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Wage Standards for *Abdi Dalem* of Kotagede Royal Cemetery and Cultural Meaning of Voluntarism and Dedication

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Abstract

Yogyakarta's special status was recognized long before Indonesia's independence as a cultural heritage site. One of the privileges of Yogyakarta is that it maintains its cultural legitimacy amidst increasingly modern developments. This paper aims to discuss whether (or not) the practice of waging for abdi dalem at the Kotagede Royal Cemetery is compatible with Indonesian Employment Law. It applies empirical legal research, which collects primary and secondary data sources. It suggests that abdi dalem, who works at the Kotagede Royal Cemetery, receives kekucah (wages) below the minimum standard according to regional regulations. However, the serat kekancingan, a decree issued by the Yogyakarta Sultanate that explains the status of abdi dalem, must not be interpreted as conflicting with Indonesian employment law, particularly regulations determining the minimum wages. This research also found that abdi dalem tends not to protest this status quo because they uphold a live philosophy of Nrimo ing pandum. Therefore, abdi dalem accepts all tasks assigned sincerely by the Sultan without expecting anything in return. They firmly believe that serving at the Kotagede Royal Cemetery will bring abundant blessings and peace from God through the Sultan.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Special Region of Yogyakarta is one of the provinces in Indonesia that obtained special autonomy status.¹ The privileged status of this province is granted by the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia (Indonesian Constitution), which stipulates that the State recognizes and respects units of regional authorities that are special and distinct, which shall be regulated by law. Law No. 13 of 2012 concerning the privileges of the Special Region of Yogyakarta (Law on Special Region of Yogyakarta) was then established to implement the Indonesian Constitution.² This law

¹ Dessy Isfianadewi, Unggul Priyadi, and Lak lak Nazhat El Hasanah, "Stakeholders of Yogyakarta Special Region and the Way They Manage Privilege Fund" in *Sustainable Finance, Digitalization and the Role of Technology*, ed. Bahaaeddin Ahmed Alareeni and Allam Hamdan, A. ICBT 2021. Lecture Notes in Networks and Systems, vol 487. (Cham: Springer, 2023), 185.

² Ariyanti Luhur Tri Setyarini, Benedictus Hestu Cipto Handoyo, and Vicki Dwi

Fithriatus Shalihah

determines that the Special Region of Yogyakarta, as an autonomous region, is entitled to establish self-regional regulations in the affairs of procedures for filling the positions, status, duties, and authority of the Governor and Deputy Governor; regional government institutions of the Special Region of Yogyakarta; culture; land; and spatial planning.³ The magnificent contribution of *Kesultanan Ngayogyakarta Hadiningrat* (Ngayogyakara Hadiningrat Sultanate, hereinafter Yogyakarta Sultanate) before and after the independence of Indonesia that consistently supported the existence of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia was the main reason why the privileges were granted by the lawmakers.⁴ The privileges have institutionalized the roles and responsibilities of the Sultanate and Duchy in maintaining and preserving the culture of Yogyakarta, which is the nation's cultural heritage.⁵

Yogyakarta Sultanate is an Islamic Kingdom that was established as the result of the succession-related-internal war of the Islamic Mataram Sultanate (1746-1755). The *Giyanti* Peace Agreement resolved the armed conflict that stipulated the division of the sultanate into Yogyakarta Sultanate and *Kasunanan Surakarta Hadiningrat* (Surakarta Sultanate).⁶ Raden Mas Sujana (Pangeran Mangkubumi), a prince of Mataram Sultanate, was then appointed as the First Sultan of Yogyakarta Sultanate with the title Sri Sultan Hamengku Buwono I, reigned from 1755-1792.⁷

Before the establishment of the Republic of Indonesia, the Yogyakarta Sultanate was a royal territory along with its own sovereignty. After the Republic of Indonesia gained independence in 1945, the sultanate was recognized as a Special Region.⁸ The current Indonesian legal system recognizes the current Sultan, Sultan Hamengkubuwono X, as both the

Purnomo, "Legal Politics Legislative Law Number 13 of 2012 Concerning Privileges of the Special Region of Yogyakarta," *International Journal of Scientific Multidisciplinary Research* 1, no.5 (2023): 447. See also Anger Budiadji, Hari Purwadi, and Widodo Tresno Novianto, "The Kasultanan and Kadipaten Land (SG/PAG) After the YSL Enactment: Strengthening of The Patrimonial Culture and Counter Agrarian Reform," *Journal of Social Research* 2, no.9: 3169.

³ See Law No. 13 of 2012 concerning the Privileges of the Special Region of Yogyakarta (Law 13/2012), Art. 7(2)(c); and Gratianus Prikasetya Putra, Sulistyowati Irianto and E. Fernando M. Manullang, "Legal Pluralism in the Special Regency Province of Yogyakarta, Indonesia," *International Journal of Asia-Pacific Studies* 19, no.1 (2023): 3.

⁴ Decision of the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Indonesia No. 42/PUU-XIV/2016, 73.

