

IDENTITY-BASED POLITICAL PREFERENCES IN THE ELECTIONS (STUDY OF MANGGARAI ETHNICITY IN THE 2012 AND 2017 KUPANG CITY ELECTIONS)

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Volume: 4

Number: 5

Page: 1629 - 1649

Article History:

Received: 2023-08-20

Revised: 2023-09-02

Accepted: 2023-09-17

Abstract:

This research aims to explain the phenomenon of identity politics in the context of Regional Head Elections (Pilkada) in the relationship between ethnicity and voters' political preferences in Pilkada contestations. The case raised in this research is the Kupang City Pilkada during the last two periods, which included the pair Yonas Salean and Dr. Herman Man in the 2012-2017 period and the couple Jefri Riwu Kore and Dr. Herman Man in the 2017-2022 period. This research wants explicitly to measure whether identity politics has changed the behavior of choosing the Manggarai ethnic group in providing support to Dr Herman Man. This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study of the Manggarai ethnicity in Kupang City. Data collection techniques through interviews and documentation. The research results show that support for the Kupang Mayor candidate pair who collaborated with the Deputy Mayor candidate pair from the Manggarai ethnic group was strengthened by the presence of a unifying forum, namely Panga, and IKMR, as the basis for the Manggarai people's association in Kupang City. The Manggarai ethnic group is not the only ethnic group in Kupang City, but is not the largest ethnic group. However, it has influenced the victory of the Mayor and Deputy Mayor candidate pairs for two consecutive periods, namely the 2012-2017 period and the 2017-2022 period. The existence of Dr. Herman Man was the determining factor in the victory of the candidate pair for Mayor and Deputy Mayor of Kupang for two consecutive periods.

Keywords: Manggarai Ethnicity, Identity, Kupang City, Regional Elections, Political Preferences.

Cite this as SYAFRUDDIN, A., KEON, Y. F., NAMI, Y. J. (2023). "Identity-Based Political Preferences in the Elections (Study of Manggarai Ethnicity in the 2012 and 2017 Kupang City Elections)." *International Journal of Environmental, Sustainability, and Social Science*, 4 (5), 1629 - 1649.



INTRODUCTION

This research aims to explain the phenomenon of identity politics in the context of Regional Head Elections (Pilkada) in the relationship between ethnicity and voters' political preferences in Pilkada contestations. The case raised in this research is the Kupang City Pilkada during the last two periods, which included the pair Yonas Salean and Dr. Herman Man in the 2012-2017 period and the couple Jefri Riwu Kore and Dr. Herman Man in the 2017-2022 period. Interestingly, the two contexts of democratic contestation celebrations were won by the mayor candidate paired with Dr. Herman Man. This fact gave rise to several assumptions that placed the figure of Dr. Herman Man as the determining factor for victory. The presence of Dr. Herman Man in the Kupang City Regional Election contestation for two periods was inseparable from the Manggarai ethnic entity in Kupang City as the basis of social identity. Therefore, this research wants explicitly to explain the relationship

between the basis of social identity (Manggarai ethnic) and the political preferences of the Manggarai ethnic group in Kupang City regarding the victory of the Mayor candidate Yonas Salean and Mayor Candidate Jefri Riwu Kore, who teamed up with Deputy Mayor Candidate Dr. Herman Man in the Kupang City Regional Election for two consecutive periods.

The Kupang City Pilkada, which has been going on for three periods, is steeped in identity politics. The emergence of the candidates (Mayor and Deputy Mayor candidates) was immediately confronted with primordial issues. Even the determination of regional head candidates is calculated based on considerations with primordial nuances. Research conducted by Wonga (2019) entitled *Politics of Ethnic Identity in the 2017 - 2022 Kupang Mayor Election in Maulafa Sub-district* explains that the ethnicity factor dramatically influences the political preferences of the people in Maulafa Sub-district. Negong (2017) also conducted similar research on identity politics in Kupang City during the 2013 NTT Governor election. The research results showed that identity politics based on religion and ethnicity had a significant influence on the voting behavior of the people of Kupang City. Nope et al. (2021) also found a similar phenomenon in the 2018 NTT gubernatorial election. Slightly different from the two previous studies, the primordial issues that emerged in the 2018 NTT gubernatorial election were influenced by primordial issues played out at the national level (DKI gubernatorial election). The research found that national issues, such as the Ahok case and radicalism, became an advantage for candidates using them as political instruments. In the campaign rhetoric, the Regional Head candidate (Victory-Joss) always emphasizes the importance of strengthening a broader national identity as a unifying political tool in expanding voter segments. This article concludes that identity politics in the 2018 NTT Governor and Deputy Governor Election were national issues rather than local context identities. Regardless of the context and locus of research, these three studies explain the proliferation of identity politics in the social and political sphere of NTT society.

Identity politics in Indonesia has long been an exciting discussion among social science experts. The issue of identity is very influential and is dominant in determining people's choices in general elections (elections) in Indonesia. There is polarization, whose priorities are based on ethnicity and religion. Geertz (1963), in his writing about "primordial sentiment," stated that the study of identity politics would continue to receive attention, especially about ethnic, religious, gender, indigenous communities, and local communities (in Buchari, 2014). Study (Fautanu et al., 2020) The research results show that the identity politics of the DKI Jakarta Muslim community is based on religion and, in principle, is an inevitability in political culture.

Meanwhile, the identity politics of the DKI Jakarta Muslim community is in the form of *ukhuwah Islamiyah* and is more about cultural and religious factors. Manifested in the form of activeness to make the campaign a success, mobilize the Muslim community as identity politics, and support the victory of the Anies-Sandi pair in the 2017 DKI Jakarta Pilkada. A study by Khairunnas et al. (2018) uses a voter behavior approach with an analysis of three models, namely Sociological, psychological, and rational choice models. Based on the research results in the field, it can be concluded that the voting behavior of ethnic Chinese youth in the 2018 Palembang Mayor and Deputy Mayor election tends to be psychological and rational. Psychologically, the voting behavior of ethnic Chinese youth tends to be influenced by campaign influence and the candidate's personality.

In contrast, rationally, it tends to be influenced by indicators of the candidate's leadership achievements in the previous period. Keywords: voting behavior, youth, ethnic Chinese, 2018 Palembang city elections. Several previous studies show that identity politics significantly influences increasing political preferences.

A series of interrelated questions arise following the explanation in the background above, including: 1) Does the presence of the Manggarai ethnic group in Kupang City have a significant influence on the victory of the candidate pair for Mayor and Deputy Mayor of Kupang during the last two periods?; 2) What are the political preferences of the Manggarai ethnic community of Kupang City in the Kupang City Pilkada celebrations for two consecutive periods?; 3) Do ethnic entities determine the political preferences of the Manggarai ethnic group in Kupang City? 5) What is the role of actors in optimizing primordial issues to seize the seat of power?

This series of questions indicates the complex dynamics of identity-based political contestation in the local realm. This research attempts to answer several of the questions above by referring to one fundamental question related to the topic that is the focus of this research, namely: How do primordial issues based on ethnic identity influence the political preferences of the Manggarai ethnic group in Kupang City during the 2012 and 2017 Kupang City Regional Election celebrations?

Literature Review, Identity Politics. Identity politics is a political tool of a group, such as ethnicity, tribe, culture, religion, or others, for specific purposes, for example, as a form of resistance or as a tool to show the identity of a group.[1] Identities are politicized through extreme interpretations, which aim to gain support from people who feel 'the same,' whether in terms of race, ethnicity, religion, or other adhesive elements.

