

## Rationality of Social Action of the Yogyakarta Palace's Courtiers

*Sindung Haryanto*

### ABSTRACT

*Courtiers of the Yogyakarta Palace devoted themselves with a high level of dedication, submissiveness and loyalty despite the low wages. Such phenomenon posed theoretical problems for utilitarian social science assuming basically acquisitive and success-oriented human beings with a focus on immediate returns. The purposes of the present study were to explore the rationality and motives underlying the courtier's decisions of choosing courtier as profession and to challenge and reconstruct social theories in the context of rationality of social action of the Yogyakarta Palace's courtiers. The study was conducted at the Yogyakarta Palace by using a qualitative approach and socio-phenomenological perspective. An in-depth interview technique was used to collect data from 16 informants. Results indicated that courtiers' underlying motives were not entirely of economic. In addition, there were theoretical problems related to the phenomenon of courtiers' devotion to the Yogyakarta Palace, either in the perspectives of Weber's theory of rational action, Parsons' theory of social action, Blau's theory of social exchange, and theories of symbolism.*

*Key Words: rationality, social action, social theories, courtiers.*

### Introduction

The Yogyakarta Palace represented a testament to the glorious heritage of Mataram kingdom, one of the archipelago's largest kingdoms in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. During their administrations, the kings of Mataram were assisted by the *abdidalem* (a Javanese word meaning the courtiers) with their respective duties. The *abdidalem* was an integral part of the royal bureaucracy. Their roles were not only limited internally to the Palace, but also in the general population. They devoted themselves with high levels of dedication, submissiveness and loyalty to the Yogyakarta Sultan, despite the meager financial benefits. Within the Palace, the *abdidalem* performed various tasks with sincerity and a sense of responsibility in favor of their leader, the Sultan, even though their wages, called *kekucah dalem* in local terminology, only ranged from IDR 10,000 to IDR 70,000 per month (equally  $\pm$  US\$ 1 to US\$7 per month).

The aspects of job requirements, selection process to be an *abdidalem*, working hours and salary scale, on one side, and the ‘total’ dedication of *abdidalem* to the Sultan, on the other side, raised interesting questions related to the rationality and meaning of courtiers’ social actions. In carrying out their duties, *abdidalem* was always obedient to the Sultan, including policies relating to their welfare. This was evident, among others, in the absence among *abdidalem* of protest against the remuneration policy. Such a behavioral phenomenon beyond rationality posed a theoretical problem.

The questions to be addressed in the present study were (1) what was the motives underlying the choice of being an *abdidalem* of Yogyakarta Palace; was the choice of being an *abdidalem* was free from economic motives? and (2) what was the relevance of rationality of social action of the *abdidalem* of Yogyakarta Palace in perspective of social theories? The purposes of the present study were to (1) explore the motives underlying the decision made by the *abdidalem* of Yogyakarta Palace in the choice of being *abdidalem* as their profession, and (2) challenge and reconstruct social theories in the context of rationality of social action of the *abdidalem* of the Yogyakarta Palace.

### **Method**

The study was conducted using a qualitative approach and the perspective of phenomenological sociology. Location was the Yogyakarta Palace to which the *abdidalem* devoted themselves. An in-depth interview technique was used in order to obtain data from each informant. The strategy used prior to selecting key informants and interviewing them was to conduct preliminary interviews with palace officials who were familiar with the *abdidalem*. All data collected through interviewing was analyzed using the standards of Spradley’s novel ethnographic method (1997). Theories used as analytical tools were Weber’s theory of rational action, Parsons’ theory of social action, Blau’s theory of social exchange, and theories of symbolism.

### **Results and Discussion**

Sixteen *abdidalem* were recruited to serve as informants in the study, consisting of 14 men and 2 women aged ranging from the youngest 49 years old

to the oldest 85 years old. Their devotions have been for 11 to 72 years. Five informants were from Bantul, one from Sleman Regency, and 10 from the City of Yogyakarta. In general, the *abdidalem* had side jobs ranging from pensioners, peasants, merchants, housewives and casual workers to civil servants. There were only two *abdidalem* with no other job.

