LIMITATION OF ABSOLUTE AUTHORITY OF RELIGIOUS COURTS AND DISTRICT COURTS IN SETTLEMENT OF INHERITANCE DISPUTES

Alviona Anggita Rante Lembang, Natanael Andra Jaya Nababan, Dian Latifiani
Faculty of Law, Universitas Negeri Semarang
Email: alvionaanggita@gmail.com

Abstract

The absolute authority of the Religious Courts can be seen from Law Number 7 of 1989 in conjunction with Law Number 3 of 2006 concerning Religious Courts. Meanwhile, the District Court has the authority to examine, hear, and decide criminal and civil cases at the first level. Both the Religious Courts and the District Courts are authorized to settle inheritance disputes. Law No. 3 of 2006 concerning the Religious Courts states that for Muslims, the institution to settle inheritance cases is the Religious Courts. Meanwhile, non-Muslims can apply for dispute resolution to the District Court. However, the absolute authority of the Religious Courts still gives Muslim people a choice of law to choose what law to use in resolving inheritance disputes occurred which gives the potential to cause a conflict of authority between the two judicial institutions. Therefore, this conflict must be resolved in order to create legal certainty.

INTRODUCTION

The Republic of Indonesia is a legal state based on Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution, which has the aim of realizing a just and prosperous, safe, peaceful, and orderly life of the state and nation, as well as guaranteeing equal legal standing for citizens. Affirmation that the rule of law is the ideal of the law (rechtsidea) of Indonesia which is normatively regulated in Article 1 paragraph (3) of the third amendment of the 1945 Constitution, which states that: "The State of Indonesia is a state of law (rechtsstaat) not based on mere power (machtsstaat).", and "Government based on a constitutional system is not absolutism." (Kamilah & Rendy, 2015).

As we know that the Indonesian nation consists of various tribes, cultures and customs. Cultural diversity and customs give birth to diversity in law, including inheritance law. The diversity of inheritance law results in the existence of several judicial institutions that have the authority to resolve inheritance disputes. Judiciary is a procedure for conducting examinations, decisions, and court cases in judicial institutions. Meanwhile, the court is an institution whose job is to implement the judicial system to examine, hear, and decide cases (Asikin, 2015). According to Oxford University Press, the court is every person, government institution that function in adjudicating a dispute between the disputing parties in the civil, criminal, and administrative spheres based on statutory regulations (Walker as quoted from (Yuniar et al., 2021).)

Each judicial environments have absolute jurisdiction in adjudicating a particular case. This means that other judicial environments should not be allowed to adjudicate without definite authority, moreover it is included in the absolute jurisdiction of a certain judicial environment. The authority to try that arises in the judicial environment basically already has limitations that have been
outlined by law, especially regarding the Law on Judicial Power (Soeroso, 2010).

The environmental competence of the judiciary is regulated in Article 25 of Law on Judicial Power (Wahyunadi, 2016), they are:

1. The general court examining, deciding, and settling criminal and civil cases;
2. Religious courts examining, deciding, and resolving cases between people who are Muslim;
3. Military court examining, deciding, and resolving cases of military crimes;
4. The TUN Court examining, deciding, and resolving TUN disputes.

In the settlement of inheritance specifically, the judicial institutions in question are the District Courts and the Religious Courts, each of which has the authority granted by law (Maksum, 2020).

In the concept of Indonesian national law, inheritance law is regulated in the Civil Code part V concerning Inheritance Law. Inheritance is property left by parents for children who are left as successors or heirs to assets left by parents who have died. Thus, the distribution of inheritance is carried out after the termination of the marriage ties (Novitasari et al., 2019). Meanwhile, the distribution of inheritance can be done in three ways, namely based on custom (hukum adat), Islamic law, and civil law (Kamilah & Rendy, 2015). According to Wirjono Prodjodikoro, the Civil Procedure Code is a series of regulations that contains how people must act against and before a court and how the court must act, all of which are to implement civil law regulations (Hadrian & Hakim, 2020). The process of resolving cases through judges aims to restore the rights of someone who has been harmed or disturbed, restore the atmosphere to its original state that everyone must comply with civil law regulations, so that civil law regulations run as they should (Sutantio & Oeripkartawinata, 2002 as quoted from (Latifiani, 2015)). In line with this, the inheritance law generally aims to regulate the implementation of the transfer of assets or inheritance to the heirs as fairly as possible. The division of inheritance is often a trigger for conflict, so the regulation of the inheritance law can provide a settlement of inheritance conflicts in the family. The focus of the inheritance law is the family, where there must be a blood relationship between the heirs, except for the husband or wife of the heir who is still bound by marriage (Budiman, 2020). Meanwhile, the purpose of inheritance law in Islam is to regulate ways to divide inheritance so that it can be useful to the heirs fairly and well. Therefore, Islam does not only give inheritance to the husband or wife, but also from both parties. Through the judge, people get certainty about their rights which must be respected by everyone, for example, the rights as heirs, inheritance distribution, and so on (Latifiani, 2015).