⁵ Isfianadewi, Priyadi, and Hasanah, op.cit., 187.

⁶ Ilmiawati Safitri, "Keraton Yogyakarta Masa Lampau dan Masa Kini: Dinamika Suksesi Raja-Raja Jawa dan Politik Wacana "Raja Perempuan," *Indonesian Historical Studies* 3, no. 1 (2019): 45.

⁷ Els Bogaerts, "The Installation of Prince Mangkubumi; Performing Javanese History," *Wacana, Journal of the Humanities of Indonesia* 17, no. 3 (2016): 474. See also Ghilman Assilmi, "The Concept of the Devarāja in Leadership at the Royal Palace of Yogyakarta, *International Review of Humanities Studies* 9, no. 1 (2024): 237-238.

⁸ Putra, Irianto, and Manullang, op.cit., 3-4.

Sultan of the Yogyakarta Sultanate and the Governor of Yogyakarta in administering the Special Region of Yogyakarta Province as part of the Republic of Indonesia. This dual function reflects the particularity of the province. According to the Law on Special Region of Yogyakarta, Sultan Hamengkubuwono of the Yogyakarta Sultanate is the one and only person who is entitled to be a Governor; and *Adipati* Paku Alam of the *Kadipaten Pakualaman* is also the one and only person who is entitled to be a Deputy Governor.⁹ This means that their cultural status as the leaders automatically appointed them as the highest rank officers in the Special Region of Yogyakarta Province. This automatic appointment does not apply to other provinces in Indonesia because the people in their provinces elect the Governors and Vice Governors through democratic regional elections.

For centuries, the Sultan was responsible for cultural sites related to the Yogyakarta Sultanate including two magnificent tomb complexes dedicated to the Sultans (Kings) and their royal families namely Pasaréan Dalêm Para Nata Astana Pajimatan Himagiri (hereinafter Imogiri Royal Cemetery), located in Bantul Regency and *Pasarean Hastana Kitha Ageng* of Mataram Sultanate located in Kotagede (hereinafter, Kotagede Royal Cemetery) located in the city of Yogyakarta. Both tombs remained jointly glorified and managed by the Yogyakarta Sultanate and The Surakarta Sultanate.¹⁰

The Kotagede Royal Cemetery is one of the heritage sites in Yogyakarta that are situated in a unique architectural landscape. ¹¹ The royal cemetery was built by Panembahan Senopati (Danang Sutawijaya), the first Sultan of the Islamic Mataram Kingdom, starting in 1589 and completed in 1606. It comprises 627 tombs, three of which are the tomb of Panembahan Senopati; the tomb of Panembahan Hanyakrawati (Mas Jolang), the second King of Islamic Mataram, and the tomb of Sultan Hamengku Buwono II. Besides, there are also tombs of famous Java leaders, namely Ki Ageng Pemanahan (Panembahan Senopati's father) and Sultan Hadiwijaya (Joko

⁹ See Law 13/2012, Art.18 (1) (c); Muhamad Abdullah Sidiq, "Special Autonomy of Yogyakarta in the Context of Local Autonomy Law," *Law Research Review Quarterly* 7, no.4 (2021): 520-521; Retno Setyowati, "Searching for Gender Equality Between Male and Female in Yogyakarta Kingdom in The Perspective of Islam," *Proceedings of the 1st International Conference on Gender, Culture and Society, ICGCS* (2021): 2, 5; Ofita Purwani, "Questioning the Traditional Narrative Over Contemporary Urban Development in the Javanese Royal City," *Southeast Asia Working Paper Series*, Paper no. 8 (2023): 4; and Roro Retno Wulan, Catur Nugroho, and M. Nastain. "Media Discourse and Internal Conflict of Javanese Power in Yogyakarta," *Jurnal Wacana Poli*tik 8, no. 2 (2023): 166.

¹⁰ See Dita Ayu Rani Natalia and Endy Marlina, "The Influence of Cultural Tourism in the Imogiri Tomb Bantul, Yogyakarta," *International Journal of Advances in Mechanical and Civil Engineering* 7, no. 1 (2020): 10; and Office for Culture Affairs of Special Region of Yogyakarta, "Kotagede," https://budaya.jogjaprov.go.id/artikel/detail/362-kotagede.

¹¹ Erda Rindrasih and Patrick Witte,"Reinventing the Post-Disaster Cultural Landscape of Heritage Tourism in Kotagede, Yogyakarta, Indonesia," *Journal of Heritage Tourism* 16, no. 2 (2021): 141.