### **Motives of being an *abdidalem***

The issue of economic motives attracted much attention among social scientists. There was a debate in economic anthropology concerning the question of whether economic motives also belonged to or were characteristic of primitive societies. The debate appeared in relation to the growing dichotomization of society in the discipline between the primitive and modern societies. Both types of society had distinctive characteristics including the economic motives underlying their social action. Malinowski who conducted a study of the Tobriand people in 1921 (as quoted in LeClair and Schneider, 1968) argued that the Tobriand people had no economic motive in carrying out their activities of production and distribution. The argument was challenged by Raymond Firth and Goodfellow (LeClair and Schneider, 1968) believing that modern economic principles applied universally, meaning that individuals in both primitive and modern societies acted on the economic principles of maximizing utility or trying to make the most of limited means available.

The debate continued as Karl Polanyi et al. wrote a book entitled *Trade and Market in the Early Empires* in 1957, distinguishing between formal economy and substantive economy. Polanyi et al. (as quoted in Schneider, 1974:2) argued that the meaning of a substantive economy derived from human dependence on the nature and its derivatives. A substantive economy pointed to the exchanges occurring in both the natural and social environments, which in turn had impacts on the supply of material goods for satisfaction. A substantive economy derived from an economic logic, while the formal one from economic facts. A formal economy implied a set of rules serving as a reference for selecting among available alternatives in the midst of limited resources. Meanwhile, a substantive economy implied an absence of both alternatives and resource constraints.

Polanyi went on to elucidate this concept by illustrating one's actions of buying groceries at a local store. The formal economy saw it as an exchange in which food alternatives, prices to be paid, supplies, and other issues of quantity came to be critical since they shaped the supply–demand model. Meanwhile, the substantive economy focused on the movement or flow of goods necessary to maintain the existence of the seller and the buyer or the community as a whole. In the substantivist standpoint of economy, every actor played an important role in a system, and that role should be supported. Material dimensions of the transaction were of secondary; the focus was on the individuals and how they interacted and supported each other. Actors had no motivation to make profits; in other words, a substantivist economy denied the existence of profit-oriented motives as it was in the Western industrial capitalist societies (Schneider, 1974: 3). In economic anthropology, the debate on the motives of human action arose from conflicting standpoints in defining the economy. Further debate was not only within the theoretical level but also empirical one as reflected by a series of studies.

In economic sociology, there was also such a debate of economic motives between the utilitarian perspective and the perspective of embeddedness. In one side, the former assumed that every human action was always based on of gaining maximum benefits from the sacrifices or alternatives available. In the other side, the latter assumed the contrary, arguing that human actions were not necessarily based on economic motives. Human actions were so embedded to social networks that in many cases keeping an individual from motives of seeking private profits. The former perspective raised serious theoretical problems of ascetic and altruistic behaviors in which no adequate elucidation has been put forward.

Within the constellation of the above theoretical debate, the present study attempted to explore the action motives of the *abdidalem* of the Yogyakarta Palace, the results of which would be drawn on for reconstructing rationality theories of human action. Results of interviews with several *abdidalem* showed that their motives were quite diverse and non-singular, in the sense that one could

have multiple motives. In general, the motive of being an *abdidalem* was to obtain a calm and serene (*ayem tentrem*) conditions of family life. These conditions were expressed in various forms such as safety (from accidents/disasters), harmony (no conflict), health, longevity, absence of excessive desires (*ora nggrangsang*), sufficient fulfillment of daily needs, as well as the ease of obtaining sustenance. A calm and serene life represented the ultimate goal achieved by devoting themselves in the Palace. It was based on the belief that the Palace was a medium with magical powers in affecting one's life.