Puritanism or the teachings of purity or orthodoxy also play a significant role in producing and distributing the idea of 'goodness' towards members on the one hand, while on the other hand, closing the resistance or critical reasoning of members of particular identity groups. According to Abdillah (2002), identity politics is politics whose main focus of study and problems concerns differences based on physical body assumptions, politics of ethnicity or primordialism, and conflicts over religion, belief, or language (Maarif, 2012). Identity politics exists as a resistant narrative for marginalized groups due to the failure of mainstream narratives to accommodate minority interests. Positively, identity politics provides a mediating vehicle for expressing aspirations for the oppressed.

The oppositional dichotomy feature is the main foundation differentiating the collective feeling of ourselves from others. However, at the individual level in the era of modernization, which is entirely mechanical, there is a 'failure' to understand the pluralistic structure of society, so intolerance is increasing. In short, there needs to be more social imagination about the daily lives of modern humans and their interactions with the general public. Identity politics is considered a powerful weapon by political elites to reduce the popularity and electability of their political rivals or an attempt to gain political support from the public.

Ethnic and religious issues are two things that are always on the identity politics agenda of elites in Indonesia, especially the condition of Indonesian society where the atmosphere of primordialism and sectarianism is still quite strong, so it is straightforward to win public sympathy, trigger anger and mass sentiment by spreading issues. Ethnicity, religion, and certain groups [3] Recently, identity politics has appeared in many forms, starting from feminism in Europe, the proletarian movement in Latin America, the anti-apartheid movement in Africa, the Zionist upheaval vis a vis the recognition of the Palestinian people, the summer spring movement In the Middle East, the push for regional expansion based on ethnicity or tribes and even separatist movements in our country are the faces of identity politics. The spectrum of identity politics is so broad, from authoritarian to democratic, from equality to partisanship, modern to local wisdom, nation-state to religious state.

In Indonesia, identity politics is more related to ethnicity, religion, ideology, and local interests, generally represented by elites with their articulations. The regional expansion movement can be seen as a manifestation of identity politics. Issues of justice and regional development are

very central in their political discourse, but whether these are genuine or more influenced by the ambition of local elites to emerge as leaders is an issue that can be challenging to explain. Many local and national political actors consciously use this issue in power sharing.

The provinces of Riau, Central Kalimantan, West Kalimantan, and Irian Jaya clearly show how effectively this issue is used by political actors when dealing with other political entities. Therefore, local elites in the four regions politicized identity so those initially excluded from the centers of power could enter and enjoy power. Of course, the workings of identity political projects in the four regions are expressed in varying forms. First, identity politics is used as the basis for the struggle of local elites. Second, identity politics is trying to be transformed into a political entity to control regional government until the top leadership is replaced. Gerry Van Klinken (2007) calls it the local elite that takes over the entire building of local political institutions¹. Third, the politics of ethnicity is used to question between 'us and them,' 'me,' and 'you'.

Theoretically, according to Lukmantoro, identity politics is political to prioritize the interests of members of a group because they have the same identity or characteristics, whether based on race, ethnicity, gender, or religion. Identity politics is another formulation of the politics of difference. Identity politics is a political action with efforts to channel aspirations to influence policy control over the distribution of values considered valuable to the most fundamental demand, namely self-determination based on primordiality.

In the ethnic format, identity politics is reflected in efforts to incorporate values into regional regulations, separate government areas, and the desire to achieve special autonomy, leading to separatist movements. Meanwhile, in the religious context, identity politics is reflected in various efforts to include religious values in the policy-making process, including implementing sharia regional regulations, as well as efforts to make a city synonymous with a particular religion.

In the following journey, identity politics was hijacked and embraced by the majority group to establish power domination. Using identity politics to gain power, which hardens differences and encourages conflict, comes with sharp criticism. Identity politics confirm the existence of an essentialistic whole regarding certain social groups based on primordial identification.

Agnes Heller defines identity politics as a concept and political movement focusing on differences as a leading political category (Abdilah S, 2002) in her book *Identity Politics: The Struggle for Signs Without Identity*. (Magelang: Indonesiatara Foundation). Even though every community has a common ideology and goals, it cannot be denied that various individuals have their personalities and identities. So, the general theory of identity politics and various research results show that two main factors make ethnicity and religion attractive and salient to be used and influential in the political process. First, it is essential to consider the potential implications and consequences. When it comes to situations where ethnicity and religion are at risk of being affected. There is a need to maintain or defend the identity of a group. Second, when the political process takes place competitively, this means that the political process causes identity groups to face each other, and no one is dominant, so it needs to be clarified who will be the winner from a long time ago. General elections, including Pilkada, are political processes where various factors, such as identity, are at stake.

Voter Behavior. Voter behavior is one of the studies within the scope of political science, especially political behavior. According to Surbakti (in Elly, 2011), voter behavior is the activity of voting by individuals, which is closely related to decision-making activities to vote or not to vote in a general election; if voters decide to vote, they will choose or support a particular candidate.

According to Firmanzah (2008), voter behavior can be interpreted as all parties being the primary goal of the contestants so that they influence and convince them to support and then give

their votes to the contestants concerned. Behavior can be defined as a mental state of opinion, thinking, or behavior that reflects various aspects.

Political behavior cannot be separated from political participation, where society plays a role in determining and making political decisions. According to Budiardjo (in Suryadi 2007), political participation is the activity of a person or group of people to actively participate in political life by electing state leaders and directly or indirectly influencing government policy (public policy). These activities include voting in general elections, attending general meetings, and becoming a party or interest group member.

Three approaches have been the basis for reading voting behavior: The Columbia Study, The Michigan Model, and Rational Choice (Bartels, 2012; Roth, 2008). These three approaches are sociological, psychological, and rational choice. Lau and Redlawsk (2006) also developed different approaches: rational choice, early socialization, fast and frugal, and bounded rationality. Furthermore, Nursal (2004) detailed several approaches to viewing voter behavior in general elections: sociological, psychological, and rational.

Voter Behavior Viewed from a Sociological Approach. This approach explains that social characteristics and social groupings have a significant influence in determining a person's voting behavior. Social groupings such as work education. Regarding the categorization of social characteristics and social groupings, they are divided into three types, namely categorical groups consisting of people with different political characteristics who are not aware of the characteristics and goals of their group. This difference occurs because each category reacts differently to political events, political experiences, and social roles. The sociological approach will emphasize two aspects, namely 1) social groupings seen from patterns of social relationships such as friendship, kinship, and kinship relationships as well as other social groups such as professions and organizations that are part of; and 2) social characteristics that are seen by voters' orientation towards the candidate's social characteristics such as age, gender, religion, ethnicity.

Voter Behavior Viewed from a Psychological Approach. This approach emphasizes three psychological aspects as the primary study: emotional ties to a political party, orientation to issues, and orientation to candidates. This approach also uses and develops psychological concepts, especially the concepts of socialization and attitudes, to explain voter behavior. Therefore, this approach is what determines a person's voting behavior. This approach sees socialization as determining voters' political behavior, not a sociological character. This approach explains that a person's attitude is a fairly determining variable in influencing a person's political behavior.