Tingkir), the King of Pajang. The rest are tombs of royal families. 12

Sultan Hamengkubuwono X assigned six *abdi dalem* as courtiers to maintain the security and cleanliness of the Kotagede Royal Cemetery¹³, Kamiliyah NH (2023) revealed that most visitors appreciate *abdi dalem*'s efforts to maintain its cleanliness.¹⁴ Aside from those two primary roles, *abdi dalem* usually guides tourists who visit the cemetery voluntarily.¹⁵

On one hand, *abdi dalem's* position is equal to that of a worker because they are given wages to meet the needs of his daily life. On the other hand, *abdi dalem* can be regarded as a volunteer because their salary is not commensurate with the workload. It can be revealed that they received between IDR 35,000 to IDR 60,000 (equivalent to between USD 2.5 to USD 4) per month, without any social security scheme.¹⁶

The wages received by *abdi dalem* above are of course very far from the Regency Minimum Wage in Yogyakarta in the year of 2023. According to Decree of the Governor of the Special Region of Yogyakarta No. 338/KEP/2022 concerning Determination of the Provincial Minimum Wage for 2023 (Decree of the Governor of the Special Region of Yogyakarta 338/KEP/2022). Regency Minimum Wage/Provincial Minimum Wage in Special Region of Yogyakarta Province (Rupiah), 2023 as follows: Jogja City: IDR 2,324,775.51, the amount increases by IDR 170,806 or 7.93% from 2022; Sleman Regency: IDR 2,159,519.22, this amount increases by IDR 158,519 or 7.92% from 2022; Bantul Regency: IDR 2,066,438.82, an increase of IDR 149,591 or 7.8% from 2022; Kulon Progo Regency: IDR 2,050,447.15, an increase of IDR 146,172 or 7.68% from 2022; and Gunungkidul Regency: IDR 2,049,266, up IDR 149,226 or 7.85% from 2022.

It, indeed, raises a legal concern. Any profession, including *abdi dalem*, has *a* right to earn income to fulfill a decent livelihood. From a legal point of view, Article 27 (2) of the Indonesian Constitution stipulates that "Every citizen has the right to work and a living that is worthy of humanity. Besides, Article 28D (2) of the Indonesian Constitution determines that "Everyone has the right to work and receive fair and. Further, Article 5 of Law No. 13 of 2003 concerning Manpower (Manpower Law) guaranteed such rights. After the creation of Law No. 6 of 2023 concerning the Stipulation of Government Regulation in Lieu of Law No.2 of 2022 concerning Job Creation

¹² Puspasari Setyaningrum, "Makam Raja-Raja Mataram di Kotagede: Sejarah dan Daftar Nama Raja yang Dimakamkan," https://yogyakarta.kompas.com/read/2022/09/22/224432378/makam-raja-raja-mataram-di-imogiri-sejarah-dan-daftar-nama-raja-yang?page=all.

¹³ Daryanto, "Perception on Waging System Applied for Abdi Dalem in Kotagede Royal Cemetery," Interview by Fithriatus Shalihah, Yogyakarta, January 2, 2024.

¹⁴ Uystka Hikmatul Kamiliyah NH, "Millennial Tourists' Perception on Gedhe Mataram Mosque as Religious Tourism Site," *Journal of Enterprise and Development* 5, no. 1 (2023): 42-43.

¹⁵ Daryanto, Interview by Shalihah, loc.cit.

¹⁶ Ibid.

(Job Creation Law),¹⁷ the right to earn proper wages is regulated under Article 88D (2). The government policies to determine minimum wages are generally related to the improvement of the wealth of the workers and their family.¹⁸

This paper aims to discuss whether the practice of waging for abdi dalem at the Kotagede Royal Cemetery compatible to Indonesian Employment Law. This study is normative legal research (normative law research/doctrinal legal research) which discusses legal norms in terms of aspects, namely legal principles, vertical and synchronization, legal comparisons, and legal history. 19 This research is further developed by an article written by Shalihah, Alviah, and Shob'ron, titled "The Wages in Employment Relations in the Tourism Sector in Yogyakarta in Justice Perspective." (2023). However, the current version has updated the regulation and sources of information. This paper uses secondary data consisting of primary, secondary and tertiary legal materials. Apart from that, data collection was also carried out through document study. Primary data was obtained through interviews with abdi dalem at the Kotagede Royal Cemetery. The secondary data used in this research are primary legal materials originating from national law regulating manpower and human rights and court decisions and secondary legal materials in the form of textbooks, journal articles, and other reliable sources.

Previous studies have explored the topic discussed in this paper. Research on *abdi dalem* have been conducted crossing various disciplines of social sciences and humanities.²⁰ Sudaryanto (2008) discussed the rights and obligations that can be obtained by *abdi dalem* as a consequence of their involvement in administering the Yogyakarta Sultanate and discussed the reasons that motivate someone to become an *abdi dalem* in the

¹⁷ This Legislative product was drafted by using Omnibus Law Method. See Firman Freaddy Busroh, Konseptualisasi Omnibus Law Dalam Menyelesaikan Permasalahan Regulasi Pertanahan. *Jurnal Arena Hukum* 10, no. 2 (2017); Bayu Dwi Anggono. "Omnibus Law sebagai Teknik Pembentukan Undang-Undang: Peluang Adopsi dan Tantangannya dalam sistem Perundang-Undangan Indonesia", *Jurnal Rechtsvinding* 9, no. 1 (2019): 22; Agnes Fitryantica, "Harmonisasi Peraturan Perundang-undangan Indonesia melalui Konsep Omnibus Law", *Jurnal Gema Keadilan* 6, no. 3 (2019): 302; and Muhammad, Aulia Y. Guzasiah, "Omnibus Law dan Ancaman Sentralisasi", *Update Indonesia* 14, no. 2 (2020): 5.

