Foreword

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A strategic perspective is the key to shaping a well-focused ethnography. In this volume, *Pursuing Livelihoods, Imagining Development*, Ahmad Kusworo has developed a perspective that allows his analysis to shift effectively from province to region to village area, at each stage enhancing the overall argument.

At the provincial level, this ethnography presents a superb examination of the transformation of Lampung in Sumatra. Within the context of this historical transformation, the ethnography shifts focus to the specific transformation of a frontier region of Lampung and then concentrates on a fine-grained examination of local rural development – how cultivators of mixed backgrounds flexibly organized in households and attuned to new opportunities manage to pursue a range of livelihood strategies. The result is a sophisticated, nuanced ethnography that provides an exceptional portrait of smallholder production.

Lampung is an area of Indonesia that has not been given the attention that it deserves. In the colonial period, Dutch administrators viewed Lampung as an empty land that they could fill with people from Java. The province became the earliest historical target for migration and continued as such through much of the New Order. Over time, there was far more spontaneous migration than assisted transmigration, and the local indigenous population — though swamped by those from outside — took on many of the same economic pursuits as the incoming groups. The result is a complex creation of diverse settlements pursuing multiple livelihoods. The author aptly describes this population as “a multi-ethnic middle peasantry” whose efforts have resulted in successes as well as failures. This volume traces the effects of the erratic national policies and fluctuating commodity prices that have affected opportunities and the way of life in the region. It provides a convincing picture of ‘development’ as it is imagined and experienced in the local context.

To do this kind of nuanced research requires time and a solid background in Lampung’s diverse cultural traditions. Ahmad Kusworo received his first degree in agriculture from the University of Lampung and was engaged in research in the province with Friends of Nature and Environment (WATALA), and ICRAF/World Agroforestry Centre before beginning his degree program at ANU. Almost a decade before he began his fieldwork, he visited the area of his research in the company of friends and activists from various NGOs. Since completing his PhD, Ahmad Kusworo has worked for WFF Indonesia and UNDP Indonesia as well as
being the Indonesian Research Coordinator for ANU Crawford School's Australia Indonesia Governance Research Partnership. He is currently a Technical Advisor for the Indonesia Programme at Fauna & Flora International.

This is an engaging ethnography that is particularly appropriate for the Asia Pacific Environment Monograph (APEM) series. It is an ethnographic document of a particular place and a particular time but the issues it tackles are perennial and persistent.