Voter Behavior Viewed from a Rational Approach. The rational approach is related to people's voting behavior patterns, namely issue orientation and candidate quality orientation. Issue-oriented voter behavior centers on the question: What should the government do to solve the problems faced by society, nation, and state? The rational approach is that voters are genuinely rational when voting. It means that voters can determine their choices based on rational considerations. They assess the party's offer or remember the vision and mission of the candidate. If people can act rationally, that is, they will cast votes that are deemed to bring maximum benefits and minimize losses. A rational approach is an approach that sees that the voter's choice is a rational decision of the voter where what is considered is the following: 1) vision and mission orientation, which is measured from the voter's knowledge and understanding, and interest in the program offered by the candidate; 2) candidate orientation which is measured by the quality of the candidate including position, information, achievements and popularity of the person concerned in various fields of life-related to their competence in realizing the program offered

According to Firmanzah (2007), voter behavior is divided into 4 (four) types as follows:

1. Rational Voter. This type of voter places little importance on ideological ties to a political party or a contestant. Factors such as ideology, origins, traditional values, religious culture, and psychographics are also considered but are insignificant.
2. Critical Voters. This type of voter is a combination of their high orientation towards the ability of a political party or contestant to resolve national problems and their high orientation towards ideological matters. This type of voter is a critical voter. It means they will always analyze the relationship between the party's value system (ideology) and the policies being made.
3. Traditional Voters. Voters of this type have a very high ideological orientation and do not see the policies of political parties or individual contestants as something important in decision-making. Traditional voters prioritize sociocultural proximity, values, origins, ideology, and religion to choose a political party.
4. Skeptical or Appropriate Voters. This type of voter is a voter who needs to have a higher ideological orientation towards a political party or a contestant, nor does he consider policy to be something important. This type of voter has little desire to be involved in a political party because their ideological ties are shallow.

Furthermore, several indicators influence voter behavior, as identified by Nursal (2004):

- a. *Social Imagery*, or social image (social grouping), is the image of a candidate or party in voters' minds regarding which social group they belong to or what party or political candidate they belong.
- b. *Emotional feelings* are the emotional dimensions that radiate from a contestant or candidate, as demonstrated by the political policies being offered. For example, suppose a candidate offers a policy of sending elite troops to crush the separatist movement. In that case, this will give rise to emotional feelings in the form of patriotic, severe, and firm political meaning. Candidate personality refers to critical personal traits that constitute a candidate's character.
- c. *Candidate personality* refers to critical personal traits that are considered to be the candidate's character.
- d. *Current events* refer to the collection of events, issues, and policies that develop up to and during the campaign. In general, current events can be divided into domestic and foreign issues. Domestic issues include, for example, the inflation rate, economic predictions, and rampant corruption.
- e. *Personal events* refer to personal life and events that a candidate has personally experienced, for example, sexual scandals, business scandals, being victims of specific regimes, and so on.
- f. *Epistemic issues* are specific voter issues that can trigger voters' curiosity about new things. These epistemic issues will likely arise amidst public distrust of political institutions that are part of the running system.

Based on Law No. 7 of 2017 concerning Elections states that voters are Indonesian citizens who are 17 (seventeen) years of age or older, are married, or have previously been married. So, in general election contests in Indonesia, voters must be Indonesian citizens aged 17 years or over. Restricting voter categories based on age, as mandated by the Election Law, underlines the aspect of maturity and matureness in making choices.

In general, theories about voting behavior are categorized into two camps that is Colombian School and Michigan School. The Colombian School emphasizes sociological factors in shaping people's behavior in election choices. This model sees society as a unified vertical group from the lowest level to the top. Adherents of this approach believe that society is structured by basic social norms based on sociological groupings such as religion, class (social status), occupation, age, and gender, which are considered to have a quite determining role in shaping voting behavior.

Meanwhile, the Michigan School emphasizes the psychological factors of voters, meaning that people's electoral decisions are primarily influenced by the psychological forces that develop within them, resulting from political socialization. Voter attitudes and behavior are determined by idealism, level of intelligence, biological factors, desires, and heart desires. Several studies have been conducted (Wahidin et al., 2020). This case study found that Indonesian voter behavior is fluctuating. Loyal voters in Indonesia in the 2014 election are predicted only to be 20%. In the 2019 election, loyal party voters tended to be stable because it was driven by several factors, namely 1) political polarization between supporters of the Jokowi-Maruf and Prabowo-Sandi pairs, 2) high public satisfaction with the performance of the Jokowi-JK government, 3) stable public trust in government parties as well as opposition parties and 4) holding legislative elections at the same time as the presidential election. This condition can be seen from the motives of political party voters who vote because of several primary factors: figure, ideology, and work program. (Riung, 2019) Voter behavior in the Talaud Islands Regency, especially in the Miangas Special District, is more dominantly influenced by a psychological approach, namely considering choices regarding the figure of the candidate pair and factors identifying parties. Voters are also influenced by the Sociological approach, namely considering choices based on family factors, and the existence of a Rational choice approach, namely looking at the vision and mission as well as the performance of candidate pairs, which makes voters consider their choices in the 2018 Talaud Islands Regency regional head election in Miangas Special District. A study (Hemay & Munandar, 2016) found that voter behavior ahead of the 2015 Bengkulu Regional Election is greatly influenced by the identity and image of the gubernatorial candidate who will be elected. Therefore, to get a comprehensive picture of this problem, the method will combine two main aspects: the behavioral political science approach (voter behavior), ethnic identity politics, candidate image, and regional elections from a political sociology perspective with a quantitative approach following public opinion survey. In this way, evidence will be obtained that tribal identity or tribal sentiment factors, together with figure image factors, can contribute positively to shaping voting behavior in the 2015 Bengkulu Regional Election. Study (Nge & Asmadi, 2019) The research results show that voter behavior in The 2019 elections in Sambas Regency, especially in the election of DPRD members, showed changes, namely the shift from sociological and psychological voters to rational voters. Even though this change is not significant, there is a tendency that in making their choice on candidates for legislative members, the public has considered the advantages and disadvantages of the work program being offered, as well as the political promises that the Legislative Candidate feels can be realized if elected. The appearance of new figures in the Sambas Regency DPRD institution with different ethnic backgrounds, ages, and professions proves that when choosing, people first look at the track record of legislative candidates before nominating themselves as legislative candidates. Expectations of new figures caused this change in behavior as an accumulation of disappointment with previous DPRD members. Apart from that, the development of social media has made people more rational in their choices. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that the presence of new faces in the Sambas Regency DPDR cannot be separated from sociological factors, such as kinship factors.

METHODS

Research Strategy and Approach. This study uses a case study strategy with a qualitative inductive research approach. A case study was conducted on the Manggarai ethnic group in Kupang City concerning the Kupang City Pilkada during two periods (2012 and 2017). This research strategy and approach were chosen based on several considerations. First, this study wants to see the extent of the influence of identity politics in Kupang City on the political preferences of the Manggarai ethnic group in Kupang City during the two periods of power and its influence on the style of the

power regime in Kupang City during the last two periods. Therefore, this research needs to obtain information, investigate the processes and relationships formed in-depth, and explain complex situations that are not visible on the surface.

Second, this study wants to look at the patterns played by political actors amid ethnic complexity, especially the Manggarai ethnic group, which incidentally is not the majority ethnic group in the City of Kupang but is the primary choice of prospective mayoral candidates to become deputy mayoral candidates for Kupang. It was proven in the Pilkada celebrations in the last two periods (2012 and 2017) and the upcoming Pilkada (2023). Third, consider the research's scope, time, and feasibility. Moreover, this study normatively prioritizes particularity, holistic, and natural settings, so using case studies is the right choice (Yin, 2003).

Data Collection Methods. This study's data collection and retrieval method utilizes several techniques. First, observation. This technique relies on the presence of researchers in the field to obtain data through direct interaction with informants. Everything is recorded and recorded audio and visual (Denscombe, 2007). Second, in-depth interviews were conducted with informants who were determined purposely. The target informants included actors in the nomination process for candidates for Deputy Mayor of Kupang and several figures from the Manggarai ethnic group (tua panga) who represent several sub-district-based Manggarai ethnic communities in Kupang City. Third, documentary studies. Apart from field documentation produced directly by researchers, this technique is also needed to collect available secondary data. The coverage includes official statistics, newspapers and magazines (offline and online), records of meetings, letters and memos, website pages (Denscombe, 2007), and other relevant sources.

