

Cultural Legitimacy and Political Identity: Traditional Titles in Electoral Politics, Lampung, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

Indonesia has a diverse range of cultures that enable individuals to utilize their cultural identity as a representation of their values in politics. This study analyzes the role of customary law in local politics in Lampung as a cultural legitimacy strategy for expanding the electoral base. Data from mass media between 2020 and 2024 indicate that 15 traditional title conferral ceremonies were held for 26 political figures at both local and national levels. Based on this dataset, a media content analysis was conducted, focusing on four key elements: the recipients' names, their status or political positions, the customary titles they received, and the authorities conferring these titles. The conferral process serves as a cultural legitimization strategy, enabling political candidates to present themselves as figures who understand and respect local values and traditions. In relation to the legislative elections, regional head elections, and the presidential election, these events reveal a tendency for political activities to be closely associated with individuals who receive traditional titles. This phenomenon represents the articulation of social and cultural capital in political dynamics, aiming to expand the electoral base. However, this reality also presents a critical challenge, especially in maintaining the authenticity of customary traditions so that they do not become merely a pragmatic instrument in political contestation. Therefore, regulations and cultural awareness are necessary to preserve the essence of tradition, ensuring it remains an integral part of society.

Keywords: Identity Politics; Customary Titles; Lampung; Social Capital; Political Contestation

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia, known for its diversity of 1,340 tribes (Naim & Saputra, 2011), has many unique values inherent in every individual's identity within society. Indonesian society possesses modern and rationalistic attributes, yet it still pays attention to traditional values and patrimonial culture (Yusuf, 2016). Tribal or primordial ties are behaviour patterns still found in the order of State life and the implementation of government politics. Lampung is one of the transmigration destination provinces (since 1950), which causes the people of Lampung to have different cultural backgrounds.

Identity politics is becoming an increasingly dominant phenomenon in contemporary democracy (Fukuyama, 2018). Political identity, encompassing factors such as ethnicity, religion, and gender, has a significant influence on voting patterns and election outcomes. However, its impact varies across countries, alongside other factors including policy issues, candidate characteristics, and campaign dynamics (Anisa et al., 2024). Lampung, with its rich ethnic diversity and history of transmigration dating back to the 1950s, has become a dynamic arena for identity politics. In the context of local politics, granting customary titles is a political strategy used to increase the electability of candidates by creating an impression of cultural closeness with indigenous peoples.

The traditional Lampung community continues to observe Lampung cultural customs, which include Lampung Saibatin and Lampung Pepadun. The significant differences between Lampung Saibatin and Lampung Pepadun serve as the basis for determining the position within the customary structure of each pepadun/clan. Lampung Saibatin inherits status through tradition, and Lampung Pepadun establishes customary status through contracts in nursing meetings. Furthermore, this article will discuss cultural identities deliberately attached by political and public figures to the cultural values of Lampung. Awarding titles to candidates for Governor of Lampung in the 2024 regional head election is also a case study in the discussion.

The granting of customary titles was previously only given to fraternal relations; now, it is widely given to politicians and government officials. This transformation is possible because of dynamic social and political processes. However, this phenomenon raises questions about the extent to which customary titles retain their original cultural meaning and whether the awarding of titles actually affects voter behaviour. There is a lack of systematic evidence on how customary titles operate as electoral signals and under what institutional conditions they confer legitimacy. To address this gap, this study aims to analyze the role of customary titles in Lampung's local politics, exploring their electoral impact and the challenges of preserving cultural authenticity in the face of political instrumentalization.

Identity Politics

Mary Jane Collier explains self-identification as a sense of belonging to a group that is not only based on race and ethnicity but also through the construction and production of social identity in that group (Collier, 1989). Meanwhile, researcher Hildred Geertz noted that each ethnic group has an identity symbol that represents its distinct identity. From their statements, we can analyze differences in ethnic diversity, encompassing aspects such as race, language, religion, beliefs, customs, *folkways*, *mores*, and other socio-cultural life forms (Sanni, 2015). In our research, identity refers to a dimension that is always inherent in the relationship between individuals, as a person's existence is always part of an ethnic, religious, traditional, and linguistic group within a particular cultural system (Barker, 2004). Identity in cultural studies is a problem of cultural construction because the source of discourse forms the material foundation for the formation of cultural identity (Barker, 2004).