The working of the effect was difficult to explain by using a "rational-scientific" approach; however, various empirical and first-hand experiences of the *abdidalem* increasingly strengthened the belief. These experiences have been intertwined and scattered among the *abdidalem* to form a common perception or intersubjectivity that in being an *abdidalem* one should be honest, obedient, not having desire to appropriate something belonging to the Palace (*opén*), and so on, if a calm and serene life was to be obtained. A sort of "formula of life" applied among the *abdidalem*, which basically stated that: "if someone is to be an *abdidalem* solemnly, then he/she shall achieve a calm and serene life as desired". The opposite would be experienced by a person if the preconditions were not satisfied. The formula was "derived" from empirical experiences of the *abdidalem*.

The magic of the Palace was believed to have both positive and negative impacts on life, depending on the spiritual qualities of the *abdidalem* such as sincerity, honesty, and solemnity. If an *abdidalem* was to devote himself/herself with sincerity, honesty and sincerity, then the *kekucuh* he/she received would have positive impacts, or *nggowo sawab* in the local term, on his/her life. Many instances showed that an *abdidalem* who carried out their duties dishonestly or insincerely experienced a life away from calm and serene conditions. The *abdidalem* was capable of identifying (*niteni*) the tendency, which they adopted as a way of life.

Factors of knowledge and belief were of paramount importance in explaining why one should be an *abdidalem* in order to achieve calm and

serene living conditions. There were at least two explanations in this regard. First, a calm and serene life was basically a condition desired by most individuals or, in other words, not only by the *abdidalem*. If so, then the question was why was not everyone who had the same cultural background willing to be an *abdidalem*? There were two answers to this question, possibly of ignorance or disbelief. Second, if the calm and serene living conditions were to be achieved by means of sincerity in devotion, why was not all *abdidalem* solemn or at least ever did dishonesty? The answer to this question was also the same, possibly of ignorance or disbelief.

Hence, among *abdidalem* there was a belief that a calm and serene life could not be achieved simply by being a mere *abdidalem* but should be accompanied with sincerity, honesty, and solemnity in devotion. The prerequisites should be met in order to obtain the *sawab* (positive impacts) of the Palace. An element of mystical belief was intense in this case; for example, a large number of *abdidalem* kept their *kekucuh* in the hope of “pulling” sustenance external to the Palace. In addition, there were *abdidalem* who used their *kekucuh* to add money obtained externally to the Palace (despite the small percentage) for the purpose of purchasing goods in the hope that it could be a blessing.

Specifically, the revealed motives of being an *abdidalem* were quite diverse; among others, they were: being asked by the Palace, participating in the preservation of the culture, having a noble character, adding friends or relatives, expanding the horizons of knowledge, continuing the family tradition as an *abdidalem*, spending the spare time, obtaining work recommendation for one’s children, and simply retaining the *magersari* right (the tenant right).

For the purposes of analysis, those motives could be divided into economic and non-economic motives. An individual was classified as having an economic or non-economic motive on the basis of the direction of the primary motive. If the primary motive was likely to lead to short-term economic interests, such as retaining the *magersari* right, then the *abdidalem* was classified as having an economic motive, even if the relevant *abdidalem* also had other motives, such as preserving the culture (*nguri-uri kabudayan*). Therefore, the distinction was only

analytical. Empirically, motives of being an *abdidalem* were intertwined that made it difficult to be clearly mapped. Here is a description of those motives.

**Table 1 – Motives of being an *Abdidalem* among Informants**

Name of Informants	Motives of being an <i>Abdidalem</i>								
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
KRT Wasowinoto	yes	yes	yes	-	yes	-	-	-	-
KRT Cermo Widyo K.	yes	yes	yes	-	yes	-	-	-	-
Danu Sasmito	yes	-	yes	-	yes	-	-	-	-
Condrosari	-	yes	yes	-	-	-	-	-	-
Sindu Danarto	-	yes	yes	-	-	-	yes	-	-
Mangku Sriyono	yes	-	yes	-	-	-	-	-	-
Nyimas W. Hamong S.W.	-	yes	yes	-	-	yes	-	-	-
Mangun Utomo	-	-	yes	-	-	-	-	-	-
Noto Dinomo	-	-	yes	-	-	yes	-	-	-
Hamong H. Hutomo	-	-	yes	-	-	-	yes	-	yes
Widarmo Pawoko	-	yes	yes	-	-	-	yes	-	-
Mangku Prayitno	-	yes	yes	-	-	yes	-	-	yes
R.SRS. Suharjono	-	-	yes	-	-	yes	yes	-	-
Joyo Giyanto	-	yes	yes	yes	yes	-	yes	-	-
Dipo Tri Winarjo	-	-	yes	-	-	-	-	yes	-
RB Widya Arbudana	-	yes	yes	yes	-	yes	yes	-	yes

