

PERSPECTIVE

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The 2019 General Elections: Comparing Results in South Sumatra and Lampung

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Contrary to common belief that the 2019 general election in Indonesia featured the increasing importance of identity politics, research in South Sumatra and Lampung shows that identity/ideology mattered only in the presidential election.
- Different factors drove voting preferences across the five levels of elections which were conducted simultaneously in 2019.
- The presidential election campaign was driven more by volunteers than by the parties. Unlike the Prabowo Subianto-Sandiaga Uno pair which controlled Gerindra, the Joko Widodo-Ma'ruf Amin pair controlled no party even though Jokowi is a member of the PDI-P. The role of volunteers was very important to the success of the Jokowi-Ma'ruf Amin campaign.
- In the legislative elections, material benefits for voters and the personal appeal of a candidate were more decisive factors than party ideology or voters' ethnic/religious affiliation.

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INTRODUCTION

The 2019 Indonesia presidential election results indicate that the Indonesian electorate is divided by ideology and geography. Nationalists, moderate Muslims and minorities tended to vote for Joko Widodo-Ma'ruf Amin, while conservative Muslims voted for Prabowo Subianto-Sandiaga Uno.¹ The geographical division is also apparent. Joko Widodo-Ma'ruf Amin won a landslide victory in Central Java and East Java, regions densely populated by the Javanese, and also drew support from regions with significant numbers of Christians and other minorities outside Java. Prabowo Subianto-Sandiaga Uno excelled in Sumatra, South Kalimantan and South Sulawesi, and parts of Java not inhabited by Javanese, especially West Java and Banten.²

Observers have also concluded that the 2019 election also propelled religious and ethnic identities to prominence.^{3 4} In Indonesia, religion and ethnicity are often conflated. An Acehnese, for example, is almost certainly a Muslim. Likewise, a Manadonese is more likely to be a Christian.

In 2019, aside from the presidential election, four other elections were held, and simultaneously. These were the election of legislative members at the national, provincial, district/municipal levels; and the election to the Regional Representative Council (DPD). While the presidential election may have displayed identity politics, the other four elections showed different dynamics that are often overlooked. For politicians vying for parliament seats, ethnic or religious mobilization was not enough to win the election. Also, in contrast to elections at the national level, sub-national politics tended to be more personalised, and candidates had to engage with their constituents and deal with their everyday problems.

This article also highlights the influence of ideology, identity, and material benefits in each election, and is based on research in two Indonesian provinces, South Sumatra and Lampung.

WHY THESE TWO SUMATRA PROVINCES?

South Sumatra and Lampung were picked as research sites because of the demographic characteristics of its population. Lampung is a province outside Java where the Javanese make up the majority. They had been migrating to this province since the colonial era as part of the government's population transfer program.⁵ By contrast, South Sumatra's population is mainly made up of indigenous peoples. To be sure, it also has a sizeable number of Javanese, especially in several of its eastern districts, most of whom moved in under the New Order's transmigration programme.⁶

The 2010 census shows that ethnic Javanese made up 64.05% of the population in Lampung province. In some districts, this figure reached above 70%, such as in East Lampung, Central Lampung, Pringsewu, Mesuji, and Tulang Bawang. South Sumatra's population is more diverse and no single ethnic group makes up a majority. This province also has a sizeable number of Javanese (27.40% of total population in 2010). The Ogan Komering Ulu Timur district houses the highest number of Javanese, about 70% of the entire population. Javanese make up 40.77% of the population in the Musi Rawas district, and more than 25% in several eastern districts.

The 2014 presidential candidates were the same as in 2019 but both had different running mates. Prabowo Subianto-Hatta Rajasa won 51.26% in South Sumatra in 2014, while in 2019, Prabowo with his new running mate, Sandiaga Uno, managed to win 59.7%.