Identity politics refers to the process by which individuals or groups utilize cultural elements as political tools (Collier, 1989). Meanwhile, social capital theory posits that social attachments formed through cultural symbols can enhance political trust and support (Putnam et al., 1993). Additionally, Barker's concept of cultural discourse illustrates how identity is shaped by

specific social narratives and practices (Barker, 2004). Edelman's concept of symbolic politics can also be applied to understand how customary titles function as political tools (Edelman, 1985). In symbolic politics, the meaning of a particular action is more important than the action itself, which creates a perception of legitimacy and closeness between the candidate and the public. In addition, Bourdieu's habitus theory explains how cultural capital—including customary titles—can be used as a tool of domination in the political realm (Bourdieu, 1990).

Building on these theoretical frameworks, the use of customary titles in political contexts can be seen as a form of cultural capital that not only symbolizes a candidate's connection to local traditions but also serves to solidify their legitimacy in the eyes of voters. By leveraging these symbols, political figures can navigate the complex terrain of identity politics, ensuring that their position aligns with the values and expectations of their constituents.

Legitimacy

Structuring is a process of how actors reproduce structures, through a system of interactions that arise because of the use of structures (Giddens, 1984). Social structures not only limit individual actions but are also created and reproduced through repeated human actions. Agency and structure are interconnected and inseparable, because they are the duality of the structure (Achmad, 2020). Structuring describes the dialectical and mutually influencing relationship between agents and structures.

There are three types of social system structures, namely, domination, legitimacy, and significance. An overview of the relationship between the structure and the interaction system is obtained in terms of structural stratification (Craib, 2011). The first-level structure is signification that produces meaning by organising linguistic elements (semantic, interpretive, and discursive). The role of actors is extended to interpret and manipulate linguistic structures with the interpretation of various meanings (Cloke et al., 1991). The second structure is legitimacy, which is the moral order in the form

of norms, values, and social standards. When individual agents interact, they show conscious, subconscious, or unconscious meaning from their behaviour. Interacting in this way shapes current social norms and weighs the moral rules of the structure. Whether an agent's action is considered legitimate or not in the social order is determined by this legitimacy structure. The third structure is domination, which is the process of production and execution of power through the control of various resources. Resources are power vehicles (Achmad, 2020).

Structure is the rules and resources that exist in society, which shape and direct the actions of individuals. Meanwhile, according to Giddens, the agency is a fundamental element in creating change. Change can be considered as simple as movement through space to interact with a new environment, change or complexity of interaction. Agency is the ability of individuals to act and influence social structures (Achmad, 2020).

RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses a qualitative design that emphasizes the observation of phenomena and research more into the substance of the meaning of the phenomenon. Therefore, the focus of qualitative research is on the process and the meaning of the results. Qualitative research is more focused on human elements, objects, and institutions, as well as the relationships or interactions between these elements, in an effort to understand an event, behaviour, or phenomenon. Data collection is through literature studies, both from documents in the form of articles on electronic media pages and from scientific journals in the form of articles about political identity, cultural identity, Lampung customary titles (*adok*), and Lampung culture. The following are some of the online mass media pages that we access: Media Indonesia, Liputan6 page, Antara News page, Kumparan page, Sindonews page, Lampung.co page, and other news media. The time span we took was from 2020 to 2024, which was an event to give traditional titles to political figures, both local and national, held in Lampung Province. The data collected is

presented using tables. Then the data is described exploratively about the discourse that exists on: (1) customary title-givers, (2) groups/clans of customary title-givers, (3) title recipients, and (4) position/power relations of title recipients. Meanwhile, we apply condensation data analysis techniques to select, simplify, and transform the list of document findings, present the data with a narrative, and draw conclusions from the data obtained (Miles et al., 2014). Based on content media analysis, texts can make bits of information more salient by placement or repetition, or by associating them with culturally familiar symbols (Entman, 1993). In analyzing the content from online media coverage, the information structure comprising recipients' names, their social or official positions, the customary titles bestowed, and the granting authority provides a systematic basis for content analysis. These elements function as units of observation that reveal how media narratives construct symbolic legitimacy, articulate socio-political recognition, and reinforce the interplay between customary institutions and formal authority.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Lampung Society and Cultural Identity

The people of Lampung, in general, still adhere to their customs in the midst of the immigrant community. The Lampung tribe itself consists of Saibatin and Pepadun. The main difference between the two can be seen in the basis for determining the position in the customary structure of each pepadun/clan. For example, Lampung Saibatin will inherit status through tradition, while Lampung Pepadun establishes customary status through a contract in the forum of *Keperwatinan* (Irham, 2013).