Inheritance for Muslims is one of the absolute powers of the Religious Courts in accordance with the provisions of Article 49 of Law no. 7 of 1989 concerning the Religious Courts (Law on Religious Court). Furthermore, in the Elucidation of Article 49 letter (b) of Law on Religious Courts, it is from the provisions of the Elucidation of this Law that should be the main basis or main footing in the process of settling inheritance cases for people Islam.

The authority of the Religious Courts is based on Law on Religious Courts. Even for Muslims based on Law on Religious Courts, it is stated that for Muslims the institution for resolving inheritance cases is the Religious Courts so that if there is an inheritance dispute there is no choice for them unless it is resolved in the Religious Courts. However, several cases of Muslim inheritance disputes were accepted, examined and decided by the District Court. This is what causes a legal conflict between the Religious Courts and the District Courts because the District Court has the authority to settle inheritance cases for non-Muslim communities. Except, in the case of the inheritance of the Muslim, there is an act that violates the law.

Although the authority of the Religious Courts has been regulated by the amendment of Law on Religious Courts. However, this still raises questions regarding whether it is true that the General Courts institution no longer has the authority to receive, examine, and decide cases of inheritance
disputes for people who are Muslim. Previous research by Hairul Maksum stated that the regulations governing the authority to adjudicate judicial institutions have so far been seen as too general and seem indecisive so that the implementation of procedural law in the judicial field is biased and ignored by judges and even people seeking justice. For example, the case for divorce by a Youtuber, Maell Lee against Intan Ratna Juwita was deemed not to meet the formal requirements. This was because Maell Lee wrote down the defendant's domicile. The error is deemed not to meet the relative competence of the court's authority based on the defendant's residence address. Therefore, as reported by Suara.com (Wednesday 24/3/2021), Intan Ratna Juwita's attorney, Dewi Yulianti, stated that the judge should have rejected the plaintiff's claim because of the wrong domicile. Yulianti explained that each court has limited authority. Therefore, one of the important things in filing a lawsuit to the court is to pay attention that the lawsuit that will be filed by the plaintiff is true (Noviandi, 2021).

To avoid problems, usually the implementation of these regulations requires special regulations, especially those relating to the absolute competence of the Religious Courts and District Courts. This paper is intended to explain the legal basis that can be used by the Religious Courts and District Courts to receive, examine, and decide cases of community inheritance disputes based on the applicable laws and regulations. The legal issues that form the background of this article are:

1. Legal considerations of the Religious Courts and District Courts in accepting and adjudicating inheritance disputes according to their respective absolute authority.
2. Limitation of an inheritance dispute so that it can be included in the absolute authority of the Religious Court or District Court.

RESEARCH METHOD

In making this research, the authors used normative legal research or also known as doctrinal. Peter Mahmud Marzuki explained that doctrinal research is research that provides a sequential explanation that talks about the rules that govern a particular law and analyzes the relationship that exists between the rules and explains how difficulties will occur in the future. Normative legal research consists of legal principles research, legal system research, legal synchronization level research, legal history research and comparative (Nurhayati et al., 2021). Through this type research, the author uses the statute approach to reveal the meaning and interpretation of a statutory regulation.

DISCUSSION

1. The Absolute Authority of the Religious Courts

The Religious Court is one of the implementers of judicial power, which has relative competence and absolute competence. Relative authority relates to the jurisdiction of the court, while absolute competence relates to the jurisdiction of the court in legal matters, such as disputes on inheritance, both at the first level, appeal, and cassation (Komariah, 2014). Absolute competence, which is also called the attribution of power, is all the provisions regarding what is included in the power of a judicial institution. This authority is based on the laws that govern it. This kind of authority relates to the areas of the case given. The authority to adjudicate what cases are given to courts within the General Courts, State Administrative Courts, and Military Courts (Maryono, 2019). Law on Religious Courts discusses the absolute competence of the Religious Courts which have the competence in examining and adjudicating cases of first instance, may not directly litigate at the Religious High Court or at the Supreme Court (Komariah, 2014).