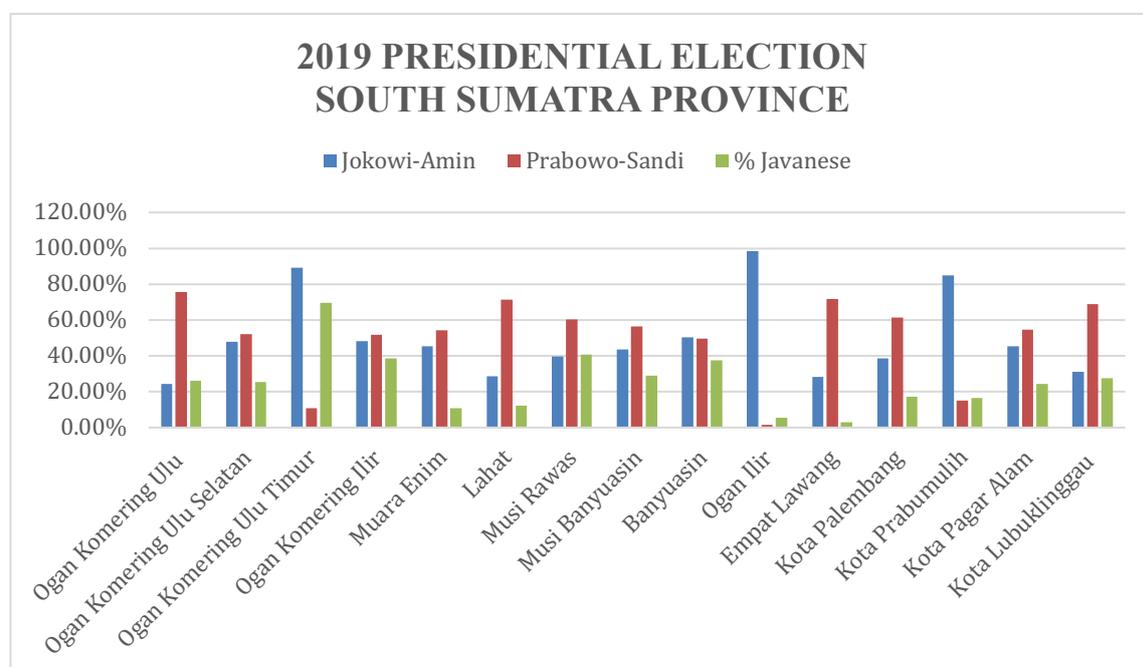
In Lampung, Joko Widodo-Jusuf Kalla gained 53.07% of the votes in 2014. In 2019, Joko Widodo-Ma'ruf Amin widened the lead to 59.3%. That is however still 5.2% less than the total of Javanese population there.

PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION RESULTS

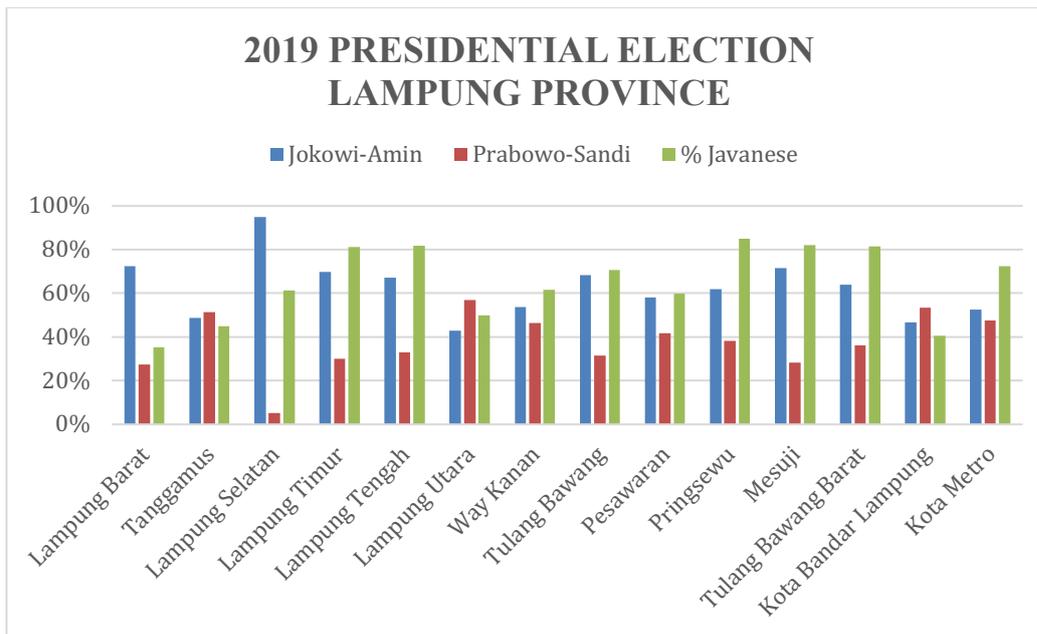
Did ethnicity influence the way the electorate voted for Prabowo Subianto and Joko Widodo? The results in Lampung and South Sumatra showed that ethnicity only had a moderate effect. Like in other Javanese majority regions, ethnic Javanese voted overwhelmingly for Jokowi. However, in some districts with a sizeable number of Javanese, Jokowi lost.