In Lampung, customary rules assign a title to each individual that symbolizes their identity within Lampung culture. For example, Lampung Saibatin is determined by lineage. At the same time, Lampung Pepadun has five divisions: Abung Siwo Migo (9 clans), Megou Pak Tulang Bawang (4 clans), Pubian Telu Suku (3 clans), Sungkai Bunga Mayang (1 clan), and Way Kanan

Lima Marga (5 clans) (Martiana, 2014). Each clan has a person who regulates the implementation of traditional events.

The people of Lampung Pepadun give customary titles in accordance with the position concerned in the customary which will be a vocation for the people in the title-granting clan. The interests of clan members are represented (*proxy*) by the clan balancer. The clan balancers consist of the balancers, who are generally the four oldest men in the pepadun. Under certain conditions, traditional ceremonies (*begawi*) are performed to alter social status within indigenous communities (Ghassani et al., 2019). In this title, there is a responsibility related to relationships within the pepadun/clan.

In addition to the rules about traditional events, the people of Lampung also have a philosophy of life, *Piil Pesinggiri* which consists of *juluk beadek*, *nemui nyimah*, *nengah nyappur*, and *sakai sambayan* (Amaliah et al., 2018). Philosophy needs revitalization so that it can become cultural capital (Sinaga, 2016), thereby improving the lives of the people of Lampung.

Until 1955, 5,491 heads of families had been transmigrated to South Lampung, a process that continued until 1986 (Dahlan, 2014). The impact of this population movement is reflected in the diversity of people's cultural backgrounds, including those from Java, Sundanese, Bali, Semende, Ogan, and Banten (Arifin, 2020; Budianto, 2020). It is recorded that in 2023, the people of Lampung had the most significant number of followers of Islam, at 8,700,424 people, and the most significant number of Hindus, at 126,983, the most in Sumatra (BPS Lampung Province, 2024).

Cultural Identity in Local Politics

The fundamental nature of cultural identity is found to be the result of societal construction and production (Ridaryanthi, 2014). This research focuses on the process of individual self-identification and the formation of cultural identity. The identity inherent in the customary title that a person holds in Lampung culture is essentially to occupy a position in the cradle and maintain a status within the custom. Lampung traditional titles are conferred

through conventional ceremonies, known as begawi. Nowadays, customary titles are not only given to the Lampung tribal people themselves but can be given to immigrants. This is motivated by the extension of relations between indigenous groups, as the recording of Lampung customs implementation is only for the clan community concerned.

Consequently, recognition of cultural identity can be used by party members to enhance the social image associated with certain groups while demonstrating commitment to ethnic voters. National identity has a strong influence in building consensus related to national culture and shows the politics of recognition from the perspective of electoral incentives that contribute to understanding cultural regimes. Although it seems unfair to some groups, it is politically valid (Dupré, 2016).

The phenomenon of granting customary titles has apparently received recognition and is considered an inherent thing in the image of political party members. Between 2020 and 2024, fourteen events were held to award traditional titles: thirteen events to honor Lampung customary titles and one event to award Hindu conventional titles. The individuals involved are 26 people with backgrounds in the central government (ministers), local governments, the Indonesian National Army, the Indonesian National Police, council members (legislative), ministers, and politicians.

Table 1: Awarding of Customary Titles

| Time | Names of Recipients of Traditional Titles | Titles Recipient Status/Position | Customary Titles Received | Titles Giver |
|------------|---|--|---|--|
| 17/10/2020 | M Nasir | Cawabup Pesawaran 2020 | Dalom Cahya Makhga | Sutan Bandakhan Paksi IV |
| 12/11/2020 | AA LaNyalla Mahmud Mattalitti | Chairman of DPD RI | Raja Utusan Mangku Negara | Penyimbang marga Buay Pemuka Pengiran Udik |
| 11/04/2021 | Puan Maharani | Speaker of the House of Representatives of the Republic of Indonesia | Ratu Mustika Kartadilaga | Keluarga Saibatin Karya Kartadilaga, Pesisir Barat |
| 19/06/2021 | Erick Thohir | Minister of SOEs | Batin Eka Perkasa | Marga Dantaran, Lampung Selatan |
| 22/01/2022 | Ganjar Pranowo | Governor of Central Java | Awarded the Captaincy Badge, a sign of clan kinship | Saibatin Kepaksian Pernong Lampung |
| 18/03/2022 | Anies Baswedan | Governor of DKI Jakarta | Tuan Penato Negara | Federasi Adat Megow Pak |
| 14/06/2022 | Salim Segaf Al Jufri | - Chairman of the Faction | Datuan Satria | Kedatun Kemaungan |