¹⁸ Fithriatus Shalihah, Siti Alviah, and Imtikhan Anas Shob'ron, "The Wages in Employment Relations in the Tourism Sector in Yogyakarta in Justice Perspective," *Substantive Justice International Journal of Law* 6, no. 2 (2023): 141.

¹⁹ Depri Liber Sonata, "Metode Penelitian Hukum Normatif dan Empiris: Karakteristik Khas dari Metode Meneliti Hukum", *Fiat Justisia* 8, no. 1 (2014): 25.

²⁰ For example, Sholihah and Alfin analyze the semiotic aspects of the live and behaviour of abdi dalem from a movie. See Sholihah, Alvia Mustafidatus and Jauharoti Alfin. "Kehidupan di Balik Tembok Keraton: Representasi Gaya Hidup Abdi Dalem dalam Film Marak Tinjauan Semiotika John Fiske." *Nusa: Jurnal Ilmu Bahasa dan Sastra* 18, no. 2 (2023): 16-31.

Fithriatus Shalihah

sultanate.²¹ Satriani (2016) discusses how abdi dalem are united in a concept of *Peranakan* and *Serat Kekancingan*. As in modern organizations, one of the signs of *abdi dalem* membership is the *Peranakan* uniform.²² Shalihah, Alviah, and Shob'ron (2023) conducted research that questioned whether giving wages to *abdi dalem* in the royal cemetery violates Indonesian laws and regulations or can be justified for certain legal reasons.²³ Research on Kotagede Royal Cemetery mainly explored the issue of cultural tourism such as conducted by Erda and Witte (2021)²⁴ and Kamiliyah (2023).²⁵ Therefore, the current paper offers a new lens: an employment law perspective and personal perception of the work of *abdi dalem* in the Kotagede Royal Cemetery.

2. RESULT AND ANALYSIS

2.1. The 'Job' of Abdi Dalem in Kotagede Royal Cemetery

The Yogyakarta Sultanate has an organization called *Parentah Hageng*, which holds the operational control center for the *Karaton Yogyakarta Hadiningrat* (The Palace of the Yogyakarta Sultanate). Based on the governmental structure of the palace, those related to the Sultan are called *abdi dalem*, even including younger siblings, children, sons-in-law, and the consort of the Sultan. *Parentah Hageng* also organizes *abdi dalem Keprajan* and *Punakawan* from the process of internship, promotion, transfer of position, dismissal, and other matters. The *Punakawan* is then divided into the *Punakawan Tepas*, who work daily, and the *Punakawan Caos*, who are not obliged to work every day.²⁶

Abdi dalem plays a vital role in supporting the Yogyakarta Sultanate as they devote their productive time for the sake of the Sultan and its Sultanate. The *abdi dalem* have an honorable position because they must carry out their duties actively without prioritizing personal interests.²⁷

The requirements for becoming an *abdi dalem* are flexible. Everyone may apply for it, even if they are not local native. For example, devotion and loyalty are the basis for assigning *abdi dalem* to the Kotagede Royal Cemetery.²⁸

Abdi dalem who serveing in Kotagede Royal Cemetery has the status of *Punakawan caos* and are paid monthly salaries by the sultanate. They did

²¹ Agus Sudaryanto, "Hak dan Kewajiban Abdi Dalem dalam Pemerintahan Kraton Yogyakarta," *Mimbar Hukum* 20, no. 1 (2008): 164.

²² Septi Satriani, "Peranakan dan Serat Kekancingan: Sebuah Bentuk 'Kepengaturan' Abdi Dalem Kraton Jogjakarta," *Jurnal Etnohistori* 3, no. 1 (2016): 132.

²³ Shalihah, Alviah, and Shob'ron, op.cit., 142.

²⁴ Erda and Witte, *op.cit.*, 136-150.

²⁵ Kamiliyah NH, *op.cit.*, 35-57.

²⁶ Indra Fibiona and Suwano, R.M. Jayadipura, Maestro Budaya Jawa 1878-1939: Sebuah Biografi (Yogyakarta, Balai Pelestarian Nilai Budaya, 2018), 34.

²⁷ Sudaryanto, *loc.cit*.

²⁸ Daryanto, Interview by Shalihah, loc.cit.

not get a pension, but their family will receive 1.600.000 rupiah (equivalent to USD 105) if they die.²⁹

Below is the rank of *abdi dalem* according to *Pranatan Kalenggahan Angka* 01/Pran/KHPP/I/2006:³⁰

- 1. Pangeran Sentana/Kanjeng Pangeran Harya (the highest);
- 2. Bupati Nayaka;
- 3. Bupati Kliwon;
- 4. Bupati Sepuh;
- 5. Bupati Anom;
- 6. Riyo Bupati Anom;
- 7. Wedono;
- 8. Penewu;
- 9. Lurah:
- 10. Sepuh;
- 11. Bekel;
- 12. Jajar (the lowest).