Based on the description above, it can be stated that the absolute authority of the Religious Courts covers certain civil fields and is based on the principle of Islamic personality. In other words,
certain areas of civil law that are the absolute authority of the Religious Courts are the field of Family Law of people who are Muslim. As a family court, namely a court that handles cases in the field of family law, of course the scope of its duties is different from the General Courts, which includes District Courts. Therefore, all the conditions that must be met by judges, clerks, and secretaries must be adjusted to the tasks carried out by the Religious Courts (Khisni, 2011).

2. The Absolute Authority of the District Courts

The authority of the General Court which includes the District Court is regulated in Law no. 2 of 1986 concerning General Courts as amended by Law no. 8 of 2004 and amended again by Law no. 49 of 2009 (Law on General Courts). Article 2 of this law states “The judiciary is the executor of judicial power for people seeking justice in general” (Maryono, 2019).

According to the system of division of the judicial environment, the District Court is faced with the absolute authority of other judicial environments. The District Court has the authority in examining, hearing, and deciding on criminal and civil cases at the first level. The authority of the District Court in criminal cases covers all forms of criminal acts, except for military crimes which are the authority of the Military Courts. In civil cases, the District Court is function to hear civil cases in general, except for certain civil cases that must be tried in the Religious Courts (Rochman, 2017).

The law has defined the limits of each jurisdiction. Disputes that can be tried in the District Court according to their existence and position as a general court environment are only limited to criminal and civil cases (Raja Guk-guk, 2019).

3. The Inheritance Overview

The general understanding of inheritance law is the law that regulates what must happen to the assets of a person who has died, in other words regulates the transfer of assets left by someone who has died and the consequences for the heirs. In inheritance law, a principle applies, that only rights and obligations in the field of property law can be inherited. When a person dies, all of his rights and obligations are transferred to his heirs at once.

Elucidation of Article 49 letter (b) of the Law on Religious Courts states that "What is meant by "inheritance" is the determination of who becomes the heir, determination of inheritance, determination of the share of each heir, implementation of the distribution of the inheritance, determination of the Court on a person's request regarding the determination of the heir, and the determination of the share to every heir (Rochman, 2017).

Talking about inheritance, it involves 3 (three) elements of inheritance, namely (Khisni, 2011):
1. There is an heir or person who controls or owns the inheritance and who will transfer it.
2. The existence of muwaris or heirs, namely people who receive the transfer or forwarding or distribution of the inheritance consisting of heirs and non-heirs.
3. The existence of mauruts or inheritance of the testator that is called inheritance.

4. The Inheritance Dispute Settlement Problems

In practice, there is often confusion in determining clear boundaries regarding absolute jurisdiction, especially in General Courts on the one hand and Religious Courts or State Administrative Courts on the other. Therefore, before filing a lawsuit, it is necessary to first examine whether the case belongs to the absolute jurisdiction of the General Court or not so that the filing of a lawsuit does not violate the absolute competence limits outlined by law. Violation of the limits of jurisdictional authority, resulting in the claim being declared inadmissible on the grounds of not being authorized to adjudicate (Raja Guk-guk, 2019).

The Center for Research and Development of Law and Justice of Indonesia recognizes that there
are many potential conflicts of absolute authority between the Religious Courts and the District Courts, one of which is related to inheritance. The absolute competence conflict between the two institutions certainly needs a solution to resolve by making a determination on which institution that actually has the authority to handle the case in question (Memi, 2017). This is because Law on Religious Courts itself still provides legal options for resolving inheritance disputes for Muslim communities in Indonesia. District Court judges can base their legal aspects on the will of the claimant or plaintiff. The Muslim community who wants to settle their case in the District Court means that they have submitted to laws other than the law of their religion and this is a major consideration. So, the District Court does not violate the law if it accepts and decides on the case of the inheritance of a Muslim based on the fact that the two parties—the plaintiff and the defendant—do not fight against the court. As a result, this indicates to the judges that in principle the plaintiff and defendant no longer follow their religious teachings.

Those who have litigated in the District Court have stated that they are no longer subject to the teachings of Islamic law which instructs them to settle their inheritance disputes with their religious law. Judges may consider them to have freed themselves from the ties of Islamic law to resolve inheritance disputes among fellow Muslims. If this is the case, then it is legal for the judges of the District Court not to use the principles of Islamic law as the basis for their decision, even though the person concerned is indeed a Muslim. Accordingly, the District Court has based their decision on the principle of “voluntary acceptance” (vrijwillige onderwerping) of the plaintiff in finding a legal reason; ignoring the provisions of the Religious Courts which prohibit the accomplishment of inheritance disputes in the District Courts.