Several data collection methods are priority data collection methods. However, this research is open to the possibility of other data collection techniques that are adapted to the needs and demands of the field.

Data Analysis Techniques. Data analysis for this study uses the explanation-building technique. This technique assumes that the propositions built in the research plan are compared with field findings. If discrepancies occur, the proposition is revised by field findings (Sarantakos, 1998). The central proposition of this study is the strengthening of the dominance of identity politics in influencing the political preferences of the Manggarai ethnic group in Kupang City in the 2012 and 2017 Kupang City Regional Election contestations, which had an impact on the nature of the local power regime during the two periods of power.

The following steps of analysis were used to modify hypotheses and field data. First, data reduction. This stage can be carried out by summarizing, coding, and categorizing. For accuracy purposes and to make things easier for researchers, data coding will utilize the Nvivo quantitative software program. This application helps code and read interview transcripts according to data analysis needs and conclusions (Lowndes et al., 2018). Second, data organization. Data organization is done through data displays, grouped or displayed in text, matrices, graphs, diagrams, and charts. This data organization is intended to see patterns or constancy of data. Third is interpretation, which is the meaning of data that has been previously organized. The aim is to find patterns, regularities, trends, and explanations of the data to conclude (Sarantakos, 1998).

Research Location. The research location is determined by paying attention to several essential things. First, different from previous studies, which always took the locus in areas dominated by certain ethnic and religious majorities, this study takes the locus in areas where the composition of society based on ethnicity and religion does not have significant differences. Second, locations with high levels of diversity interaction and mobilization enable researchers to conduct analyses from various aspects and discover new things that can add to the body of knowledge

related to local and electoral politics. Based on several considerations, this research took a case study of the 2012 and 2017 Kupang City Pilkada.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

General Description of Research Locations. Kupang City is the government center in NTT Province, located in the southeastern part of the Province. Astronomically, the City of Kupang is located between 10° 36' 14" - 10° 39' 58" North Latitude and 123° 32' 23" - 123° 37' 01" East Longitude.

Based on its area, the boundaries of Kupang City are:

East: Central Kupang and Tabenu Districts, Kupang Regency

West: West Kupang and Semaun Strait Districts

North: Kupang Bay

South: West Kupang and Nekamese Districts.

Kupang city has an area of 180.27 km² consisting of 6 sub-districts and 51 sub-districts. These sub-districts are further divided into 424 RW/RK and 1,315 RT. The largest sub-district is Alak Sub-district, with an area of 86.91 km², while the sub-district with the smallest area is Kota Lama Sub-district, 3.22 km². A Mayor leads Kupang City in carrying out government activities. A deputy mayor assists the mayor, elected through a general election every year. Kupang City has a regional apparatus, namely 18 departments. Eight bodies, three offices, and eight sections. Three vertical agencies exist: the National Defense Agency (BPN), the Central Statistics Agency (BPS), and the Ministry of Religion. The Kupang City government area covers six sub-districts. Kupang City consists of 51 sub-districts spread across six sub-districts. These sub-districts are divided into 432 RW/RK and 1,339 RT governments in smaller areas.

Kupang City is a multi-ethnic city consisting of Timorese, Helong, Rote, Sabu, Flores, Alor, Sumba, Lembata, Chinese, a small number of immigrant tribes from Ambon and several other ethnic groups such as Bugis, Javanese, Balinese and Batak. However, despite the diversity of ethnic groups, the residents of Kupang City will call themselves the "Beta people of Kupang." In 2022, the population of Kupang City will be 442,281 people, divided into 223,632 men and 218,649 women. Most of Kupang's population adheres to Christianity, namely 85.11%, of which there are Protestants, as many as 64.04%, and Catholics, as many as 21.07%. Then 14.34% of the population adheres to Islam, 0.51% to Hinduism, and 0.04% to Buddhism. Since changing its status to a Municipality in 1999 through Law No. 2 of 1999, the City of Kupang has held general elections three times, namely in 1999, 2012, and 2017.

Kupang City Election 2017. The election of the Mayor and deputy mayor of Kupang (Pilkada) is regulated in Article 24 Paragraph (5) of Law No. 32 of 2004 concerning Regional Elections. Regional elections continue the political and institutional reform process of government, which has been rolling rapidly since the advent of the Reformation era with the emergence of Law No. 22 of 1999. It was later changed to Law No. 32 of 2004, followed by PP no. 6 of 2005 concerning Election, Ratification, Appointment and Dismissal of Regional Heads and Deputy Regional Heads. Several articles were amended through PP No. 17 of 2005.

The election process for the Mayor and Deputy Mayor of Kupang for 2017 - 2022 was carried out on February 15, 2017. Based on details from the KPU regarding the number of voters, there is a permanent voter list (DPT) of 235,265 voters, a transfer voter list (DPPH) of 426 voters, and a list of voters. Additional permanent (DPTb) voters of 5,408 voters in 660 TPS (Polling Places) are spread across 51 sub-districts.

The election for Mayor and Deputy Mayor of Kupang for the 2017 - 2022 period was followed by two packages of candidate pairs, namely the FirmanMu package (Jefirstson R. Riwu Kore and Hermanus Man) and the Sahabat package (Jonas Salean and Nikolaus Fransiskus). The results of the

election for Mayor and Deputy Mayor of Kupang for the 2017-2022 period can be seen in the following table.

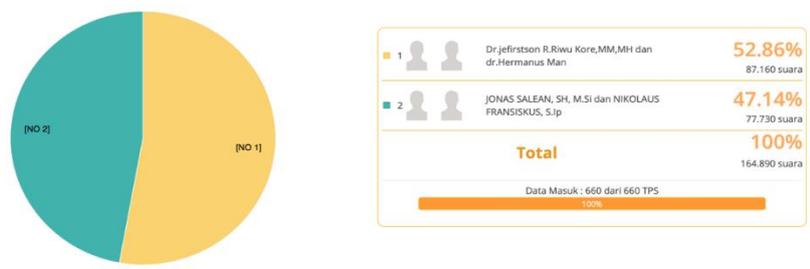


Figure 1. Votes obtained by Candidates for Mayor of Kupang in the 2017 Regional Election

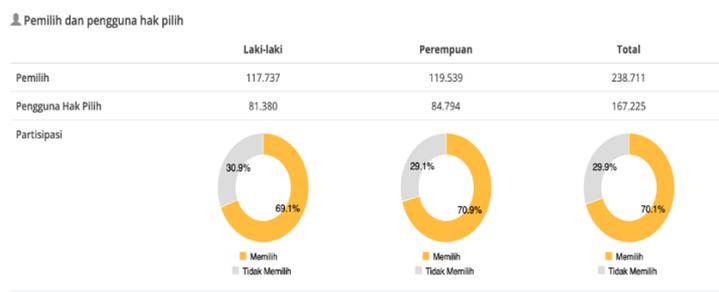


Figure 2. Participation of Kupang City Voters in the 2017 Regional Election

Stages of the Kupang Mayor Election for the 2017 -2022 Period. The implementation of the election of the Mayor and Deputy Mayor is a form of community political preference in terms of being elected, choosing, and controlling the process of selecting the Mayor and Deputy Mayor. In selecting the Mayor and Deputy Mayor of Kupang, the KPU determines the procedures for selecting the Mayor and Deputy Mayor based on PKPU Number 1 of 2017 Article 4 concerning the election stages consisting of the preparation and implementation stages. The election activities for the Mayor and deputy mayor of Kupang for the 2017 - 2022 period were carried out in two stages: preparation and implementation. Referring to Law No. 1 of 2015 concerning Regional Government in Article 5, paragraph 1, the implementation of Regional Head Elections includes preparation and implementation stages.