The rank above makes clear that *Pangeran Sentana* holds the highest level of *abdi dalem* while *Jajar* is regarded as the lowest level. As an example, the highest rank of *abdi dalem* assigned in Kotagede Royal Cemetery is *Bekel*.

In terms of function, the Yogyakarta Sultanate determines several titles to *abdi dalem* by considering their respective skills, as described in table 1.

Table 1. Title of Abdi Dalem based on functions31

Title of Abdi Dalem	Functions/Responsibility
Projo	Regional Government employees
Danu	Livestock
Kardi	General affairs
Tirta	Irrigation
Ranu	Drinking water
Dirjo	Economics
Dwijo or Marto	Teacher
Niti	Law
Noyo	Supervision
Sastro	Employment/human resource
Cermo	Puppetry
Broto	Education

²⁹ *Ibid*.

³⁰ Satriani, op.cit., 145.

³¹ Sudaryanto, op.cit., 168.

The scheme for promotion is unique as several aspects of assessment are imposed, including the frequency of visiting the sultan's palace, good behavior, and the capacity to carry out his duties. The regular promotions are conducted every 3 or 4 years. However, *abdi dalem*, who has a specific educational background and expertise, may be promoted yearly until the rank of *wedono*. After reaching *wedono*, they will follow the regular promotion process. Bupati Kliwon is the highest position that can be obtained regularly by every *abdi dalem*. Apart from regular promotions, special promotions based on *Sultan*'s orders are implemented in the positions of *Bupati Nayaka* and *Pangeran Sentana*.³²

The promotion of an *abdi dalem* will automatically increase the duties and responsibilities. The tasks given generally consider the educational background and skills of *abdi dalem*. In terms of leadership, an *abdi dalem* who holds a higher rank leads those who have ranks below. However, it is commonly practiced that the hierarchy is not used as a source of arbitrary order. Courtesy and politeness are still upheld to ensure a conducive situation. This reflects that becoming an *abdi dalem* is not about pursuing rank or material things but a dedication as a custodian of culture.³³

The length of time a servant in the Kotagede Royal Cemetery varies. Some have worked the longest for 30 years, 15 years and the shortest for 2-5 years. It is known that the servants of the court have to undergo an apprenticeship period of 2-5 years before being appointed as servants. Meanwhile, the courtiers at the Kotagede Royal Cemetery only work 1 day a week for 24 hours, which means the courtiers only work 4-5 days every month. This enables them to seek other type of jobs. It implies that becoming a courtier in the Tomb is not the main job. From an economic perspective, the big chance of working outside the cemetery seems to be why they never demand wages more than they are usually given. Serving in the Royal Tomb Cemetery is sought of pride and satisfaction in the context of culture.³⁴

As previously explained in Section I, the remuneration given by Yogyakarta Sultanate to *abdi dalem* in Kotagede Royal Cemetery is between IDR 35,000 to IDR 60,000 (equivalent to between USD 2.5 to USD 4) per month. At a glance, this seems to be inhuman treatment if assessed from an economic or human rights perspective. The most exciting fact is that those *abdi dalem*, however, feel sincere and do not mind the wages they receive because of a belief that there is a blessing in the wages awarded by the Sultan. They also believe that their life is not only about money, but also

³² Interview by Shalihah, *loc.cit*.

³³ *Ibid*.

³⁴ *Ibid*.

devotion and loyalty.³⁵ Therefore, the lack of monthly salary received by *abdi* dalem must not be seen merely from a material perspective.

It may be understood because the primary motivation for becoming *abdi dalem* is to seek blessings from the Sultan for their lives. Besides, some other factors encourage them to become *abdi dalem*, include preserving Javanese culture; seeking a more meaningful life; calmness and peace; continuing the traditions of their parents; and maintaining the Magersari land to be still used as a place to live or cultivate land.³⁶

The retirement period for serving as an *abdi dalem* is not specified. Therefore, they can work as long as possible. *Abdi dalem* who can no longer carry out their duties due to old age, impaired health, or other reasons will undergo a dismissal process called *miji*. It is an infrequent case where courtiers feel bored or submit their resignation.³⁷

The following are several provisions related to *miji* or the process of dismissing *abdi dalem*. First, *Miji Sudono Mulyo* is awarded to *abdi dalem*, who has served for over 20 years. Second, *Miji Sudono Saroyo* is awarded to *abdi dalem* who has served 10-20 years. Third, *Miji Tumpuk:* length of service under 10 years. Forth, *Miji Pocot:* was dishonorably dismissed so he had to return the title given by the *Sultan (asma paring Dalem)* and was prohibited from entering the palace.³⁸

Serat Kekancingan is a surat keputusan (decree)³⁹ issued by the Yogyakarta Sultanate comprising the name of person appointed as abdi dalem, the title, function, rank, and the consequences arising from its issuance. Serat Kekancingan can be used as the proof of becoming an abdi dalem who is entitled as the right holder to use land belonging to the Yogyakarta Sultanate. For the Sultanate, Serat Kekancingan arises its right to regulate and monitor the work of abdi dalem. Meanwhile, the responsibility of abdi dalem is to act as servants of culture, meaning that they dedicate their life to being a 'guardians' of the culture of the Yogyakarta who can ngayahi (do) and nguri-nguri (maintain/preserve) the culture of the Sultanate.⁴⁰

³⁶ Sudaryanto, op.cit., 176-177.