| Time | Names of Recipients of Traditional Titles | Titles Recipient Status/Position | Customary Titles Received | Titles Giver |
|------------|---|--|--|--|
| | | Partai Keadilan Sosial (PKS) - Minister of Social Affairs (2009-2014) - Ambassador of Indonesia to Saudi Arabia (2005-2009) | Negara | |
| 02/10/2022 | Commissioner General of Police Tomsu Tohir Balaw, M.Si Dr. Ari Yusuf Amir, SH, MH. And 4 other people | Inspector General of the Ministry of Home Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia Advocate | Raja Gusti Indrapati Kusumaningrat Bangsawan Tinggi | Kepaksian Pernong Paksi Pak Sekala Brak |
| 05/01/2023 | -Hi. Nanang Ermanto - Hj. Winarni Nanang Ermanto | - Regent of South Lampung - Chairman of TP PKK | - Pangikhan Nata Marga - Mother Earth's Pangikhan | Pekhwatin Punyimbang Adat Lampung (PEKHPAL) Marga Katibung Kabupaten Lampung Selatan |
| 18/02/2023 | - AKBP Pratomo Widodo - Ade Pratomo (wife) | Pesawaran Police Chief | - Suntan Perwira Negara - Suntan Ibu Pertiwi | MPAL Pesawaran Regency. |
| 26/10/2023 | Ganjar Pranowo | Prospective Presidential Candidates for the Republic of Indonesia 2024 | Given a filter scarf | Paguyuban Turonggo Cipto Manunggal |
| 25/01/2024 | Mahfud MD | Minister of Politics and Legal Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia | Batin Perkasa Sai Bani Niti Hukum | Kepaksian Pernong Paksi Pak Sekala Brak |
| 06/03/2024 | - Qudrotul Ikhwan - Herlinawati - AKBP James Hutajulu - Lt. Col. Pnb Yosi Hadi Wiyanto - Letkol Kav Deluy Marico and 6 others | - Acting Regent of Tulang Bawang - Acting Chairman of TP PKK Tulangbawang Regency - Tulang Bawang Police Chief - Danlanud Pangeran M Bun Yamin - Dandim 0426 Tulang Bawang | - PAngeran Pemimpin - Pangeran Ikutan - Pangeran Satria Pengayom Sejati - Pangeran Satria Angkasa - Pangeran Satria Bumi | Megou Pak Tulangbawang |
| 29/09/2024 | Rahmat Mirzani Djausal | Candidates for Governor of Lampung 2024-2029 | Ksatria Shri Natha Bhuwana (the knight who brings prosperity) | Balinese Hindu Community in Lampung |
| 29/10/2024 | - Rahmat Mirzani Djausal - Purnama Wulan Sari | Candidate for Governor of Lampung 2024-2029) | - Suttan Rajo - Suttan Ratu Pembina | Perwatin Megou Pak |

Source: (ANTARA News, 2021; ANTARA News Lampung, 2023; Dinamik, 2024; iNews.id, 2023; Inilampung.com, 2022; Laraspati, 2021; Monologis.ID, 2020; Radar Lamsel, 2023; Sindonews.com, 2021; Tempo.co, 2022; Tribunjakarta.com, 2022; Tribunlampung.co.id, 2024; Wijaya, 2022)

The traditional titles in Lampung culture are *juluk* (titles given to unmarried individuals) and *adok* (titles given to married individuals).

Traditional titles (*adok*) are shown and declared by perwatin in traditional events held in *sessat* (customary event areas). Traditionally, *juluk* and *adok* are given to the descendants of Lampung. However, as it develops, it is possible to give *adok* to individuals not of Lampung descent with statements and confessions from the people. The recipient of the title (non-Lampung) is declared as a relative of a younger brother or sister from one of the clans; this event is called *angkon*. It showed the open structure of the indigenous people of Lampung. In Lampung Saibatin, kinship is declared as descendants.