District Court judges can also base their reasons on Article 28 of the 1945 Constitution. The principle of equal rights of every citizen referred to in this article, although not directly related to inheritance disputes between Muslims, can be used as a rational basis for accepting such cases. The right to obtain settlement of inheritance dispute cases is a human right which is recognized in the 1945 Constitution, and religious status cannot be a barrier. In this case, a court institution must prioritize the justice-seeking community in carrying out justice (Salter, 2017 as quoted from (Yuniar et al., 2021)). In Article 5 of Law on Judicial Power, it is stated that courts in judging should not discriminate people. Courts are also carried out to achieve justice expected by the community and help to resolve existing obstacles (Saleh, 2016 as quoted from (Yuniar et al., 2021)). Thus, the general legal propositions contained in Article 28 of the 1945 Constitution can be used as a basis for handling cases of inheritance disputes for people who are Muslim.

The cases of inheritance disputes in the Muslim community that are tried and decided by the District Court judges are a good example of the judge's efforts in applying the principles of national law in making a decision. This is because, theoretically, the obligation of judges is not only to be involved in resolving cases based on existing normative regulations, but also to interpret how the legal principles established by the state can be applied to every case brought to the District Court (Thohari, 2015).

5. The Limitation of Inheritance Disputes that Becomes the Authority of the Religious Courts

In inheritance cases, the duties and authorities of the Religious Courts are stated based on the explanation of Article 49 letter b of Law on Religious Courts as follows:

a. Determining who will be the heir
b. Determining the inheritance
c. Determining the share of each heir
d. Carrying out the distribution of the inheritance
e. Making a court decision on a person's request regarding the determination of who will be the
heirs and the determination of their share.

If summarized, the absolute authority of the Religious Courts in terms of inheritance, namely the determination of who becomes the heir and how much part is obtained (the subject), the determination of the inheritance (the object), and the determination of the implementation of the distribution of the inheritance (transfer of ownership rights to the inheritance). These three things are “inheritance disputes in terms of property rights”.

When referring to Article 50 paragraph (2) of the Law on Religious Courts, there is a provision that states in the event of a dispute over property rights, the legal subject of which is between people who are Muslim and the object of the dispute shall be decided by the Religious Courts. By elaborating on the Supreme Court Decision No. 287 K/AG/2012 and Supreme Court Decision No. 177 K/AG/2014, two terms related to the intersection between inheritance disputes and property rights disputes are used, namely “property rights disputes in terms of inheritance” and “inheritance disputes in terms of property rights”. The term “inheritance dispute in terms of property rights” is a property rights dispute as regulated in Article 50 paragraph (2) of the Law on Religious Courts. With the adoption of the principle of Islamic personality in this article, this type of dispute only involves the heirs (who are Muslim) only. Thus, “inheritance disputes in terms of property rights” is the authority of the Religious Courts. The term “property rights dispute in terms of inheritance” is a property rights dispute that meets the requirements as specified in the Decision of the Supreme Court of the Republic of Indonesia Number 287 K/AG/2012 and Supreme Court Decision No. 177 K/AG/2014, namely disputes over the inheritance of Muslims who have all been transferred and there are other legal subjects other than the heirs who are drawn as one of the one party. Thus, disputes of this type fall into the absolute jurisdiction of the General Courts. Therefore, a lawsuit regarding an “property rights disputes in terms of inheritance” is submitted to the District Court (Rochman, 2017).

Although inheritance is included in the absolute jurisdiction of the Religious Courts, there are several arguments that can be used as reasons to dispute the absolute authority of the Religious Courts, such as:

1. The District Court accepts, examines, and decides on cases of inheritance disputes for Muslims because the judge may not reject the case submitted for any reason;
2. Elucidation of Article 49 of Law on concerning Religious Courts states that the meaning of ‘between people who are Muslim’ is a person or legal entity which automatically submits voluntarily to Islamic law. The Elucidation of Article 49 can be used as a basis for District Court judges to accept, examine, and decide cases of community inheritance disputes that are Muslim. Although Article 50 Paragraph 2 still gives authority to the Religious Courts on the one hand, the Elucidation of Article 49 still opens up opportunities for the District Court to hear the case on the other side. However, the Elucidation of Article 49 shows that there is legal uncertainty, so that the authority of the Religious Courts in dealing with Islamic inheritance cases is not absolute.