Preparation Stages. The preparation stages for the Pilkada are regulated in Law No.1 of 2015 Article 5 paragraph 1, namely: 1) Program and budget planning; 2) Preparation of election implementation regulations; 3) Implementation planning, which includes determining the procedures and schedule for the stages of election implementation; 4) Establishment of PPK, PPS and KPPS; 5) Formation of Regency/City, Subdistrict, PPL and TPS Supervisory Committees; 6) Notification and registration of election observers; 7) Submission of a list of potential voters.

Implementation Stages. The implementation stage refers to Law no. 1 of 2015 article 5, paragraph 3, which includes: 1) Registration of Candidates for Governor, Regent/Mayor; 2) Public test; 3) Announcement of registration of Candidates for Governor, Regent/Mayor; 4) Registration of Candidates for Governor, Regent/Mayor; 5) Research the requirements for Candidates for Governor, Regent/Mayor; 6) Determination of Candidates for Governor, Regent/Mayor; 7) Implementation of the campaign; 8) Implementation of voting; 9) Vote counting and recapitulation of vote counting results; 10) Determination of selected candidates.

Profile of Candidates for Mayor and Deputy Mayor of Kupang for the 2017-2022.

A. Your Word Partner

1) Jefirstson R. Riwu Kore. Dr. Jefirstson R. Riwu Kore, MM, MH, was born in Kupang on January 13, 1960, the first of eight children of Drs. A. D. Riwu Kore and Mrs. E. M. Riwu Kore. Dr. Jefirstson R. Riwu Kore, MM, MH, married Mrs. Hilda Manafe, SE. MM was blessed with two children, Firda R. Riwu Kore, and Herison R. Riwu Kore. Jefirstson R. Riwu Kore comes from the Sabu ethnicity.

a. Educational background

- Director of Finance and Supervision, SD Negeri Namosain Kupang in 1972
- Kupang 1 Public Middle School in 1975
- SMPP Negeri 34 Kupang in 1979
- Bachelor (S1) in Accounting at the National Education University (Undiknas) College of Economics, Denpasar - Bali, in 1986
- Masters (S2) in Finance at Pelita Harapan University, Jakarta in 2005 and 2013
- Doctorate (S3) in Economics at August 17, University Surabaya 2010

b. Work experience

- Lecturer at the Denpasar-Bali National Education University in 1987-1992
- Finance Manager at Puri Ratih Hotel, Hotel Industry, Kuta-Bali 1989-1992
- Assistant Comptroller of Nusa Indah Hotel & Bali International Convention Center, 5 Star Hotel and Convention and Exhibition Services Industry (MICE), Nusa Dua Bali in 1992-1993
- Main Director of PT. Putra Nusa Lontar, Jakarta Cement Bag, and Lamination (Fabrication) Industry 2000-Present
- Jakarta Convention and Exhibition Services (MICE) Industry at the Convention Center Convention Hall 1993-2007
- Member of the DPR RI Commission X Democratic Faction for the 2009-2014 period
- Member of the DPR RI Commission X Democratic Faction for the 2014-2016 period

2) Hermanus Man. Dr. Hermanus Man started his career as head of the Roga Community Health Center in Ende, born in Pau-Ruteng Village, Manggarai, on September 3, 1949, the 6th of 12 children of his parents, Mr. Petrus Hanto (deceased) and mother Maria Awuk (deceased). I worked as a doctor in Ende on August 15, 1978, and was married in Jopu-Ende to Mrs. Elisabeth Liez Rengka SST. From his marriage to Mrs. Elisabeth Liez Rengka, he was blessed with four children: Rafael Paulus Helmy Herman Putra, Maria Petra Herly Herman Putri, Maria Gradia Nguraman, and Martinus Gradus Woloman. Hermanus Man is a son from Manggarai.

a. Educational History

- The People's School in Ruteng ended in 1962
- Tubi Junior High School in Ruteng graduated in 1965
- SMAK Syuradikara in Ende Completed in 1968
- UNAIR Faculty of Medicine in Surabaya graduated in 1976

b. Employment history

- Head of the Roga Ende Community Health Center in 1979
- Head of Alor Health Service 1979-1983
- Head of the Ende Health Service/Kankandep Ende 1983-1986/1990
- Head of the Sikka Health Department Office in 1990-1997
- Head of the Kupang Health Department Office in 1997-2000
- Head of the Kupang Health Service 2000-2006
- Deputy Mayor of Kupang for the 2012-2017 period

B. Best Friend Couple

1) Jonas Salean. Jonas Salean, SH., M.Si was born in Oetete, Kupang, on March 12, 1958, to father Jacob Salean (deceased) and mother A. Julianlean-Malesi (deceased). He is the 9th child of 11 children. Jonas Salean married A. Resdyana Ndapamerang, B.Sc on November 6 1986. They were blessed with two children from this marriage, Meridiani Christianti Salean and Adriani Aprilia Salean. Jonas Salean comes from the Rote ethnicity.

a. Educational background

- Elementary School in Bokonusan finished in 1971
- Junior High School in Kupang ended in 1974
- SMPPN 34 in Kupang graduated in 1977
- Faculty of Law at Jember State University graduated in 1984
- Postgraduate in Development Studies at Satya Wacana Christian University, Salatiga, graduated in 2002

b. Employment history

- Head of Administrative Subdivision at the Regional Revenue Service of Dati II Kupang Regency in 1986
- Daily Acting Head of the Dati II Kupang Regency Regional Revenue Service in 1991
- Head of Legal Affairs at the Regional Secretariat of Dati II Kupang Regency in 1991
- Secretary of the Administrative City of Kupang in 1993
- Development Administration Assistant at Dati II Kupang Municipality in 1996
- Head of the Kupang Municipal Regional Revenue Service in 1998
- Head of the Kupang City Regional Revenue Service from 1999 – 2002
- Regional Secretary of Kupang City 2002 – 2007
- Executive Staff at the Kupang City Regional Secretariat in 2007
- Staff of the Regional Education, Training, Research and Development Agency of NTT Province in 2009 – 2010
- Governor's Expert Staff for Economic Affairs 2010 – 2012
- Mayor of Kupang 2012 – 2017

2) Nicholas Francis. Nikolaus Fransiskus, S. IP, was born to his father and mother in Lela on May 6, 1962. Nikolaus Fransiskus is married to Maria Murniman and has one child, Octoviano Rivaldo Frans. He comes from Flores ethnicity.

a. Educational background

- Nita I Catholic Elementary School from 1967 – 1973
- Kimang Buleng Middle School from 1973 – 1976
- SMAK St. Gabriel from 1977 – 1980
- Widya Mandira Kupang Catholic University from 1998 – 2002

b. Employment history

- Coordinator for Agriculture and Environment at the Prosperous Community Foundation (Yasmara) Kupang in 1991
- Expert Staff for Agriculture at the Kupang Prosperous Community Foundation (Yasmara) in 1999
- Member of the Kupang City DPRD in 1998 – 2014
- Chairman of the Commission at the Kupang City DPRD in 2009 – 2014

Identity Politics in the Kupang City Regional Election. The selection of the Firmammu package in the 2017 Kupang City Regional Election was inseparable from the strengthening issue of identity politics. Research findings in the field prove that Kupang City voters are generally still

classified as voters with a sociological character because the majority of respondents tend to choose candidates for Mayor-Deputy Mayor based on sociological reasons, namely because of similarities in region, ethnicity, family, and religion, as well as similarities in work/social status with the candidates. A survey conducted by Tokan (2019) on the two packages in the name of Yonas Salean/Niko Frans and the package in the name of Jefri Riwu Kore/Herman Man found that each candidate had a voter support base with almost the same sociological characteristics.