M. Nasir is a Regent Candidate in the Regional Head Election of Pesawaran Regency, Lampung Province in 2020, getting a customary title because of the procession of the appointment of brothers by Sultan Bandakh Makhga IV Way Lima. The awarding of this title ultimately became a polemic, as it was attended by only 4 out of 14 Punyimbang Adat Saibatin Makhga Way Lima (Monologis.ID, 2020).

AA La Nyalla Mahmud Mattalitti is a businessman who serves as the Chairman of the Regional Representative Council of the Republic of Indonesia, and has a special interest in the culture and kingdom of the archipelago. Not only did he receive a traditional title from Buay Pemuka Pengiran Udik Clans of Waykanan (Mimbar Sumbar, 2020) and be recognized as an *angkon* (brother) of Pangeran Edward Saibatin Kepaksian Pernong in 2021, but he was also bestowed the *adok* Batin Gusti Calak Perkasa Mangkunegeri by Laraspati (2021).

Puan Maharani (Speaker of the House of Representatives of the Republic of Indonesia at that time) was given an *adok* based on traceability, the great-grandfather of the grandmother from the paternal line of Taufik Kiemas (her father), as the native of Banana Island, which was determined at the Saibatin Karya Kartadilaga customary meeting on April 9, 2021. The agreement of 12 clans to give traditional titles to Puan's husband, Hapsoro Sukmonohadi, with the title Suntan Surya Kartadilaga and Puan Maharani Nkshatra Kusyala Devi with the title Ratu Mustika Kartadilaga (ANTARA News, 2021). The awarding

of this customary title aims at continuity, harmony, integrity and honor, the Big Family of Sai Batin Karya Kartadilaga

Furthermore, Erick Thohir was appointed Minister of State-Owned Enterprises on June 19, 2021. At the event, Erick Thohir was appointed as the younger brother (*angkon*) of Zulkifli Hasan (then Chairman of the National Mandate Party), aiming to preserve customs and culture. Erick Thohir received a traditional title, Khadin Bangsawan, from the Dantaran clan in South Lampung.

On January 22, 2022, Saibatin Kepaksian Pernong gave Ganjar Pranowo a gold pin as a symbol of acceptance and a badge of kinship. Although there was no activity to give customary titles, the pin was declared as a sign of kinship. At this event, there was no awarding of customary titles. Anies Baswedan received the customary title of Tuan Penato Negara from the Federasi Adat Megow Pak Tulang Bawang Barat on May 8, 2022 (Inilampung.com, 2022). The Government of Tulang Bawang Barat Regency organized the awarding of this customary title. In that period, Anies Baswedan was also a candidate for President of the Republic of Indonesia.

On June 14, 2022, Salim Segaf Al Jufri received the traditional title of Yang Mulia Datuan Satria Negara from the Lampung Sovereignty. The basis for awarding this title is the appointment of a brother (*muakhi*) with Mawardi Harirama, who is a Lampung cultural expert (Wijaya, 2022). At that time, Salim Segaf Al Jufri was the General Chairman of the International Muslim Ulema Union and the Chairman of the PKS Shura Council.

The Pernong Paksi Pak Sekala Brak gave customary titles to Police Commissioner General Tomsu Tohir Balaw and Dr. Ari Yusuf Amir, SH, MH, on October 2, 2022. Both were appointed by the 23rd Sultan of Sekala Bekhak Yang Di Pertuan (PYM), Paduka Yang Mulia (PYM) Sai Batin Puniakan Dalom He (SPDB) Prince Edward Syah Pernong. Paraded and welcomed traditionally with Alam Gemisikh (Saibatin's Instrument of Greatness as a symbol of honor to guests who are honored with Saibatin's permission), in Alam Gemisikh

Komjend Pol Drs. H. Toms Tohir Balaw, M.Si, accompanied by Hj. Sekar Niken Langit's wife, Dr. Ari Yusuf Amir, S.H., M.H, Dr. H. Erwin Moeslimin Singajuru, S.H., M.H Titled Dalom Singajuru Raja Penggalang Paksi. *The Adok Celebration* began. This procession received four Title Awards, positioned as Royal Nobles, with Sai Batin's brother at the Dalom Building of the Traditional Kingdom of Paksi Pak Sekala Brak Kepaksian Pernong. After the rejection of the dok, it was continued with the awarding of the Tulus Penghakhi Gold Badge to Komjend Pol. Drs. H. Toms Tohir Balaw, M.Si., the title of King Gusti Indrapati Kusuma Ningrat. And Dr. Ari Yusuf Amir, S.H., M.H., Titled Batin Gusti Adipati Arya Panji Negara