**Source: Adapted from field data (2011–2012).**

Description for codes of motive:

- 1 : being asked by the Palace
- 2 : participating in the preservation of the culture
- 3 : having a noble character
- 4 : adding friends or relatives
- 5 : expanding the horizons of knowledge
- 6 : continuing the family tradition as an *abdidalem*
- 7 : spending spare time / no other jobs
- 8 : obtaining work recommendation for one's children
- 9 : retaining the *magersari* right (the tenant right)

Table 1 indicates that the motives of being an *abdidalem* are quite diverse and each *abdidalem* does not have a single motive. The motive constantly present in any individual *abdidalem* was one of acquiring the noble characters. Noble characters were marked among others by a subtlety of speech (*tata krama*), appropriateness in positioning oneself relative to others when interacting (*unggah-ungguh*), ethical manners (*subo-sito*) and, in general, moral behaviors. Noble

characters were of high importance among the *abdidalem*, specifically, or the Javanese, in general, since it could affect one's status and dignity in social interaction. An individual with noble characters would be respected despite the lower socioeconomic status.

Furthermore, strategies to respond family's economic conditions in relation to the low levels of *kekucah dalem* should also be assessed. This was important since the *abdidalem* generally did not make *kekucah dalem* directly the main source in fulfilling family's economic needs. In families with sufficient income, the low levels of *kekucah dalem* did not matter; however, it did matter for families with mediocre economic conditions, necessitating special strategies in order to meet their daily needs. These strategies could be divided into progressive and retrogressive strategies. The former strategy was pursued by earning income from outside of the Palace as much as possible. The latter strategy was pursued not by maximizing efforts but rather by minimizing or depressing daily needs through saving or reducing desires by develop acquiescent, submissive and other attitudes that tended to be fatalistic. The following matrix indicates the association of the variable of the motives of being an *abdidalem* with the variable of the strategies of survival.

**Figure 1 – Matrix of the Association of the Motives of being an *Abdidalem* with the Strategy of Survival**

		Strategies of Survival	
		Progressive	Retrogressive
Types of Motives of being an <i>Abdidalem</i>	Economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Noto Dinomo</li> <li>• Hamong H. Hutomo</li> <li>• Widarmo Pawoko</li> <li>• Dipo Tri Winarjo</li> <li>• RB. Widya Arbudana</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mangku Prayitno</li> <li>• Mangun Utomo</li> <li>• Suharjono</li> <li>• Joyo Giyanto</li> </ul>
		Quadrant I	Quadrant II
	Non-Economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• KRT Wasesowinoto</li> <li>• KRT Cermo Widyo Kusumo</li> <li>• Danu Sasmito</li> <li>• Condrosari</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sindu Danarto</li> <li>• Mangku Sriyono</li> <li>• Nyimas Hamong S.W.</li> </ul>
		Quadrant IV	Quadrant III

Source: Adapted from Field Data (2011–2012).

## Theoretical Reflection of Rationality of Human Actions

Theories used to analyze the phenomenon of devotion of the *abdidalem* of Yogyakarta Palace (Weber's theory of rationality, Parsons' theory of social action, theories of social exchange Blau's and theory of symbolism) suggested that the measure of the rationality of human actions was tangible in nature. The typology of Weber's theory of rationality clearly distinguished the degrees of rationality based on the levels of efficiency and effectiveness in achieving the purpose of life, which was supposed to be purely capital accumulation. The measure of the advance of society in Weber's view was also determined by the extent to which the capital was successfully accumulated by the society. The more advanced the society the more advanced the capitalist industry was, which was increasingly marked by instrumental rational actions that Weber believed to be the most rational form of human actions.