Jokowi did not fare well in South Sumatra's Musi Rawas district which has 40.8% Javanese. He got 41.1% of the votes there, almost the same as the percentage that are Javanese residents. Jokowi pulled a slim victory with 50.4% in Banyuasin regency, which has 37.5% Javanese.

Jokowi lost in many districts that have more than 25% Javanese in its population. Those are Ogan Komering Ulu, Ogan Komering Ulu Selatan, Ogan Komering Ilir, Musi Rawas, Musi Banyuasin, and Lubuk Linggau municipality.



In Lampung, Jokowi also lost in Tanggamus, Lampung Utara, and Bandarlampung despite having a sizeable number of Javanese voters. Tanggamus population has 44.81% Javanese, Lampung Utara 50.5%, and Bandarlampung, the province's capital, has 40.67% Javanese.



Ethnic identity might have played a role in presidential elections but there were also other factors that must be taken into account. In South Sumatra, even though Javanese voters overwhelmingly supported Jokowi-Ma'ruf Amin, the pair still lost. It is likely they failed to attract conservative Muslim voters to their side. In South Sumatra, non-Javanese ethnic groups tend to be more religiously conservative.⁷

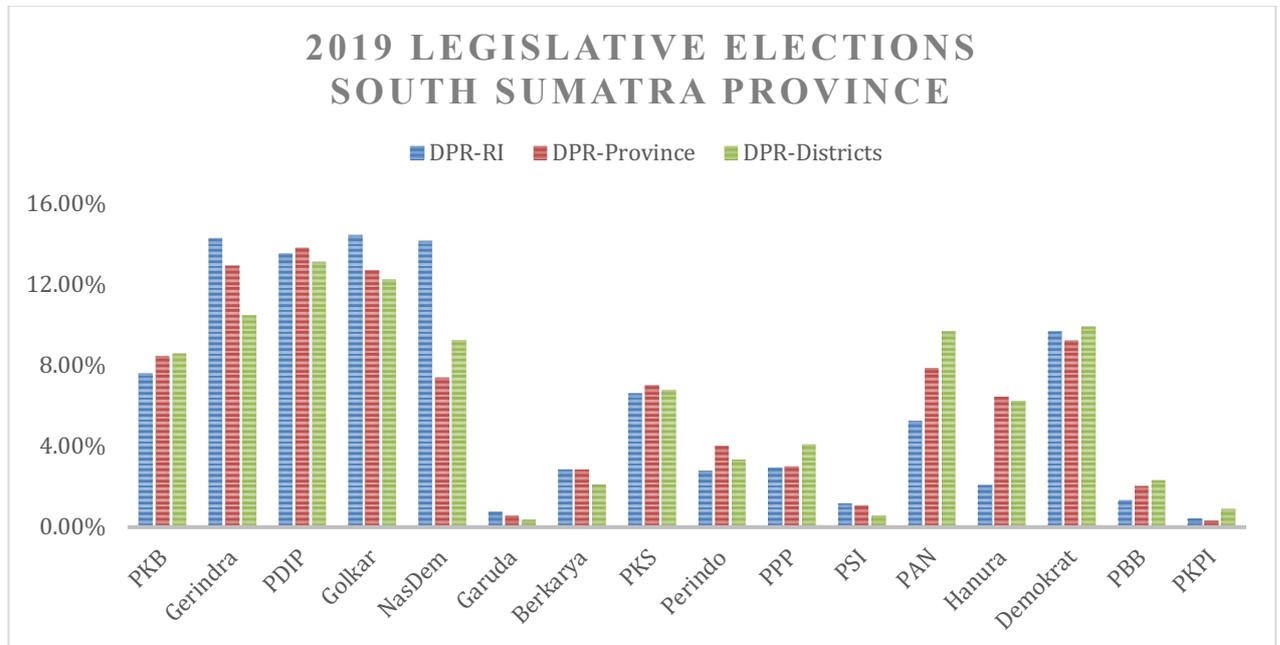
In Lampung, where ethnic Javanese are the majority, the religious factor proved crucial. There are Javanese who subscribe to Islamic conservatism,⁸ and various interviews conducted in both provinces reveal that religion served as a determining factor to the election.