Yonas Salean and Jefri Riwu Kore, as mayoral candidates, have the same religious background, Protestantism, but they are of different ethnicities. Likewise, the two candidates for Deputy Mayor are both Catholics and come from Flores Island but only have different districts of origin. Based on the religious background and place of origin of each candidate, this has resulted in the voter base being split in two with the strength of support almost equal. It has been confirmed from the results of field data, where the package of candidates for Mayor-Deputy Mayor in the name of Yonas Salean-Niko Frans was chosen for sociological reasons, amounting to 156 respondents (31%) out of a total of 510 respondents, namely 73 respondents (14.50 %) chose the package because of similarities in religion, 71 respondents (14%) chose the package because of similarities in region, ethnicity/family, while 17 respondents (3.50%) chose the package because of similarities in social/occupational status.

Likewise, the results of the mayor-deputy mayor candidate package in the name of Jefri Riwu Kore-Herman Man were similar, where 164 respondents (32.50%) out of 510 chose for sociological reasons. Namely, 68 respondents (13, 50%) chose the package because of similarities in religion, and 70 respondents (14%) chose the package because of similarities in region, ethnicity/family. In comparison, 21 respondents (4%) chose the package because of social/occupational status similarities.

A critical aspect of the sociological character that voters make political choices regarding the desired candidate package is because of the similarity of religion. Kupang City has a population of 347,523 people. The majority are Protestant Christians and Catholics, which can be broken down as follows: Protestant Christian population: 255,661 people (73.57%), Catholics: 79,935 people (23.00%), Muslims: 4,817 people (1.39%), Hindu: 7,041 people (2.03%), Buddhism: 62 people (0.02%) and other religions seven people (0.002%).

The dominance of the population of Kupang City based on Protestant and Catholic religions has opened up significant opportunities for prospective leaders, success teams, and volunteers to politicize religion through church leaders by using church pulpits and various other religious events to influence the people. Congregations and Christians provide voting support to prospective leaders who share their religion on voting day. Phenomena like this show that religion is still an effective political tool for power-hungry politicians competing in regional elections. It can at least give rise to polarization between religious adherents, which can trigger conflict between groups and have implications for inequality in public service patterns if there are no post-election reconciliation steps.

The results of this survey have at least confirmed the variations in the answers of 510 respondents in 51 sub-districts spread across six sub-districts in Kupang City. The variation in respondents' answers can be seen from the respondents' reasons for choosing the Kupang City Mayor/Wawalkot Candidate package in the name Yonas Salean-Niko Frans (Friend). However, the strong tendency is towards religious similarities at 13.50%. Meanwhile, the reasons respondents chose the FirmanMu package were similar to the Sahabat package, namely 14.50%. Thus, the difference in the number of respondents who voted for reasons of similar religion with candidates from the Sahabat package was 13.50% and FirmanMu: 14.50% (see graphs 3 and 4). Thus, the difference between the Sahabat and FirmanMu packages is only a 1% difference in support figures

from the religious aspect and a 1.50% difference in the overall figures from the sociological aspect. Even though the difference in numbers is minimal, if these numbers represent the difference in the amount of support from the people of Kupang City regarding the religious aspect, then this number is quite significant in giving the FirmanMu candidate victory. It means that the residents of Kupang City support the mayor-deputy mayor candidate in the name of the FirmanMu tagline for reasons of similar religion with the candidate. It means that religious figures from Protestant and Catholic church congregations in Kupang City will primarily support the candidate in the name of the FirmanMu tagline. It can also be explained using the patron-client explanation (Pamungkas, 2009), namely that voting behavior depends on how the elite role models (patrons) behave. In this context, voter behavior towards a particular candidate greatly influences what patrons want or refer. Other data related to sociological aspects are regional, ethnic/ethnic/family similarities. Data related to this also shows almost the same tendency that most respondents tend to vote because apart from religious similarities, they also have similar regional, ethnic/ethnic, or family reasons. Before reviewing research findings related to aspects of regional and ethnic/ethnic similarities, at least first show the characteristics of the respondents. Of the 510 respondents, they can be broken down according to region, ethnicity/tribe, including: (a) Flores: 18%, (b) Alor: 6%, (c) Timor: 26%, (d) Rote: 22%, (e) Shabu: 18%, (f) Sumba: 4%, (g) Others: 6%. Methodologically, the entire data represents the ethnic/ethnic diversity of the residents of Kupang City.

Research findings prove that most respondents chose the mayor-deputy mayor candidate with the tagline Friends (Yonas Salean-Niko Frans) and the mayor-deputy mayor candidate with the tagline FirmanMu. Apart from religious reasons, it is also due to regional, ethnic/family similarities, with the same number being 14%. This data is interesting because regional, ethnic/family aspects dominantly support no candidate. After all, these two pairs of candidates have an equally solid support base.

Thus, each voter, apart from voting for reasons of shared religion, also tends to choose candidates for reasons of originating from the same area and is then strengthened and expanded by tribal ties and marriages as well as inter-ethnic friendships of each supporter or voter. As a result, the quite diverse ethnic/ethnic diversity was then polarized and split into two poles of potential leaders who faced each other in the democratic party (pilkada) this time.

A critical aspect of the sociological approach is the similarity of work or social status. The perspective of this approach is that voters also tend to choose candidates because they are motivated by the similarity of work or social status with the candidate. Based on the data presented below shows that the characteristics of respondents are pretty varied in terms of work, including Workers: 17%, Fishermen: 7%, Scavenger: 6%, Small Traders: 23%, Teachers/Lecturers: 20%, ASN/PNS: 22%, and retirees at 5%. The data presented by respondents according to the above occupations generally represents all levels of society in Kupang City. Therefore, the results of respondents' choices regarding job similarity/social status aspects remain essential to analyzing voting behavior. The processed data shows that the candidates with the tagline Friends were chosen for similarity in work/social status by 3.50% and FirmanMu by 4%. The difference in figures for this aspect is relatively tiny. However, this data is quite interesting because most respondents from ASN/PNS, teachers/lecturers, and small traders are likelier to choose FirmanMU candidates. Even though the difference in numbers is only 0.5%, it is still vital and taken into account because it increases the chances of winning for candidates in the name of FirmanMu's tagline.

Based on the existing data, two candidate packages with the tagline Friends and FirmanMu have the strength, potential, and opportunity to win the Kupang City regional elections competition. It means that a coalition of political parties, success teams, and volunteers who have a solid and

militant social support base and are supported by the correct issues, strategies, and momentum in six sub-districts in 51 sub-districts of Kupang City will almost certainly win the competition to win the position of Mayor-Deputy Mayor of Kupang for the 2017/2022 period.

Meanwhile, from a psychological approach, an interesting finding from this survey is that quite a lot of respondents chose the package of candidates for Mayor and deputy mayor of Kupang City due to psychological factors; namely, voters made their political choices because they were interested in politics, had feelings of closeness to a particular party (party identity).), have enough information to make a choice, feel that their voice is meaningful, and believe their choice can improve the situation (political efficacy).

Indicators of psychological factors consist of (a) a person's connection/closeness to a political party or candidate; (b) a person's orientation towards political issues touches on the interests expressed by the candidate, such as poverty/economic empowerment, health, education, electricity, clean water and the agenda for eradicating KKN; (c) a person's orientation towards the qualities of the candidate who are believed to be able to improve the situation. The survey findings revealed that the behavior of choosing candidates for Mayor-Deputy Mayor in the name of the Friends tagline for psychological reasons was only 12% with the following description: (1) reasons for being happy with the candidate's leadership at 4%; (2) the reason why the vision, mission, and programs touch community needs by 4%; (3) the reason the candidate can fulfill the campaign promise of 2.50%; (4) the reason for being sure that the package will win 1.50%.