On January 5, 2023, Hi. Nanang Ermanto (Regent of South Lampung) and his wife, Hj. Winarni Nanang Ermanto (Chairman of the PKK of South Lampung Regency) was given a customary title by the Pekhwatin Punyimbang Adat Lampung (PEKHPAL) of the Katibung Clan of South Lampung Regency—traditional titles given by Pangikhan Nata Marga and Pangikhan Mother Earth. The event was held in conjunction with the inauguration of PEKHPAL Marga Katibung.

Pesawaran Police Chief AKBP Pratomo Widodo and Police Chief Ade Kusumawati officially became indigenous residents of Lampung Pepadun Marga Way Semah, after angkon muakhi (raising brothers) by Erland Syofandi titled Suntan Penatih. The Pesawaran Police Chief, AKBP Pratomo Widodo, and his wife, Ade Kusumawati, were officially appointed as indigenous residents of Lampung, specifically in Pepadun Marga Way Semah, through the angkon muakhi (brother adoption) procession led by Erland Syofandi, who holds the title Suntan Penatih. This procession was carried out based on the decision and approval of seven traditional villages (pitu tiyuh) of Lampung Pepadun Marga Way Semah, which are located in Negeri Sakti Village, Gedong Tataan District. During the appointment, AKBP Pratomo Widodo was awarded the customary title of Adok Suntan Perwira Negara, while Ade Kusumawati received the traditional title of Suntan Ibu Pertiwi.

Perindo Party Presidential Candidate Ganjar Pranowo received a tapis shawl from cultural figures, traditional leaders, and art activists as a symbol of his acceptance as an honorary citizen of Lampung customs. The procession of embedding the tapis shawl took place in the Cultural Celebration event held at Nambah Dadi Field, Terbanggi Besar District, Central Lampung Regency, Lampung Province, on Thursday, October 26, 2023.

The Minister of Politics and Legal Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia and Vice Presidential Candidate Mahfud MD received a customary title from the Kingdom of Skala Brak, West Lampung, on January 25, 2024, as a gesture of respect for his work as an expert and law enforcement official. The awarding of this title was carried out through a series of traditional processions typical of Skala Brak. Mahfud MD was greeted with a traditional procession of girisir clouds, which is the welcome of grand guests with a procession using red stretchers.

The Tulang Bawang Regency Government held the XVIII Megou Pak festival in conjunction with the 27th Anniversary of 2024 on March 6, 2024. Qudrotul Ikhwan, Acting Regent of Tulang Bawang, was given the title of Leader. Herlinawati, Acting Chairwoman of TP PKK Tulang Bawang Regency, received the title of Participant Leader. Dandim 0426 Lt. Col. Kav. Delvy Marico holds the title of Pengeran Satria Bumi. Additionally, the Chairman of Persit Kartika Candra Kirana branch XLIX, Zulita Dwi Arona, held the title of Pengeran Kartika. The Commander of the Indonesian Air Force Base, Prince M. Bun Yamin, Lieutenant Colonel Pas Yoseph M. Purba, held the title of Pengeran Satria Angkasa. The Chairman of PIA Ardhya Garini branch 9/region I of the PM Air Base, Bun Yamin, holds the title of Pengeran Kartini. Tulang Bawang Police Chief AKBP James H Hutajulu was given the title of Pengeran Satria Pengayom Sejati. There was also Kajari Tulang Bawang Devi Freddy Muskitta, titled Pengeran Nembang Abadi; Chairman of the Adhyaksa Dharmakarini Tulang Bawang Association, Netty Adriaty Alfons, titled Pengeran Mustika; Chairman of the Menggala District Court, Trihandayani, titled Pengeran Mulia;

and the husband of the Chairman of the Menggala District Court, Makmun Sunarto, titled Pengeran Akuan.