However, some interviewees⁹ also acknowledged that the price of commodities (especially rubber and palm oil), which slumped during the campaign, impacted the Jokowi-Ma'ruf Amin campaign.¹⁰ Low commodity prices encouraged farmers, wholesalers and merchants to support the opposition. They blamed the national government for implementing economic policies that affected commodity prices negatively. Commodity prices were not raised as an issue during the legislative election campaigns, but some considered religiosity to be an expression of economic frustration.¹¹

LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS RESULTS

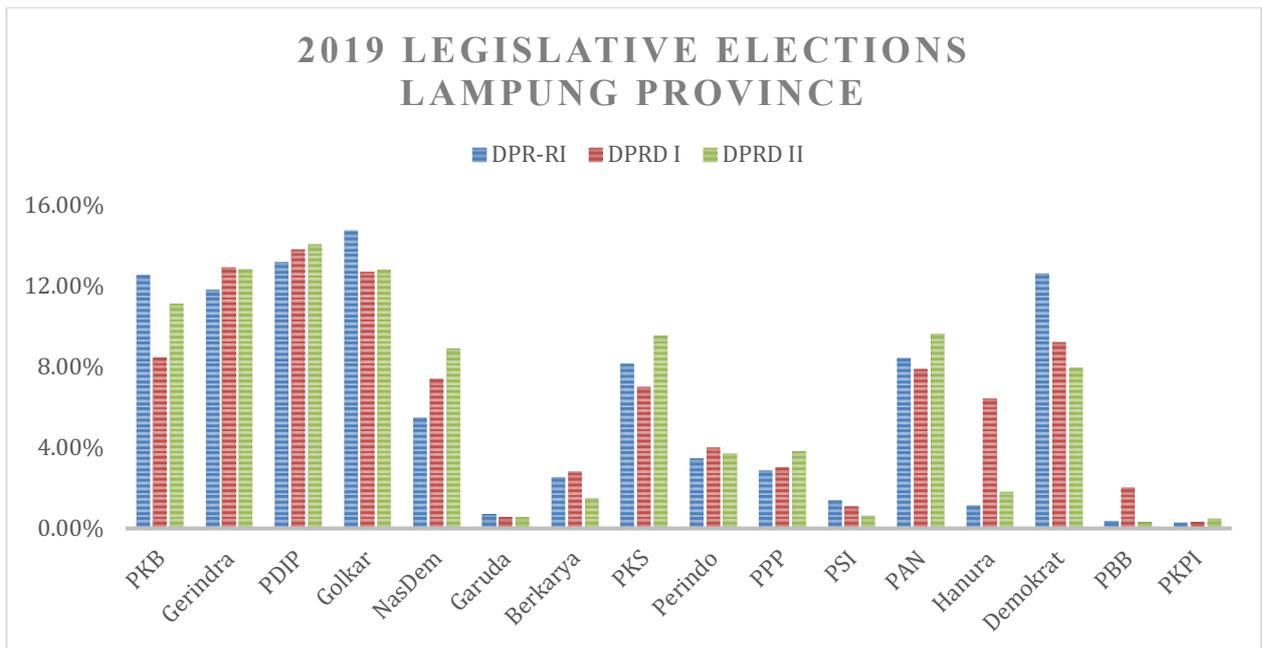
Besides the presidential election, there were four other elections that took place simultaneously. Did these elections share characteristics similar to the presidential election? In other words, was there a 'down-ballot' effect from presidential election to the legislative elections? The results from South Sumatra and Lampung exhibit that the effect was limited. Therefore, one could say that voters may cast their votes differently at different levels of election. So, there is a possibility that the choices were based on identity at one election but not at others. In particular, people voted based on identity in the presidential election but decided strategically at the legislative election. Also, it is possible that the lower the electoral level, the more voters acted strategically.