³⁵ *Ibid*.

³⁷ Daryanto, Interview by Shalihah *loc.cit*.

³⁸ Admin of Karaton Ngayogyakarta Hadiningrat Official Website, "Tugas dan Fungsi Abdi Dalem," https://www.kratonjogja.id/abdi-dalem/3-tugas-dan-fungsi-abdi-dalem/

³⁹ See Special Region of Yogyakarta Province. Regulation of the Governor of the Special Region of Yogyakarta No. 49 of 2018 concerning Application Procedures for the Utilization of Sultanate Land and District Land, Art. 1 (3). Term *kekancingan* also refers to Sultanate's land certificates. See Bayu Dardias Kurniadi, "Defending the Sultan's Land: Yogyakarta, Control over Land and Aristocratic Power in Post-Autocratic Indonesia" (A Thesis of Doctor of Philosophy, The Australian National University, September 2019), 100.

⁴⁰ Satriani, op.cit., 138.

2.2. The 'Applicability' of Employment Law on the Employment Relations between Yogyakarta Sultanate and Abdi Dalem

The issue of employment covers both public and private dimensions. From a public law perspective, Indonesian Employment Law covers a wide range area of laws and regulations.⁴¹ The employment law generally regulates the foundations, principles and objectives of employment development; equal opportunities and treatment in terms of employment; workforce planning and employment information; work training; workforce placement; expansion of employment opportunities; use of foreign workers; work relationship; protection, wages and welfare; industrial relations; coaching; supervision; investigation; and criminal provisions and administrative sanctions in the field of employment.

The Manpower Law and its implementing regulations generally establish principles and norms regarding manpower development that aim to empower and make efficient use of people available for a job optimally and humanely, realizing equal job opportunities and the provision of workers to support the national and regional development needs.; protecting the worker in realizing welfare; and improving the welfare of the worker and their family.⁴² The Manpower Law also determines that a job can be classified as a "*Perjanjian Kerja Waktu Tertentu*" (Specified Time Employment Agreement) if it is temporary in nature; the working period is no longer than 3 (three) months; seasonal; and work that is related to a new product, a new type of activity or an additional product that is still in the experimental or try-out stages.⁴³

The Indonesian Employment Law also adjusted the norms regulating the maximum term, extension, and renewal of the Specified Time Employment Agreement. Previously, the Manpower Law determined the maximum employment period is 2 (two) years and may only be extended once for a maximum period of 1 (one) year. Further, renewal can only be carried out after exceeding the grace period of 30 (thirty) days of the previous Specified Time Employment Agreement. The renewal may only be granted once for a maximum of 2 (two) years.⁴⁴ Later, Article 81 of the Job Creation Law amended it by eliminating the provisions on the maximum term, extension, and renewal of the Specified Time Employment Agreement.

⁴¹ A study revealed that there were at least 17 laws and regulations concerning employment in 2018. See National Center for Analysis and Evaluation of Law. Final Report of the Legal Analysis and Evaluation Working Group Related to Employment Legislation. Jakarta: National Legal Development Agency, 2018, 9.

⁴² Manpower Law, Art. 4.

⁴³ See Manpower Law, Art. 59 (1); Muhammad Bram Glasmacher, "Political Implications of Law in the Formation of Law No. 13 of 2003 concerning Workers Protection in Employment Agreement Specific Time (EAST/PWKT)," *Journal of Law and Legal Reform* 1, no. 3 (2020): 527.

⁴⁴ Manpower Law, Art. 59 (4), (5), and (6).

Furthermore, Article 56 (3) of the Job Creation Law determines the period or completion of specific work based on the employment agreement. The new law obviously weakens workers' bargaining position with the employer.

The Indonesian Employment Law also adjusted norms regarding written and unwritten employment contracts. Previously, Article 57 (2) of Manpower Law regulates that a Specified Time Employment Agreement must be made in writing; it entails that an oral employment agreement will be classified as Perjanjian Kerja Waktu Tidak Tertentu (Unspecified Time Employment Agreement). Later, however, the Job Creation Law abolished such a regulation, meaning employers and workers may enter into employment relationships just using a verbal (not written) contract. On the one hand, it protects the workers' rights from unilateral ignorance or nonrecognition status as a worker. On the other hand, it weakens the worker's position because it lacks legal certainty and creates legal vacuum regarding the status of the workers arising from unwritten employment contracts.