Candidate for Governor of Lampung, Rahmat Mirzani Djausal, received the honorary title of Knight Shri Nata Buana from the Balinese Hindu community in Lampung on September 29, 2024. This event was held in Kampung Rama Dewa, Central Lampung. The title of Suttan Rajo was bestowed upon Rahmat Mirzani Djausal. At the same time, his wife was awarded the title of Suttan Ratu Pembina by Herman Artha as Suttan Kuasa Marga, and witnessed by Lampung traditional leaders and all Perwatin. The Begawi event, which took place in Tubaba on Tuesday, October 29, 2024, also marked Rahmat Mirzani Djausal and Purnama Wulansari as adopted children of the Megou Pak extended family, with the bond of Seangkenan Warey or adoptive brother with Wahyu Agus Saputra, who holds the title of Suttan Sampurna Jaya, Chairman of the Megou Pak Tulang Bawang Traditional Federation.

These various phenomena demonstrate that customary titles have a dual meaning, namely, they can be utilized by politicians to attract the attention of local communities and serve as a means or medium for ethnic nationalization or local issues (Valentina, 2018). The Lampung customary title (*adok*) has a burden consequence on the relationship within the Pepadun/clan. This does not necessarily make the recipient present in traditional activities organized by the family of the degree-giver. So that it is only a ceremonial process that has no direct impact on Lampung culture, but rather serves political interests.

If associated with the legislative election (February 14, 2024), regional head elections (December 9, 2020, and November 27, 2024), and presidential elections (February 14, 2024), there is a tendency for political activities attached to individual political party figures. Indonesia's national political agenda may influence the events. The prospective presidential candidates who were given customary titles or honours were Puan Maharani, Erick Tohir, Ganjar Pranowo, and Mahfud MD. Although Ganjar Pranowo holds a traditional event, the symbols given (pins of honour and shawls) do not have a deep

connection to the awarding of the title.

According to local figures, some regents are given titles that indicate they want to strengthen their ties with the community. However, in the case of M. Nasir, a rejection occurred after the traditional event had been held, in contrast to the case of Governor candidate Rahmat Mirzani Djausal, who was well received and received customary titles from the Lampung community and the Hindu community.

The Bradley effect leads to electability for only one variable, thus creating a gap between the level of performance satisfaction and the electability of candidates. The electability of regional leadership candidates is based on various variables, including sociological, psychological, and *rational choice factors*. Sociological variables: religion, ethnicity, age, gender, education, and income. Meanwhile, psychological variables include party proximity or partisanship that supports candidates. Other variables of rational choice include program, technocratic issues, incumbent performance satisfaction, egocentric and sociotropic retrospectives, and personal qualities of candidates.

Symbolic interaction can be illustrated through the similarity of mind, self-concept (self), and society, as seen in the perspectives of political communicators on gender and religious issues (Suharman, 2021). Religious similarity is superior to ethnic similarity. The tribal factor in explaining electoral politics is relatively weak, and identity politics based on religion dominates in Indonesia. Basically, the Betawi, Sundanese, and Minang tribes have more potential to experience cognitive dissonance (doublethink), which prioritizes rationality. Likewise, the indigenous tribes of Lampung, who have been part of Lampung Province's society and received acculturation from various ethnic cultures, base their choices on rational and intelligent aspects (Muhtadi, 2018).

Legitimacy

The granting of customary titles to politicians is a form of recognition from indigenous peoples. This traditional title serves as a symbol of status and honor, recognized by the people of Lampung. Customary titles strengthen their position in local social and political structures, as they are considered to possess an intimate understanding of the community's cultural values and traditions. The legitimacy obtained through customary titles can enhance public trust in the leader's ability and good intentions in carrying out their duties.

The tradition of granting customary titles is part of a social structure that has been passed down from one generation to the next. Officials or candidates for regional heads, as agents, not only passively receive customary titles but also use them to gain social and political legitimacy. Giddens also introduced the concept of structural dualism, which means that structures and agencies interact with each other in an ongoing cycle. In other words, the granting of customary titles is not only the result of existing customary rules. Still, it is also updated and reproduced through social interaction between indigenous peoples and politicians.

Customary titles serve as a symbol of respect and recognition of the leader's authority, which can increase emotional bonds, trust and community support. Traditional ceremonies held in the context of awarding titles are also part of the promotion of cultural traditions. On the other hand, by accepting customary titles, politicians show their willingness to respect and preserve local culture. Additionally, it demonstrates a commitment to listening to opinions and advocating for the interests of indigenous peoples in the political decision-making process. There is a symbiotic relationship of mutualism between the giver of the degree and the recipient of the degree.