Parsons' theory of social actions also used a tangible measure — albeit implicit — in determining rationality of human actions. For Parsons, the main orientation of human action was optimization of gratification for himself. Gratification was more material in nature, though he did not dismiss other types of gratification such as the inner one. According to Parsons, altruistic actions, for example, were not fully oriented to the interests of others but rather a form of action taken to satisfy the inner of the actor. The tangible measure of rationality was evident in the theory of social change. Parsons (in Baert, 1998:50) presupposed a society moving toward universalism, performance, specific relations, and affective neutrality, all of which indicating material pursuits.

Similarly, the social exchange theory of Peter M. Blau was still heavily influenced by the utilitarian perspective, for example in seeing the motive of exchange as solely to obtaining either extrinsic or intrinsic rewards for oneself. It was also seen in his assumptions with regard to human nature. For Blau, essentially human beings were virtually to pursue pleasure and avoid pain (Ritzer, 1983; Poloma, 1984, Cook, 2005). Consequently, the theory Blau developed also used a tangible measure in seeing rationality of human actions.

Rationality of human actions was measured, for example, by the choice of social exchange partners. In the view of Blau, a relationship with a person with a lower social status was a loss since it would lower the social status. Similarly, a relationship with a person with a higher social status would lead to subordination, which was also a loss.

Meanwhile, the theory of symbolism, though not explicitly examining the rationality of human actions, implicitly explained that symbols were the most efficient means of “instigating” human actions or communicating ideas to the public. The ultimate goal was to achieve a society behaving and acting in accordance with the ideas symbolized, which would bring positive impacts on the society in many aspects, especially the creation of social harmony. Achievement of the goal would have such economic values as a reduction in social monitoring costs, availability of public goods, efficiency and effectiveness in achieving a common interest, and so on.

Sociological theories of rationality, as Waters (1994:56-57) put it, were more individualistic than holistic in nature, looking at the macro-social phenomena as a result of human interaction. In this case, there was no theory of rationality derived from large-scale social phenomena. The specific assumption made was that human beings had fundamental natures of greed and success orientation focused on immediate returns. In fact, such orientation applied to the action of self-sacrifice of martyrs seen as aiming at gaining prestige and social approval and is also the title as a hero.

According to Waters (1994:58), the sociological theories of rationality had three schools. The first was the school of psychological behaviorism. Homans' social exchange theory, developed later by Blau, Emerson and others, exemplified it. The second was the school representing a direct application of economic theory of private choice to the non-economic realm well-known as the public choice theory. The third school was the development of theories combining elements of exchange theory and Marxian theories of exploitation and game theory.

The drawbacks of theories of rationality in the social sciences were realized by many scholars. Smelser (1997), for example, argued that there was an

analytic bias toward rationality within the utilitarian tradition due to lack of attention to the aspects of non-rational life. Marxian theories of rationality also subordinated all moral forms and the affective aspects of life as the products of historical forces. Habermas (in Baert, 1998:143) criticized Weber's concept of instrumental rationality. For him, modern civilization was characterized by an increased logic of means-end rationality.

Many scholars attempted to deal with the drawbacks. For example, George Simmel later developed the sociology of emotions. On the other hand, Habermas (2006) developed the theory of communicative action. For him, an action or statement was principally rational, obtaining justifications by open debate with everyone. Smelser (1997) noted that the theories of rationality within the postmodern tradition appeared in a variety of versions, discussing among others alienation, frustration, mental illness, violence, and intensified primordiality in group and political lives.

In the context of this study, social theories used as analytical tools proved an incapability of elucidating the phenomenon of the devotion of the *abdidalem* of Yogyakarta Palace. Weber's typology of rationality empirically proved an inability of categorizing the actions of the *abdidalem* exhaustively. This was partly due to the multiple rather than single motivation of being an *abdidalem*. Motivation of being an *abdidalem* was generally not for immediate financial gain. In some cases, being an *abdidalem* was in fact not by design or a desire childhood but rather by accident.

