



# Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs

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OKAMOTO, Masaaki, and HONNA Jun (2014), Introduction: "Local" Politics in Jakarta: Anomaly from Indonesia's Local Politics?, in: *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs*, 33, 1, 3–6.

URN: <http://nbn-resolving.org/urn/resolver.pl?urn:nbn:de:gbv:18-4-7347>

ISSN: 1868-4882 (online), ISSN: 1868-1034 (print)

The online version of this article can be found at:

[www.CurrentSoutheastAsianAffairs.org](http://www.CurrentSoutheastAsianAffairs.org)

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Published by

GIGA German Institute of Global and Area Studies, Institute of Asian Studies and Hamburg University Press.

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## Introduction

# “Local” Politics in Jakarta: Anomaly from Indonesia’s Local Politics?

OKAMOTO Masaaki and HONNA Jun

Urbanisation is progressing rapidly in Southeast Asia, with almost half of the region’s total population residing in urban areas by 2025 (Yap 2012: 11). With the possible exception of Myanmar, national capitals have been in the spotlight as the centre of many aspects of life in Southeast Asian countries. One typical example is the Indonesian capital of Jakarta, which has more than ten million people and controls 60 per cent of Indonesia’s total money circulation. Ever since the Dutch colonial period, Jakarta has been the centre of economy, politics, media and culture in Indonesia, and the city has been the subject of numerous scholarly works.<sup>1</sup>

Jakarta has a wide range of political infrastructures, including the presidential office, government ministries, national assembly and political party headquarters. Thus, while it is easy to find studies that analyse politics in Jakarta, these focus more on the “national” politics of the city. Jakarta has its governor, local bureaucracy and local MPs, and elections to choose them, but local politics per se has rarely been well researched.<sup>2</sup> There seem to be several reasons for this lack of academic interest on Jakarta’s “local” politics. First, it has been alleged that local politics independent of national politics does not exist in Jakarta. The boundary between national and Jakarta politics is blurred and both are regarded as being too closely related. This creates difficulties in separating out local politics.

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1 The most comprehensive bibliography on the articles and books on Jakarta was edited and published by Ebing and Youetta de Jager from KITLV (2001). The bibliography covers the period from 1,600 to 2,000 and contains over 5,000 titles classified into 42 broad subject categories.

2 The only articles I could find on Jakarta’s elections were a brief article during the New Order (Cribb 1984) and one report on the Jakarta gubernatorial election in 2006 (Eriyanto 2006). There are some socio-political studies on a mass ethnic-based social organization, the Betawi Brotherhood Forum (Forum Betawi Rumpug, FRB) by Untung (2006) and Wilson (2006).

Second, Jakarta's politics is very different from that of other Indonesian areas. Since the democratisation and decentralisation process started in Indonesia, local politics has attracted academic interests of Indonesianists, and there has been a dramatic increase in research on politics at local levels (for example, Aspinall and Fealy 2003; Erb and Priyambudi 2009; Nordholt and van Klinken 2009; Hadiz 2010). However, Jakartan politics has never become a part of this, because Jakarta is the national capital of Indonesia and local politics, such as the gubernatorial election, have been considered an anomaly in the nation's local politics. This is partly because Jakarta is too metropolitan and has the highest percentage of upper and middle class people in the country. The political behaviour and voting patterns of these groups are decisive in Jakarta and are not the same as those in other parts of Indonesia.

Third, the politics of Jakarta is openly visible to everyone. On a daily basis, all the major national media outlets scrutinise and cover the activities of Jakarta's governor, vice-governor and provincial parliament. Especially, the sudden rise of Joko Widodo (Jokowi) and Basuki Purnama (Ahok) as candidates for governor and vice-governor in 2012 was such a phenomenon that every major newspaper covered their election campaign on a daily basis and continued to cover them after the election. The daily exposure to the media could give the impression that everyone knows how politics functions in Jakarta, thereby avoiding the need for a long article or a book on the topic. Scholars in Indonesia may be satisfied with nothing more than writing short essays on Jakarta politics in newspapers and weekly journals for daily consumption.

This special issue attempts to go beyond short essays and conduct a deeper analysis of Jakarta's local politics. Some of the contributions show the peculiarities of Jakartan politics, while others identify similarities with other local politics in Indonesia. Each paper extracts some quintessential factors with which to understand local politics in Jakarta, such as the unique local government institution (Okamoto), the (dis)continuing significance of horizontal social cleavages of religion and ethnicity (Wahyu and Miichi), the rise of populism (Hamid) and the political volunteerism (Suaedy). The phenomenal rise and leadership of Jokowi and Ahok is so important to understand the contemporary Jakarta local politics that all of the papers mainly refer to it from different perspectives.

After Jokowi assumed the governorship, he tried to implement some government reforms and new programmes, such as the open recruitment for sub-district head posts and the free education and health service. These reform-oriented initiatives made him even more popular.

Just one and a half years after the election, he was nominated as a candidate for the presidential election in July 2014 and is now the likely winner according to many surveys. This rapid rise was possible because he is the governor of national capital. Clearly, Jakarta is not only the centre of national politics but it is becoming also the exemplary centre of local politics in Indonesia.

These studies were supported by the JSPS Grant-In-Aid for Scientific Research (B) “New Development of Southeast Asian Local Politics in the Era of Globalization: National Capital, Energy and Border” (principal investigator: Okamoto Masaaki) and the JSPS Asian Core Programme “Southeast Asian Model for Co-existence in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century” (principal investigator: Hayami Yoko).

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**Keywords:** Indonesia, Jakarta, local politics, gubernatorial election

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