The Manpower Law stipulates that minimum wages are directed towards achieving decent living needs which is determined by the governor after considering the recommendations from the wage council.⁴⁵ Article 81 (27) of Job Creation Law determines that government must realize the rights of workers/laborers in the form of a decent living for humanity through the establishment of wage policies. One aspect of the wage policy is related to regulations regarding minimum wages.

As an implementation of Job Creation Law, Government Regulation No. 51 of 2023 concerning Amendments to Government Regulation No. 36 of 2021 concerning Wages (Government Regulation 51/2023) was stipulated to amend Government Regulation No. 36 of 2021 concerning Wages (Government Regulation 36/2021). The regulation makes clear that wages are determined based on units of time; and/or unit of results⁴⁶ and that minimum wages apply to workers who have worked less than 1 year.⁴⁷ It determines minimum wage based on economic and employment conditions which include 3 variables, namely purchasing power parity; labor absorption rate; and median wage.⁴⁸

Government Regulation 51/2023 eliminates sectoral minimum wages and determines the minimum wage consisting of the provincial and

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, Art. 89 (3); See also Article 30 of Government Regulation 51/2023 which authorizes the Governor to determine the minimum wage if it meets two conditions, namely, the average economic growth of the relevant regencies/cities over the last three years is higher than the average provincial economic growth and the value of economic growth minus inflation for the relevant regency/city for the last three years has always been positive, and higher than the provincial value.

⁴⁶ Government Regulation 51/2023, Art. 14

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, Art. 24.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, Art. 25 (4).

Fithriatus Shalihah

regency/city minimum wages with certain conditions.⁴⁹ It also determines that the adjustment of the minimum wage value is set at a certain range of values between the upper and lower limits of the minimum wage in the area concerned.⁵⁰

The Constitutional Court of the Republic of Indonesia ruled the matters of waging. In its Decision No. 61/PUU-VII/2010, the Court considers that provisions governing the suspension of minimum wage payments allow the employer to fulfill their obligation to pay wages according to their capabilities for a certain period of time.⁵¹ Further, in decision No. 72/PUU-XIII/2015, the Constitutional Court considers that:

"...suspension of minimum wage payments by employers to workers/laborers is possible with the aim of protecting both employers and the workers/laborers concerned. From an entrepreneur's point of view, the suspension of minimum wage payments provides an opportunity for employers to fulfill their obligation to pay wages according to their capabilities for a certain period." 52

From a private law perspective, employment contracts must fulfill cumulatively 4 (four) conditions for the validity of contracts as required by the Indonesian Civil Code, namely consent of the parties, capacity to conclude a contract, specific subject, and lawful (admissible) reason. An 'employment contract' is a generic term for a document that establishes a legal relationship between an employer and a worker. Article 1601a of the Indonesian Civil Code determines that an employment contract is an agreement in which one party, the worker, agrees to render their services to the other party, the employer, for a specific term in return for remuneration. In the context of employment contracts, the principles of employment relations generally cover the issue of the type and nature of work, rights and obligations of employer and worker, working duration, cancellation, and sanctions for failure to comply with the contractual obligations.

Serat Kekancingan, as explained in Section 2.1, can be paired with an administrative decree. However, it does not contain principles of employment as stipulated in Indonesian Employment Law, but instead acts as proof of the status of a person becoming an abdi dalem. Serat Kekancingan is a recognition of the status of an abdi dalem in the Yogyakarta Sultanate.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, Art. 25.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, Art. 26.

⁵¹ Decision of the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Indonesia No. 61/PUU-VII/2010, 78.

⁵² Decision of the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Indonesia No. 72/PUU-XIII/2015, 40.

As explained in Section 1 and Section 2.1, kekucah (wage) received by abdi dalem in Kotagede Royal Cemetery is far below the provincial and minimum wages. However, the status *abdi* dalem as regency workers/laborers falls into the category of casual daily workers because they only work one day (24 hours) a week, between 4-5 days every month, and no more than 21 working days in 1 month. Casual daily workers are different from monthly workers, entitled to a minimum wage and a fixed basic wage/salary every month. As abdi dalem is categorized as a casual daily worker, it can be argued that the Job Creation Law and Government Regulation 36/2021 do not have legally binding effects on the employment relations between Yogyakarta Sultanate as employers in one side and abdi dalem as workers in the other side. 53

2.3. The Spirit of Voluntarism and Dedication of Abdi Dalem

Historically, after the establishment of the Yogyakarta Sultanate in 1755, it appointed civil servants called *abdi dalem* and military personnel. *abdi dalem* is characterized by wearing unique clothing called 'Peranakan'. Besides that, *abdi dalem* also uses '*bagongan*' language, slightly different from Javanese in general, when communicating within the Sultanate's Palace.⁵⁴