Motivation did not necessarily predispose an action, as was explained by the theory of behavioristic psychology. In fact, motivation could emerge and then grew stronger precisely after an individual acted. Although there were several *abdidalem* who become *abdidalem* by accident, but all *abdidalem* admitted that their personal and family lives got better (peaceful) after becoming an *abdidalem* and they were determined to devote themselves to the end of their lives.

In addition, there was another theoretical problem in the characteristics of each category that were also incompatible with the facts, especially that of instrumental rational actions. Characteristics of instrumental rational action had

something in common with the philosophical standpoint underlying the perspective of utilitarian theories that presupposed that human actions and behaviors were characterized by: (1) self-interest (self-interest was the main driver of individual actions and behaviors), (2) self-centeredness (human actions and behaviors were only focused on the consequences for the actors), (3) the use of rational calculation, namely considerations of gains, losses and satisfaction for individual desires.

Those characteristics were not entirely in accordance with those of the *abdidalem* who were placed into the category of instrumental rationality. In fact, even if the actions of the *abdidalem* were categorized as instrumental rational ones, but its characteristics differed to what Weber conceived. The *abdidalem* remained upholding the values and norms and etiquettes outlined by the Palace — that might be contrary to those of efficiency, which was the cornerstone of instrumental rational actions.

In addition, the characteristics of self-interest, self-centeredness and rational calculation underlying instrumental rational actions in the context of the devotion of the *abdidalem* had “intensities” dissimilar to what Weber described for the modern capitalist society. Characteristics noticeable were only for practical and pragmatic interests. In other words, self-interests did not represent a dominant characteristic dictating all other actions. In general, the *abdidalem* constantly strived to put the interests of the King or the Palace above theirs. This was evident among others in their submissiveness and loyalty to all orders of the Palace. There was no lexicon “against orders” among the *abdidalem* and even objections to the orders constituted taboos.

The *abdidalem* sacrificed everything, either time, energy, thought and even money, in performing their duties. In many cases, *kekucah dalem* (remuneration received by the *abdidalem*) was insufficient to pay for transportation, consumption and others during on duty at the Palace. This indicated that the *abdidalem* never calculated rationally in their devotion. In addition, their actions were distant from the characteristic of self-centeredness. Devotion with its various sacrifices was not seen as a cost to be incurred. On the other hand, *kekucah dalem*

they received was also not fully considered benefits. In order to meet their daily needs, most of the *abdidalem* relied on the income external to the Palace either by themselves or by their spouses.

Five theoretical problems were identified in Parsons' theory of social actions with regard to the assumption of human nature, motivation of individual action, units of action, mechanisms of cybernetic systems theory, and variable of patterns. In terms of human nature, Parsons assumed that humans were rational, self-interests-oriented and autonomous beings. There were problems with these assumptions associated with the reality of devotion of the *abdidalem*. The *abdidalem* — whatever their categories of action based on Weberian framework of action theory — they were indeed rational beings. However, the problems were in the second and third assumptions of orientation to self-interests (of the actors) and autonomy, respectively. The actions of the *abdidalem* were not completely oriented to self-interests. The tendency was just the opposite. In devoting themselves, the *abdidalem* tended to put the interests of the Palace or the royal family above their own self-interests. In addition to the problem with regard to orientation of action, there was also the question of individual autonomy in taking action. In terms of the decision to be an *abdidalem*, it was evident that not all of the *abdidalem* had the full freedom in the sense that their decisions were influenced by the surrounding social situations. In many ways, decision to be an *abdidalem* was not entirely the result of an in-depth analysis of all positive and negative aspects.

The second theoretical issue related to the motivation of individual action. Parsons (in Zeitlin, 1995:30; Waters, 1994:144) argued that motivation orientation of one's action had three components contributing to fuel action. Those were the cognitive, evaluative, and cathectic components. Cognitive component was actor's definition of the situation in terms of his or her interest. Cathectic component constituted actor's test for the sake of his or her satisfaction, performed by feelings. Evaluative component was the choice of an actor and his/her arrangement of alternatives, performed by assessing and sorting objects.