Meanwhile, only 9% of respondents chose the Mayor-Deputy Mayor candidate in the name of FirmanMu's tagline for psychological reasons, consisting of (1) reasons for being happy with the candidate's leadership, 1.50%; (2) the reason why its vision, mission and programs touch the needs of the community by 3%; (3) reasons why the candidate can fulfill the campaign promise of 2%; (4) reasons because they were confident that the package would win 2.50%. The number of respondents who voted for the candidate for Mayor-Deputy Mayor of Kupang in the name of FirmanMu for psychological reasons was 9%, much smaller than voters from the Sahabat package at 12%. It means the number of voters from the Friends package is much more rational than those who chose the FirmanMu package. If the percentage figures for these two packages are accumulated based on psychological reasons, then only 21% of Kupang City voters chose the leader candidate because of psychological considerations.

Manggarai Ethnic Political Behavior in the Kupang City Regional Election. The presence of Herman Man as a figure and elder of the Manggarai people in Kupang City in the Kupang City Regional Election contestation for two consecutive periods, namely 2012 and 2017, cannot be separated from the presence of the Manggarai ethnic group in Kupang City. Interestingly, during these two periods, Herman Man, who held the position of Deputy Mayor, always succeeded in securing his position as a representative in the regional elections during these two periods. The first period accompanied Yonas Salean, and the second accompanied Jefri Riwu Kore. Therefore, it is essential to see the extent of influence of the Manggarai ethnic presence in Kupang City on the political constellation and dynamics of the City of Kupang in this year's Kupang City Regional Election contestation. The following section will describe the specific political behavior of the Manggarai ethnic group in this year's Kupang City Regional Election contest.

Manggarai Ethnicity in Kupang City. Sociologically, Kupang City is a heterogeneous area. Various identities inhabit this region and interact with each other to maintain existence. The ethnic identity in Kupang City is characterized by the presence of several ethnic groups, namely Timorese, Helong, Rote, Sabu, Flores, Alor, Sumba, Lembata, Chinese, a small number of immigrant tribes from Ambon, and several other ethnic groups such as Bugis, Javanese, Balinese, and Batak. The most

dominant ethnicities are the Timorese, Rote, and Sabu, which are topographically close to Kupang City. Meanwhile, the Flores ethnic group generally consists of several tribes on Flores Island, such as Manggarai, Ngada, Nagekeo, Lio, Sikka, and East Flores.

The presence of the Manggarai ethnic group in Kupang City, compared to other Flores ethnic groups, is quite significant because it consists of three regencies, namely West Manggarai Regency, Manggarai Regency, and East Manggarai Regency. Even though the number of ethnic Manggarai people in Kupang City has not yet been recorded, the distribution of Manggarai people in Kupang City, which is found in almost all sub-districts in Kupang City, shows the high number of Manggarai people in Kupang City. The election of the Deputy Mayor of Kupang and two legislative members from the Manggarai ethnic group for two consecutive terms also indicates the number and influence of the Manggarai ethnic group in Kupang City.

Sociologically, the existence of the Manggarai ethnic group in Kupang City is bound by a family organization called IKMR (Greater et al. Association). This forum accommodates all Manggarai people in Kupang City from the west end (West Manggarai) to the east end (East Manggarai). IKMR is coordinated by one of the Manggarai elders, elected periodically every three years. Even though they already have a unifying forum for IKMR, the Manggarai people in Kupang City also have a forum for kinship ties, which are formed based on the similarities of the tribe/sub-district/village in Manggarai, which is usually referred to as Panga in the Manggarai language. Each Panga is coordinated by one of the older members who is considered to have influence, known as Tu'a Panga. Usually, kinship, kinship, and familiarity are most felt in this more limited bond (Panga). There are currently 12 Pangas in Kupang City. One Panga usually consists of 40-50 families. The following are the results of an interview with a Manggarai figure in Kupang City:

The Manggarai community in Kupang City is under one organization called IKMR (Greater Manggarai Family Association), which is chaired by a person considered to have the capacity. This organization unites all Manggarai communities from West Manggarai to East Manggarai. Even though administratively, the Manggarai region has been divided into three districts, socio-culturally, Manggarai is still one because the same cultural customs and language bind it. In Kupang City, every sub-district in Manggarai has its association to strengthen internal relationships. Each bond has a leader called Tu'a panga. These Tu'a pangas then coordinate with each other on matters relating to the togetherness of the Manggarai people as a whole. However, at a particular time, all of them joined IKMR.

The interview excerpt shows that the presence of the Manggarai ethnic group in Kupang City has become socio-culturally institutionalized. In its development, this institution is not only a forum for strengthening ties but also for mediating various issues and accommodating various interests relating to the livelihood of the Manggarai people in Kupang City.

Manggarai Ethnicity in the 2017 Kupang City Regional Election Contestation. The political contestation in Kupang City cannot be separated from the presence of the Manggarai ethnic group in Kupang City. It became even more pronounced when Dr. Herman Man, who comes from the Manggarai ethnic group, was proposed as a candidate for Deputy Mayor of Kupang to accompany Yonas Salean in the 2012 Kupang City Regional Election. At the same time, several DPRD member candidates from Manggarai (Golkar Party and Nasdem Party) were also successfully elected as legislative members in the City. Kupang. The election of the candidates paired Yonas Salean and Herman Man as Mayor and deputy mayor of Kupang at that time, which can be said to be an era of revival of the Manggarai ethnic group in Kupang City. This couple's choice must be kept from the background of the Deputy Mayor (Dr. Herman Man) as a Manggaraian who has lived in Kupang City for a long time. The following interview quotes explain this:

Dr. Herman Man's nomination as Kupang's deputy mayor for the first period must be kept from his status as a Manggaraian. Dr. Herman Man's bureaucratic background makes him a suitable leader in Kupang City, in addition to his prominence within the Manggarai ethnic group. However, in principle, the choice of Yonas Salean and Dr. Herman Man cannot be separated from the support of the Manggarai Community in the City of Kupang."

A similar view was also expressed by one of the Yonas Salean Success team at that time:

"We chose Dr. Herman Man as Deputy Mayor's partner and accompanied Yonas Salean because we know very well what he is like in the eyes of the Manggarai people. So we do not just choose. He is considered an elder and figure among the Manggarai community. We also believe that the Manggarai ethnic group in Kupang City has quite solid ties. Even though the numbers were insignificant then, the solidity within them seemed quite strong. Moreover, when one of them runs for number two in Kupang City, the Manggarai people's votes will focus on the figure of Dr. Herman Man."

Apart from his ethnic background, the election of Herman Man as a candidate for Deputy Mayor to accompany Yonas Salean at that time was also strengthened by the character of Dr. Herman Man, an elder respected by the Manggarai people in Kupang City. The work of internal solidity of the Manggarai ethnic group in Kupang City adds to the confidence of the mayoral candidate's success team to propose Dr. Herman Man as a candidate for Deputy Mayor, as stated by one of the success team of Yonas Salean and Herman Man at that time:

"In ethnic heterogeneity such as Kupang City, choosing the right companion candidate is difficult. Each ethnic group wants one to be chosen as number one or two. Yonas Salean's character is quite popular among the residents of Kupang City. Just find the right companion. The emergence of the figure of Dr. Herman Man is certainly our consideration in choosing the right partner to accompany Yonas Salean. The consideration at that time was that the Manggarai ethnic group was quite solid. Dr. Herman Man himself was the only Manggarai figure accepted by the Manggarai community and the Flores ethnic group in general. "This consideration then became why he was invited to accompany candidate Yonas Salean."