The results in South Sumatra are telling. Comparing the results of the legislative election at the national, provincial and district levels shows the dominance of major parties. For the national parliament, Golkar gained the most votes (14.45%), followed by Gerindra (14.29%), NasDem (14.16). and PDIP (13.52). Then follow intermediate parties such as Democrats (9.26%), PKB (7.59%), and PKS (6.62%), and PAN (5.26%).



Some parties performed well at the national level but not at the local levels, while some showed consistent results. In South Sumatra, PDIP was consistently supported at all levels by around 13% of voters. Other parties that performed consistently at the national and local levels were PKB (with a tendency to do better at the lower level), PKS, and Democrats. Meanwhile, Gerindra and Golkar showed lower support to local elections. The most striking was NasDem which showed a sharp decrease at the lower electoral level.¹²

In Lampung, the situation is slightly different. At the national level, the victorious parties are Golkar (14.75%), followed by PDIP (13.2%), Democrats (12.6%), PKB (12.6%) and Gerindra (11.8%). Then came PAN (8.5%), PKS (8.2%) and NasDem (5.5%). Imbalance between the results of national and local elections was shown by Democrats, Golkar and PKB. Other parties showed consistency or even increase their vote share in local elections: PAN, PKS, and Gerindra found that their votes went up at the local level.



WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

The mismatch between successes in national elections and failure at the local level indicates that campaigns by national candidates were not necessarily coordinated with party functionaries at the local level. In the presidential election campaign, this lack of coordination arose because of the decision to give a greater role to volunteers. At the parliamentary level, however, the problem was twofold. First was in how legislative candidates were recruited. Second was in the way the winner of the election was decided. Legislative candidates had to compete with their party's fellow candidates and candidates from other parties. This pattern of competition prevents cooperation and coordination within the party. During my fieldwork observations, I found that coordination between campaign teams was an exception rather than the norm. Each candidate actually organized their own campaign team.¹³

The presidential campaign did not coordinate with coalition parties at the local level. Jokowi-Ma'ruf Amin organized their campaign at the national level by forming TKN (National Campaign Team) and TKD (Regional Campaign Team) at the provincial and district levels. TKDs organized volunteers who were not under the control of any party. Likewise, Prabowo-Sandiaga Uno also formed a national-level BPN (Badan Pemilihan Nasional) with its regional branches, BPDs. It appears that BPN had more coordination with parties within its coalition.¹⁴ The Prabowo-Sandiaga campaign also mobilized an army of volunteers who were not controlled by political parties. In South Sumatra and Lampung, most of Prabowo's volunteers came from Islamic organizations such as 212 Movement activists, Gerakan Nasional Pembela Fatwa – Majelis Ulama Indonesia (GNPF-MUI), or Front Pembela Islam.¹⁵

Volunteers were crucial to the presidential campaign. They tended to be more ideological and identified themselves with causes dear to their candidate. Their militancy was also higher compared to party members who were in the coalition of each presidential campaign.

In addition to ideological issues, both presidential campaigns exploited ethnic and religious identities. The Prabowo-Sandiaga camp mobilized conservative Islamic sentiments while the Jokowi-Ma'ruf Amin campaign appealed to nationalists, moderate Islam and minorities. Jokowi-Ma'ruf Amin's ideological position, which never directly targeted the Javanese, placed his campaign culturally closer to the Javanese.¹⁶

On the other hand, the Prabowo-Sandiaga Uno campaign appealed to conservative Muslims. Therefore, their campaign was more attractive to ethnic groups whose cultures were close to conservative Islam. This ideology and the ethnic/religious identities did not work strongly in the legislative elections, and was the biggest contrast between the legislative and the presidential campaigns.