In relation to the devotion of the *abdidalem*, the three components of motivation action were not present at all times in any action or decision taken by the *abdidalem*. For example, not all of *abdidalem* had the cognitive component with regard to the Palace and prior decision to be an *abdidalem*. In this study, only a small number of *abdidalem* had adequate cognitions of the Palace or the life of an *abdidalem*.

The second component of motivation was the cathectic (or affective responses to objects). Logically, this second component existed if the first one, the cognition, also existed. Apparently, the logic did not apply fully in the context of devotion of the *abdidalem*. There are several *abdidalem* who had certain feelings even though he/she did not have adequate cognition of the Palace and the lives of the previous *abdidalem*. As for Parsons' third component of motivation, this study even showed that the evaluative component was also absent in the context of the devoted *abdidalem*. Prompt approval upon request of being an *abdidalem* clearly did not involve the evaluation process even though it was only for a single alternative of means.

The third Parsons' theoretical issue related to the units of action. According to Parsons (1982), social actions sociologically had five basic elements; those were the actors, who could act intentionally based on consciousness; goals, which was where the action was to be directed; means, which was instruments to achieve the goals; value orientations in the form of norms, values, and beliefs, which were capable of supporting and simultaneously inhibiting; and finally, biological conditions and situations around the actor.

Values of honesty, Javanese culture virtues, peaceful living and so on, represented value orientations dominating the minds of the *abdidalem*. For the *abdidalem*, happiness and peace of life resided more in the "inner" rather than the "outer" side. Lack of material wealth was to be addressed among others by minimizing "desires" and physical needs of life as a manifestation of *tirakat* (asceticism), which in Javanese conception was believed to be a means to obtain a perfect life. These goals were believed to be achievable effectively by being an *abdidalem* since it meant a proximity to the source of power and prosperity.

Theoretical issue relating to units of action resided in the mechanism of functioning of each unit of action in the structuring of the action. Decision to be an *abdidalem* was not necessarily made by design but rather by accident. Furthermore, situational conditions did not at all times affect the actor but might be otherwise. An actor could affect or create situational conditions that supported his/her actions. For example, there were several *abdidalem* that, prior to deciding to be an *abdidalem*, preconditioned their families in such a way that their becoming *abdidalem* did not disturb their family life meaningfully. Efforts undertaken were, among other, to educate their children to live independently.

Furthermore, the fourth theoretical issue related to the concept of cybernetics. As with the third theoretical issue, this issue also resided in the mechanism of functioning of each sub-system. In the context of this study, the *abdidalem*, on the one side, internalized values, norms, ideas and knowledge formally imparted by the Palace. On the other side, they also ran the process of socialization and internalization among themselves. The established interactions were quite intense when they were serving together in the Palace (*caos*).

The process of institutionalization proceeded as described by Parsons, in which the control flow moved from the cultural sub-systems → social sub-systems → personality sub-systems → behavior organisms (in this case the *abdidalem*). Meanwhile, the energy flow moved in opposite direction from behavior organisms to cultural sub-systems. However, it remained a question whether the mechanism was substantially effective in the sense that it has successfully carried out the genuine mission; for instance, there was a question of whether symbols found in the Palace have been well-understood or even internalized by the *abdidalem* daily interacting with those symbols. This question was relevantly posed given the complexity and contradictory nature of symbols found in the Palace as well as the relevance of the knowledge of the meaning of those symbols to the *abdidalem* themselves. This suggested that, despite the theorized flow of control and information movement, it did not necessarily successfully internalize the normative elements into the *abdidalem*.

Finally, the fifth theoretical issue concerned the variable of patterns. In the view of Parsons, the variable of patterns referred to alternatives faced by an actor in relation to an object. Those variables were universalism versus particularism, performance versus quality, specific versus diffuse relations, and affective neutrality versus affectivity. Parsons presupposed that society moved toward universalism, performance, specific relations, and affective neutrality (Baert, 1998:50).