Meanwhile, in the eyes of the Manggarai community in Kupang City, Herman Man is a capable figure. As a bureaucratic retiree who once held an echelon II position, Dr. Herman Man is considered capable of leading the Kupang city bureaucracy. In addition, his experience as head of the Health Service in several districts in NTT has made him a respected figure in the Manggarai community in Kupang City. Apart from that, among the Manggarai people themselves, the figure of Herman Man is a senior figure who is a role model for the Manggarai people in Kupang City, as stated by one Tu'a Panga in the following interview excerpt:

"For us Manggarai people, Dr. Herman Man is a figure who is known to have the capacity to enter the world of politics because he has a bureaucratic background. When he intended to run for deputy mayor for the first time, we Manggarai people felt it was an honor. Moreover, we all enthusiastically support his intentions. At first, we had low hopes of winning, but then all the Manggarai community figures in Kupang City welcomed us and were enthusiastic, so we worked extra hard to win. Thank God he was eventually selected. I have corrected any spelling, grammar, and punctuation errors."

The victory of the mayoral candidate, accompanied by Dr. Herman as a candidate for Deputy Mayor for two consecutive terms, was inseparable from the support of the well-organized Manggarai Community of Kupang City. The IKMR forum, which oversees the subordinate forum (Panga), is an effective medium for gathering support for the figure of Herman Man. The intensity of communication built during the preparation period until the implementation of the regional elections mediated by the Tu'a Panga determined the solidity of the Manggarai Community of Kupang City to support Herman Man as a candidate for Deputy Mayor of Kupang for two periods, as can be seen from the following excerpt from an interview with one of the Tu'a Panga:

We must admit that Dr. Herman Man's election as Kupang's deputy mayor for two terms was inseparable from the support of all Manggarai people in Kupang City. Why do I say that? We, who are in the position of Tu'a Pangaa from several small groups of Manggarai people associations in Kupang City, have coordinated with each other to support him. We show this support by ensuring that our people continue to support him. Moreover, he is active in every celebration of the Manggarai people in Kupang City. So, there is no reason for us not to support it. Coincidentally, of all the Manggarai people present, he was the only one who ran for office. So, it is likely that all Manggarai people will support him.

The solidarity and unity of the Manggarai ethnic group in Kupang City in supporting candidate pairs from the same ethnic background cannot be separated from the Manggarai cultural context, which is still deeply rooted in Manggarai people living in overseas areas. The Manggarai people who were overseas built their civilization on the motto of togetherness and kinship practiced in their area of origin. The principle of togetherness and kinship binds ties of friendship, which continue to be built through bonding platforms both on a small scale (Panga) and a broader scale (IKMR). The same language (Manggarai language) and culture symbolize unifying the Manggarai people even though they are in overseas areas. In various matters, including political matters, these basic principles continue to be adhered to so that wherever they are, the Manggarai people are known as a relatively united and solid ethnic group. The following excerpt from an interview with the chairman of IKMR explains this:

From my experience as chairman of the IKMR, I admit that it is easy to unite the Manggarai people because they are bound by the same language, namely the Manggarai language. Sometimes, there are indeed disputes, but in the end, they can be resolved because, for us Manggarai people, there is a term, muku ca puu neka woleng curup, teu ca ambo neka woleng bantang, which means that if there is a problem, everything can be resolved amicably. Moreover, we are all people living overseas. So, we must maintain solidarity and brotherhood. Even though we come from different areas and do not even have family ties, in the Rantau area, we are all the same as one big family. Solidarity and brotherhood must continue to be prioritized for the common good. This spirituality continues to be instilled in the minds of every Manggarai person in Kupang City.

Moreover, I am sure in other areas too. Many Manggarai people are smart and quite vocal. However, there is no harm as long as it can contribute to the common good. Just do not create division.

The interview excerpt above emphasizes sociocultural aspects as the irreplaceable internal strength base of the Manggarai ethnic group in Kupang City. At this level, it can be concluded that the influence of the Manggarai ethnic group in winning the Mayor candidate pair, accompanied by the Deputy Mayor candidate pair from the Manggarai ethnic group, was quite strong. Two things that are the strength of the Manggarai ethnic group in the context of the Kupang City Pilkada contestation are internal solidity through a common bond and the principle of kinship, which has been ingrained in Manggarai traditional and cultural traditions and has become a guide for all Manggarai people in building their communities wherever they are.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and results of the analysis in the previous section, several conclusions and answers to this research question can be drawn, namely:

First, the presence of the Manggarai ethnic group in Kupang City influenced the victory of the candidate pair for Mayor and deputy mayor for two consecutive periods, namely the 2012-2017 and 2017-2022 periods. Even though the number of Manggarai ethnic groups is not the largest ethnic group in the City of Kupang, the victory of the candidate pair for Mayor and Deputy Mayor during these two periods cannot be separated from the presence of the figure of Dr. Herman Man. The fact

that strengthens this conclusion is the victory of the Firmanmu package pair (Jefri et al. Man) in the 2017 Pilkada, defeating the pair Yonas Salean and Nikolaus Frans. Yonas Salean was elected Mayor in the previous period, accompanied by Dr. Herman Man. It means that the existence of Dr. Herman Man was the determining factor in the victory of the candidate pair for Mayor and Deputy Mayor of Kupang for two consecutive periods.

Second, the victory of the candidate pair for Mayor and Deputy Mayor for two consecutive periods cannot be separated from the intensity and solidity of support from the Manggarai ethnic group in Kupang City for the candidate pair who took representatives from the Manggarai ethnic group. When compared with the results of Frans B. Tokan's (2019) survey regarding voter behavior in the 2017 Kupang City Pilkada, which emphasized the presence of identity politics as the basis of voters' political preferences in Kupang City in 2017, it can be confirmed that the Manggarai ethnic political behavior in the Kupang City Pilkada in 2017 2017 is also based on shared identities, especially ethnic identities. It means that the Manggarai people in Kupang City chose a pair of candidates for Mayor and Deputy Mayor who have the same ethnic background, which is represented by the presence of Dr. Herman Man as a candidate for Deputy Mayor of Kupang who comes from the Manggarai ethnicity.

Third, support for the candidate pair for Mayor of Kupang, who is collaborating with the candidate pair for Deputy Mayor from the Manggarai ethnic group, is further strengthened by the presence of a unifying forum, namely Panga and IKMR as the basis for the Manggarai people's association in Kupang City. The presence of this non-formal institution has become an effective consolidation medium in gathering support and strengthening the internal solidity of the Manggarai ethnic group in Kupang City to support candidates from their community. The principles of togetherness and kinship that have been deeply rooted in the minds of every Manggaraian are Manggarai's cultural heritage that strengthens this community entity from time to time. This principle was also implemented in the Kupang City Regional Election contestation moment.

Suggestion. Identity politics is an anomaly in a democratic system. The emergence of identity politics in democracy shows the low level of public understanding of the essence of democracy, which places rationality as the basis of political preferences. However, in reality, identity politics always fills the democratic space, especially at the local level. It shows that the reality of regional development and bureaucratic governance is still built on a solid dichotomy of primordialism. At least the political contestation in Kupang City, which is the focus and locus of this research, explains this. People's political awareness is no longer built on the principles of common interests but has been contaminated by ethnic and religious fanaticism. The issue of primordialism has become the basis for political calculations facing the regional election contestation. This research does not touch on democratic values in the context of the Kupang City Pilkada. However, the results of this research at least recommend critical notes to strengthen democratic values, especially in the future Kupang City Regional Election contestation.

Identity politics is a bias in the development and bureaucratic governance process that is unfair in the context of heterogeneous social life in society. Therefore, the government is expected to drive change, especially in building a more democratic understanding of society. Politics and power must be interpreted as an effort to create shared prosperity. The principles of justice in running government are keywords that must be adhered to firmly by the regime in power.

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