For centuries, *abdi dalem* continuosly dedicate their live for the Yogyakarta Sultanate without any critical demand of what they could gain from their service to the Sultan and the Sultanate. This might happen because they uphold a Javanese live philosophy of *nrimo ing pandum*. According to Jati (2023), this proverb reflects a philosophy of stoic acceptance which encourages persons to accept the results of their work as "whatever God eventually decides for them".⁵⁵ Allifa and Nurwardani (2023) perceives it as a receptive attitude toward what life has to offer which includes three psychological constructs: acceptance, patience, and gratitude.⁵⁶

For Daryanto, an *abdi dalem* at Ketagede Royal Cemetery, *narimo ing pandum* is inherently understood as accepting all gifts from the God's with gratitude. In life, *nrimo* is an attitude that humans believe in only *sakderma nglakoni urip*, *Gusti kang nemtoake* (human only carry it out, God has the

 $^{^{53}}$ See Job Creation Law Article 88 (2); and Government Regulation 36/2021, Arts. 10 (3) and 23 (3).

⁵⁴ Admin of Karaton Ngayogyakarta Hadiningrat Official Website.

⁵⁵ Wasisto Raharjo Jati, "Narimo ing Pandum": How Highlander Women Perceive Poverty as a Destiny in Gunungkidul, Yogyakarta," *Masyarakat, Jurnal Sosiologi* 28, no. 1 (2023): 2.

⁵⁶ Annisa Mufti Allifa and Mayreyna Nurwardani, "Nrimo Ing Pandum a Positive Energy in Organizational Change," *Proceedings of the International Conference of Psychology: International Conference on Indigenous Treatment and Contemporary Psychology* (2023): 17.

authority to decide). Humans who are able to interpret *nrimo ing pandum* will always be grateful, patient, calm and not easily angry in responding to the events experienced. Good or bad events will be treated the same, that is, it will be surrendered and surrendered to God.⁵⁷ For him, *nrimo ing pandum* becomes one path to achieving spiritual needs to feel the *paraning dumadi* (the beginning and the return of humans) calm the soul and the achieving *Semeleh* (surrender to God's will).⁵⁸

Regarding award is in the form of a salary, title, or assignment or orders from the Sultan, Daryanto respect them with reverence. He generalized that all *abdi dalem* who is assigned to Kotagede Royal Cemetery basically searches for blessings, tranquility, and peace in life. They believe, those will be obtained by serving the sultan faithfully.⁵⁹

Therefore, the philosophy *nrimo ing pandum* guides *abdi dalem* not to question the amount of money they receive from the Yogyakarta Sultanate for the works they dedicated, that are between IDR 35,000 to IDR 60,000 (equivalent to between USD 2.5 to USD 4). Apart from working as *abdi dalem*, Daryanto is a seller of meatball soup. However, he committed to prioritize the fulfillment of obligations as *abdi dalem* rather than seeking profit from selling the meatbowl even the money he receives as a seller is higher that income as an *abdi dalem*. But He enjoyed becoming *abdi dalem* as he perceived the blessing from Sultan implies the blessing from the God, therefore, it is more valuable than the money earned from selling.

The spirit of voluntarism and dedication of abdi dalem for the sake of the Sultan and Yogyakarta Sultanate seem to be the ultimate reason to explain their acceptance of any Sultan policies imposed on them. It implies from the absence of defects in the will and the expression of sincerity to serve the sultanate. Besides, this may also be the reason why abdi dalem never compared whatever they might obtain from the Sultan with any other job that falls into national and regional regulations. Therefore, the devotion of abdi dalem overrides the Indonesian Employment Law, particularly for the waging scheme, which is understandable. It further leads to an understanding that the practice of waging for abdi dalem in the Kotagede Royal Cemetery has no relevance to be assessed for its compatibility (or even incompatibility) with Indonesian Employment Law.

3. CONCLUSION

From the employment law perspective, the wages (kekucah) received by abdi dalem are below the minimum wages determined by the regional government. The status of abdi dalem of Kotagede Royal Cemetery can be

⁵⁷ Daryanto, "Perception on Waging System Applied for Abdi Dalem in Kotagede Royal Cemetery," Interview by Imtikhan Anas Shob'ron, January 9, 2024.

⁵⁸ *Ibid*.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

categorized as casual daily workers. Therefore, serat kecancingan, a decree issued by the Yogyakarta Sultanate which explains the status of abdi dalem, must not be interpreted as conflicting with Indonesian employment particular regulations determining the minimum Interestingly, abdi dalem tends not to protest this status quo situation. This can be understood by exploring the perception of abdi dalem, who devoted their life to the Sultan by referring to nrimo ing pandum, a life philosophy that guides them to seek blessings and tranquility. That is perhaps why abdi dalem accepts all tasks assigned to them sincerely without expecting anything in return. They firmly believe that serving at the Kotagede Royal Cemetery will bring abundant blessings and peace from God through the Sultan. The devotion of abdi dalem that overrides the waging scheme of Indonesian Employment Law leads to an understanding that assessment for the compatibility/incompatibility of the waging system for abdi dalem in Kotagede Royal Cemetery with Indonesian Employment Law is irrelevant.

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