Traditional Title as an Electoral Strategy

The granting of customary titles to political candidates aims to create emotional closeness with Lampung ethnic voters. Studies show that cultural

elements can increase a candidate's electability when combined with an effective campaign strategy. However, in some cases, the granting of titles has caused controversy, such as in the case of M. Nasir, who was opposed by some customary balancers. From the perspective of symbolic politics, the awarding of customary titles can be seen as a strategy to enhance the candidate's image within the local community. By gaining symbolic legitimacy, candidates can more easily attract electoral support from indigenous peoples. However, this practice also risks creating political manipulation that obscures the original meaning of customary titles (Muhtadi, 2018).

In the long run, the politicization of customary titles can lead to:

1. Cultural Significance Reduction: Traditional titles lose their sacred significance and become mere political tools.
2. Internal Conflicts of Indigenous Communities: Awarding titles to outsiders can cause divisions within indigenous communities.
3. The Gap between Symbols and Reality: Candidates who receive the degree do not necessarily have a genuine commitment to Lampung's culture.
4. The Shift of Cultural Capital to Political Capital: Customary titles are used as a tool for political negotiation rather than as a means of respecting cultural values.

To address this challenge, it is essential to establish regulations from customary institutions (such as *perwatin*) governing the awarding of traditional titles, ensuring that they are granted based on genuine contributions to local culture, rather than political motives. Additionally, public education on the importance of preserving cultural values is necessary to prevent traditional titles from becoming mere political commodities. Community political education should also be prioritized to ensure that cultural symbols do not solely influence voters; instead, candidates' qualifications and capabilities should also be considered. Ultimately, strengthening socio-cultural capital is essential for raising awareness of the

value of tradition in politics, thereby fostering a deeper understanding of how cultural heritage can enhance political engagement.

The Urgency of Traditional Titles in the Future

The granting of customary titles can serve as a tool of social legitimacy for individuals who receive them, especially in strengthening their position within indigenous communities. In some cases, customary titles can also be used as social capital to build political influence. Lampung culture, in the context of a power struggle, exists primarily at the level of concepts that, in practice, differ, particularly in the implementation of regional head elections (Kurniawan, 2017). Although customary titles have influence, they are not necessarily the main factor in determining political leadership in the region.

The philosophy of Piil Pesenggiri, which emphasizes self-respect, honor, and independence, has been applied more widely in the realm of customs but has not yet fully entered the realm of politics or broader social interaction. Along with the times, there is potential for these values to become more relevant in various aspects of people's lives, including in the modern leadership system. Suppose the values in Piil Pesenggiri can be appropriately adapted. In that case, it is not impossible that customary titles can also be an instrument to encourage ethics-based leadership and noble values in government.

CONCLUSION

The granting of customary titles (*adok*) in Lampung culture has evolved beyond its traditional function as a symbol of social status and community recognition. Historically reserved for individuals of Lampung descent, these titles are now conferred upon outsiders, including politicians and public figures, as part of a broader social and political dynamic. This phenomenon reflects both the adaptability of Lampung traditions and the strategic use of cultural elements within electoral politics.

The analysis of cases involving political figures such as Puan Maharani, Erick Thohir, Ganjar Pranowo, and Mahfud MD suggests that the awarding of

customary titles is often intertwined with political agendas, particularly in the context of regional and national elections. While such recognition can foster emotional ties between candidates and local communities, it also raises concerns about the potential commodification of cultural heritage.

From a sociopolitical perspective, customary titles serve as a means of legitimacy, reinforcing the positional authority of recipients within the Lampung community. However, their increasing politicization risks diminishing their cultural significance. The symbolic interaction between politicians and indigenous communities can strengthen the role of tradition in modern governance; however, it also creates challenges, such as internal divisions within indigenous groups and the erosion of customary authenticity.

To prevent the degradation of traditional values, it is crucial for customary institutions to establish clear guidelines on the awarding of titles. Education and awareness campaigns can help ensure that customary titles maintain their original purpose as markers of respect and social contribution rather than instruments of political maneuvering. In this way, the rich heritage of Lampung culture can be preserved while adapting to contemporary societal changes.

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