Legislative elections were strongly influenced by two things. First, in the way legislative candidates were selected. Political parties nominated legislative candidates both from their own cadres and from outside the party. There were two types of candidates selected from outside the party. The first kind were the 'vote getters,' who were usually celebrities or artists, religious leaders, people who have influence in society, or local leaders. The second type are the party 'financiers'. They became candidates because of their monetary contributions to the party or to its functionaries.¹⁷

Because of this system, many national candidates did not originate from the regions that they wished to represent. Also, many of them had not even joined the party before the election. The party only served as a 'vehicle' to give them a ride into parliament.

Second is the way candidates competed for a seat in the legislative elections. The system requires that candidates fight on two fronts. First, they must compete with other candidates within their party. Second, they have to fight with candidates from other parties. The system makes competition for a parliamentary seat very costly and tight. As a consequence, the candidates' appeal is based on their personal capabilities rather than their party affiliation. Party ideology was not a determining factor in the election, and I found that candidates became more pragmatic rather than ideological when campaigning.¹⁸

Legislative elections were thus more about a candidate's personal appeal than his party's ideology, or ethnic/religious identity for that matter. Therefore, it was more difficult to mobilize voters through identity than through material benefits. Even if a candidate were a leader in his constituency, he would not be automatically elected if he did not have enough resources to share with voters. It is not too surprising that money politics is rampant in legislative elections. This is also where the patronage network to distribute material benefits plays a role.¹⁹

The Indonesian party system lacks a mechanism to connect politicians with their constituents. However, politicians who fight for a parliamentary seat at the local level usually pay more attention to everyday issues and try to connect to their constituents as closely as possible.²⁰ The role of the political party is minimal, candidates would not even rely on the party organization to run their campaign. Some candidates used non-party organizations to mobilize support.²¹

¹ Such ideological division is not strange in Indonesian politics. What happened in 2019 strongly reflects Indonesian politics in the 1950s when conservative Islamic parties, especially Masjumi, won in the outer islands and West Java while the nationalist party (PNI) and traditionalist Islamic party (NU) dominated areas with Javanese populations.

² See, Tom Pepinsky, "Religion, ethnicity, and Indonesia's 2019 presidential election," *New Mandala*, 28 May, 2019. <https://www.newmandala.org/religion-ethnicity-and-indonesias-2019-presidential-election/?fbclid=IwAR2ZNdd3gHSIoyqOCsNoyAutLv3glNAMOmeHWdi6xJTcRgP5fym0zu1KqlE>

³ <https://thediplomat.com/2019/04/indonesias-election-is-over-but-identity-politics-will-linger/>

⁴ <https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/opinion/article/3007460/indonesias-elections-identity-politics-almost-trumped-economy>

⁵ Another province outside Java which has the largest Javanese population is North Sumatra. However, the migration of Javanese to North Sumatra was driven more by the need for indentured labor by plantation companies. In Lampung, migration occurs more spontaneously even though there was also a push to work on the few plantations found in North Sumatra. See Kusworo, Ahmad. *Pursuing Livelihoods, Imagining Development: Smallholders in Highland Lampung, Indonesia*. Vol. 9, ANU Press, 2014. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt5vj72v. Esp. pp. 17-40.

⁶ On taking over the power in early 1966, the New Order government launched a programme to move a portion of the Indonesian population from the so-called 'inner islands'—namely Java, Madura, and Bali—to outer islands. These regions were inhabited by two thirds of the population of Indonesia while constituting only 7% of Indonesia's land area. In 1969-74, the government moved 182,000 people to the sparsely populated outer islands. This number increased to 544,000 in 1974-79. In 1979-84, this number exploded to 2.5 million following the oil boom. After this period, transmigration declined. But during the final decade before the collapse of the New Order, the government managed to move around two million more. See Barter and Côté (2015); Potter (2012).

