cultural mechanism turns out to be adaptive and open to the presence of new community members from other ethnic groups.

To Belunguh people, "the outside world" is part of them and they do not separate themselves from the lives "outside" their blood-based ethnic community. Although the population of Belunguh people is then smaller than the population of Javanese migrants, their accommodative marital system signifies that Belunguh tradition (culture) is not sidelined. Through the marriage tradition, Belunguh people reconstruct their ethnic identity as a community continuing to take good care of their ancestors' tradition and culture, declaring themselves part of and open to the changes they experience. Belunguh people's marital system demonstrates how they, as ethnics, define themselves in certain situations and social relations

4. Conclusion

This study has confirmed the relevance of the social identity conception which is relational, contextual, and dynamic in nature, as theorized by Banks and Giddens (Banks, 1996; Giddens, 1991). The finding of this research shows that Belunguh people's ethnic identity in Lampung constantly changes in time and space dimensions. Ethnic identity dynamics are conditioned by the historic course and social, economic, and political changes experienced by Lampungnese in general, which concern their position and relation to transmigration, centralization, decentralization, and economic construction processes in Indonesia.

The awareness of identity comes to the surface in different ways in certain contexts; as "masters" in their relation to Javanese migrants in the period of colonial transmigration, as a "sidelined" ethnic group stripped of the possession of lands in local politics in the period of the New Order, and as "local sons" or "natives" when the domination of the New Order fell apart and reformation along with decentralization was ongoing, which made it possible for Lampungnese to enter the stage of local political elites. On top of it, the local political changes conditioned by the national political changes in Indonesia had major impacts on the local identity articulation.

The identity articulation is significant not only in its relationship with economic and political interests, but also with cultural context, through marriage tradition and rituals. In the context of the multiethnic society whose change is influenced by demographic dynamics, like the change in Lampung, marriage is an important cultural occurrence which plays a role in the ethnic identity reconstruction of Belunguh people. Borrowing Giddens's interpretation of "the identity of hope," marriage serves as a vital locus where current ethnic identity is emphasized in order to gain significance in the future because marriage is the means of social reproduction of a community.

Hence, this study lends support to the idea that it is essential to understand the mechanism and means of how the identity of a social group is constitutionalized.

Marriage practices provides a window to observe ethnic identity dynamics of Belunguh people. In the context of intra-ethnic relation, Belunguh people keep the traditional marriage mechanisms *semanda* and *metudau*. In the context of inter-ethnic relation, Belunguh people accommodate it through the *tekhang* tradition. All those three share the same thing, which is that the traditional marriage ritual (*tayuh*) serves as a means of emphasizing the ethnic identity or how "Lampungnese" Belunguh people are, as indicated by the use of requirements, agreements, ornaments, and foods for the ritual elements. The marriage mechanisms demonstrate dynamic and contextual nature in terms of the way Belunguh people declare their identity. Belunguh people's marriage tradition being part of the Sai Batin traditional society on the Tanggamus coast is supposed to portray how Lampungnese can adapt to various changes and how Belunguh people define themselves and others; how they perceive the outside world and themselves at present and how they will perceive them in the future.

Conflict of interest: We declare that there was no conflict of interest either in the conduct of the research or in the reported research findings.

Acknowledgement: The first author acknowledges the financial support provided by the Directorate General of Higher Education (Dikti) through a National Strategic Research Grant from 2017 to 2019. We expresses gratitude for the grant and appreciates the collaboration with the Belunguh community in Kota Agung, Tanggamus. The initial manuscript was authored by the first author and subsequently refined and edited by the second author.

References

- Abdoellah, O. S. (1987). Transmigration Policies in Indonesia: Government Aims and Popular Response, *Center for Migration Studies Special Issues*, 5(2):180–196. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.2050-411X.1987.tb00501.x>, accessed on 15 January 2022.
- Banks, M. (1996). *Ethnicity: Anthropological Construction*. London: Routledge.
- Barth, F. (1988). *Kelompok Etnik dan Batasannya: Tatanan sosial dari perbedaan kebudayaan*. Jakarta: UI Press.
- Bustami, R.; Nasrudin, E.; & Samat, N. (2006). *Religious Pluralism: Mapping the Complexities in Malaysia* (Religious and Ethnic Pluralism in Malaysia). Linköping: Linköping University Electronic Press.
- Davidson, J. S. & Henley, D. (2007). *The Revival of Tradition in Indonesian Politics: The Deployment of Adat From Colonialism to Indigenism*. London: Routledge.
- Geertz, C. (1973). *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books.
- Giddens, A. (1991). *Modernity and Self-Identity; Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*. California: Stanford University Press.
- Hadikusuma, H. (1989). *Masyarakat dan Adat Budaya Lampung*. Bandung: CV. Mandar Maju.
- Hammersley, M. & Atkinson, P. (2007). *Ethnography: Principle in Practice*. London: Taylor and Francis.
- Kingston, J. (1987). *The Manipulation of Tradition in Java's Shadow: Transmigration, Decentralization, and the Ethical Policy in Colonial Lampung*. Dissertation. Columbia: University of Columbia.

- Kusworo, A. (2015). *Pursuing livelihoods, Imagining Development: Smallholders in Highland Lampung, Indonesia*. Canberra: Australian National University Press.
- Levang, P. (2003). *Ayo ke Tanah Sabrang: Transmigrasi di Indonesia* (S. A. Wahyuni, Penerj.). Jakarta: Kepustakaan Populer Gramedia.
- Levang, P., & Sevin, O. (1989). 80 years of Transmigration in Indonesia 1905 – 1985. Jakarta: Departemen Transmigrasi dan ORSTOM.
- Nurdin, B. V.; Yamazaki, Y.; & Syarif, A. (t.t.). *Ritual Membakar Hutan Dalam Tradisi Ngumo: Berladang dan Memelihara Hutan pada Masyarakat Adat Lampung Pepadun*, <https://simposiumjai.ui.ac.id/wp-content/uploads/20/2020/03/5.9.3.-Bartoven-Vivit.pdf>, accessed on 15 January 2022.
- Perret, D. (2010). *Kolonialisme dan Etnisitas: Batak dan Melayu di Sumatera Timur Laut*. Jakarta: Kepustakaan Populer Gramedia.
- Tahara, T. (2013). Kebangkitan Identitas Orang Bajo di Kepulauan Wakatobi, *Jurnal Antropologi Indonesia*, 34(1):41-57, [https://www.academia.edu/98316919/Kebangkitan Identitas Orang Bajo di Kepulauan Wakatobi?uc-g-sw=41615107](https://www.academia.edu/98316919/Kebangkitan_Identitas_Orang_Bajo_di_Kepulauan_Wakatobi?uc-g-sw=41615107), accessed on 15 January 2022.
- Thung, J. L.; Adhuri, D. S.; Saifudin, A. F.; & Hidayah, Z. (2010). *Klaim, Kontestasi & Konflik Identitas: Lokalitas vis-à-vis Nasionalitas*. Jakarta: LIPI. <https://karya.brin.go.id/id/eprint/16703>, accessed on 15 January 2022.
- Warganegara, A. & Waley, P. (2021). The Political Legacies of Transmigration and the Dynamics of Ethnic Politics: A Case Study from Lampung, Indonesia, *Asian Ethnicity*, 1-22, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14631369.2021.1889356>, accessed on 15 January 2022.