Despite the implementation by the Palace of principles of modern bureaucracy, but the established relations were more of familial in nature. At least in the normative level, the pattern of established relations was directed at familial relations. A study by Suwarno (1994:70-71) suggested that the bureaucracy of the Palace was the same as the traditional government bureaucracy; therefore, the employees were recruited from the King's relatives and servants on the basis of kinship and loyalty. Appointment procedures for *abdidalem* were not quite transparent for *kawulodalem* (ordinary people), and even led to an inheritance of positions. The Sultan held the highest authority in determining the types of *abdidalem* he wanted.

Meanwhile, the main problem of the exchange theory of Peter M. Blau in the context of the devoted *abdidalem* of the Yogyakarta Palace resided in his assumptions on the motives of social exchange. Theories of social exchange, including the one developed by Blau, remained having characteristics of a theory reduced from the utilitarian philosophy that saw human behaviors from economic aspects of the motivation to maximize rewards and minimize costs. Exchange theory presupposed that cost-benefit analysis was carried out prior to one's exchange with others. In the context of this study, the assumption was incorrect. There were at least two explanations in this regard. First, some individuals had spontaneously decided to be an *abdidalem* without going through a long process of forethought. Some other declared willingness to be *abdidalem* upon request by the Palace. Second, no one would be willing to be an *abdidalem* if the cost-benefit analysis was to be carried out (using the formal rational approach). This was due to the fact that the cost incurred might outweigh *kekucah* (benefits) gained. In this

situation, there was a question of why was the exchange continuously taking place. The answer was because the benefits gained by the *abdidalem* were more of intangible (incalculable) in nature, which were in the forms of calm and serene feelings, health, longevity, ease in finding sustenance and so on, the validity of which had been proved empirically by the *abdidalem*.

Despite the meager extrinsic rewards, the *abdidalem* has proved themselves that their courses of life ran well. They were able to meet their minimum basic needs and frequently even send their children to the college level. Mathematically calculated, income they gained would not be sufficient to finance the study of their children but, in fact, the *abdidalem* was capable of doing so. For the *abdidalem*, it was a miracle and believed to be partial blessings gained as an intrinsic reward for their devotions as *abdidalem*. Intrinsic blessings or rewards were unequal for individual *abdidalem*.

Harmonious family life with no conflict, undemanding wife and children, health, longevity, and sufficient fulfillment of daily needs were distinctive blessings perceived by the *abdidalem*. Those blessings were rarely obtained by those who were not *abdidalem*. In general, the *abdidalem* felt that their lives were marginally different from those of their reference groups, in spite of the meager income. The *abdidalem* defined social equality as a condition in which they were in the same positions as their neighbors in social activities. When neighbors contributed to a celebration, the *abdidalem* could do so. They could also participate in social activities such as mutual assistance in repairing village roads and so on. In fact, some *abdidalem* assumed special positions in their communities. Their experiences as *abdidalem*, supported by the high levels of *kalenggahan* (positions) in the Palace, constituted the social capitals that raised their statuses within their communities. Overall, they felt that their lives became better after becoming the *abdidalem*.

Additionally, theories of symbolism had problems, especially in terms of the function of symbols as “instigators” of social actions. In this study, some *abdidalem* were not aware of the various symbols in the Palace, including those closest to everyday life such as the meaning of *pranakan* clothing with its trinkets.

Some other *abdidalem* considered knowing those symbols as insignificant. Even if an *abdidalem* did not know in detail the meaning of the symbols, however, he/she remained behaving as expected by those creating the symbols. The establishment of behaviors of the *abdidalem* derived not from the symbols inherent to them but through a “chain” process of socialization among *abdidalem*. Thus, symbols in the context of this study did not function as the “instigator” of social changes as suggested by Turner (1967).

### Conclusion

1. Motives underlying one’s decision to be an *abdidalem* were quite diverse, and some *abdidalem* had multiple motivations. Motives underlying the *abdidalem* were not fully of economic.
2. There were theoretical problems related to the phenomenon of devotion of the *abdidalem* of the Yogyakarta Palace, either in the perspectives of Weber’s theory of rational action, Parsons’ theory of social action, Blau’s theory of social exchange, and theories of symbolism.

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