⁷ In the western regions of South Sumatra province, Prabowo-Sandiaga Uno won a landslide victory. These are also conservative Islam areas that have a small Javanese population. In the past, these regions were the bases of Masjumi and Persis, two Islamic parties. By contrast, in the eastern part of South Sumatra Province, the number of the Javanese migrants is significant and they may even make up the majority when compared to other ethnic groups. These are regions where nationalist party (PNI in the past and PDIP recently) triumphed. In this region, Jokowi-Ma'ruf Amin either won victory or lost but narrowly.

⁸ This is nothing new. Lampung has long been a sanctuary for hardline Islamic groups who had moved from Java to avoid repression. In 1989, the Talangsari incident happened in East Lampung Regency. Military officers stormed a camp belonging to a hardline Islamic Warsidi Group, which left 246 civilians dead.

⁹ This project carried out 11 interviews in South Sumatra and 18 in Lampung. Interviewees came from different backgrounds, and included journalists, academics, activists and local bureaucrats. The majority were politicians who were running for office.

¹⁰ Interview with Giri Kiemas in Palembang, 8 March 2010.

¹¹ Interview with Budi in Lampung on 16 April 2019. Budi is a local businessman, and owns a gas station. He is the publisher of an online magazine in Lampung.

¹² Nasdem is a new party that was founded in 2011 by Indonesian tycoon Surya Paloh. This party accommodates many disappointed politicians who had previously joined Golkar, the Democratic Party, and PDIP. Switching parties has become an increasingly common phenomenon in Indonesia.

¹³ A candidate in Lampung told me that in the campaign SDM law applied. SDM is the acronym for *Sumber Daya Manusia* (human resources). But during the campaign, it is an acronym for "selamatkan diri masing-masing" (save yourself). Interview with a PKB candidate in Lampung, March 14, 2010.

¹⁴ In my observations, Gerindra's local secretariat often (though not always) functioned as the office for the BPDs. This secretariat also became a gathering place for volunteers. For the Jokowi-Ma'ruf Amin campaign, TKDs had their own headquarters, which were centrally organized by TKN.

¹⁵ These organizations were involved in a massive rally on 12 December 2016 which demanded that Jakarta's Governor, Basuki Tjahaja Purnama (a.k.a. Ahok) be jailed for insulting Islam.

¹⁶ For example, in Lampung, the Jokowi campaign emphatically used symbols that were easily associated with Java such as clothing, arts, and other symbols. The campaign also explicitly stressed the secular aspects of Indonesia, although that did not mean they did not use religion as a draw. Jokowi's campaign was in principle targeted at pluralist and moderate Islam voters.

¹⁷ "Dowry" (*mahar*) is the famous term in Indonesia for contribution to the party or to its functionaries. Legislative candidates or regional leader candidates who wish to run in local elections have to choose a political party as their 'vehicle.' The amount of 'dowry' depends on the level of the election. At the national level, this may cost several billion rupiah; for the provinces hundreds of millions of rupiahs and tens of million for the regency level. Interview with Yuriansah in Palembang, March 8, 2019.

¹⁸ A candidate from the Islamist PKS who ran for a provincial parliamentary seat told me that his signature campaign programme was organizing traders at traditional markets into a credit union. I was impressed by his reaction as I told him that credit union is against Islamic law, which prohibits interests (*riba*). He said that what is more important is that a credit union would be 'beneficial to my constituents.' Interview with Ade in Lampung, April 15, 2019. His pragmatism defies his ideology.

¹⁹ See, Kurniawan, Rahmatunissa, and Agustino, "Vote Buying in Lampung Local Election," *Mimbar* Vol. 33, No. 2 (December), 2017, pp. 359-367.

²⁰ A candidate for the Indonesian Solidarity Party (PSI) in Palembang told me that he approached his constituents by repairing their broken shoes or patching their leaking woks or pans. He said that this was the way he made intimate contact with his constituents. He lost the election.

²¹ I also found a candidate who was using *Banser*, a militia organization associated with Nahdlatul Ulama, a traditional Muslim organization, to mobilize voters. In Lampung, I met with a candidate who organized his campaign using Javanese arts organizations called *Jathilan* or *Jaran Kepang*, a Javanese performing art performed by buskers.

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