This will then lead to legal uncertainty. In practice, legal certainty is always identified with legal certainty. This has resulted in enforcing the law, law enforcers always work without paying attention to the society that is always developing as a legal reality. In fact, in addition to achieving justice and certainty, the law must be enforced for the benefit of the community itself so that the legal objectives will fully be achieved (Salihu & Gholami, 2018; Wienhues, 2018 as quoted from (Latifiani et al., 2020)). However, it is undeniable that these three principles have the potential to collide with each other. This is where the judiciary functions to fortify justice, which is basically the embodiment to protect human rights as regulated in Law on Basic Provisions of Judicial Power. The community expects a judicial system that runs firmly and harmoniously, both vertically and horizontally, with the hope of guaranteeing certainty in creating justice in the community where the
judiciary works (Latifiani et al., 2020).

6. The Limitation of Inheritance Disputes that Becomes the Authority of the District Court

The District Court has the authority in adjudicating disputes over the inheritance of Muslims. This is can be done if (1) the disputed inheritance has been transferred, even though the inheritance has not been divided and (2) there are other legal subjects who serve as parties, both the Plaintiff, Defendant and Co-Defendant, in addition to heir. These two conditions are benchmarks for determining whether a case is included in an inheritance dispute or an ownership dispute. Thus, there is a wedge between the authority of the District Court and the Religious Court in the field of inheritance. Based on the description above, the District Court can also adjudicate lawsuits on the basis of unlawful acts in "property rights disputes in terms of inheritance".

The slice of authority of the District Court has a very vital legal effect on the absolute competence of the Religious Courts. If an inheritance case is submitted to the Religious Court on the inheritance of a Muslim who has all been transferred and there are other legal subjects other than the heirs who are drawn as one of the parties, the Religious Court must declare that it is not authorized to handle the case. This is because the case is the authority of the District Court in examining and adjudicating disputes over the inheritance of Muslims as decided in the Supreme Court Decision No. 287 K/AG/2012 and Supreme Court Decision No. 177 K/AG/2014. This authority is an absolute authority concerning the distribution of power between judicial bodies (attributie van rechtsmacht) so that it cannot be interfered with by other judicial bodies. Thus, the District Court is the only court that can hear the case (Rochman, 2017).

Basically, inheritance is the absolute authority of the Religious Courts. However, apart from property rights disputes in terms of inheritance, there were cases where the Muslim community wanted to resolve inheritance disputes in general in the District Court. In a case like this, the District Court may accept the application for settlement of the inheritance dispute. The District Court does not violate the law if it accepts and decides on a Muslim inheritance case claim based on the fact that both the plaintiff and the defendant did not fight against the court. As a result, this indicates to the judges that in principle, the plaintiff and defendant no longer follow their religious teachings; or if they still follow it, they choose not to obey the principles of their religion anymore.

In addition, Article 28 of the 1945 Constitution is a valid legal reason for District Court judges to accept, examine, and decide cases of Islamic inheritance disputes. This article also serves as the ideal of unification of national inheritance law, namely differences in customs and religion of the people residing in Indonesia may not be the cause of constitutional violations in carrying out any legal action. The right to obtain settlement of inheritance dispute cases is a human right which is recognized in the 1945 Constitution, and religious status cannot be a barrier. The settlement of inheritance disputes for now can be carried out in the relevant court institutions directly, or through the E-Court as written in Supreme Court Regulation (PERMA) No. 1 of 1999 concerning Electronic Case Administration and Trial in Courts (Yuniar et al., 2021).

CONCLUSION

In practice, it is often ambiguous to define clear boundaries about absolute jurisdiction. It can also happen that a case is considered to meet certain categories so that based on the division of authority, the case belongs to the jurisdiction of the Religious Court, but it turns out to be wrong. One of which concerns inheritance cases. In terms of inheritance, both the Religious Courts and the District Courts have the authority to resolve inheritance disputes. However, the Religious Courts are limited to the settlement of the inheritance of people who submit to Islam and its rules. Meanwhile, people outside of Islam can settle inheritance disputes in the District Court. However, the District
Court also still has a gap to settle disputes for the Islamic community. So far, the absolute authority of the Religious Courts in terms of inheritance includes the determination of who becomes the heir and how much of the share is obtained (the subject), the determination of the inheritance (the object), and the determination of the implementation of the distribution of the inheritance (transfer of ownership rights to the inheritance). These three things are “inheritance disputes in terms of property rights”. Meanwhile, the District Court has the authority to adjudicate lawsuits on the basis of unlawful acts in “property rights disputes in terms of inheritance”.

As for the reasons that can strengthen the authority of the District Court in accepting and deciding the inheritance dispute of the Muslim community, the judge may not reject the case submitted for any reason; there is a possibility that the community is Muslim but does not submit to Islamic law; and differences in customs and religion of the people residing in Indonesia must not be the cause of constitutional violations in carrying out any legal action. Therefore, it is hoped that the boundaries that distinguish inheritance disputes that are included in the authority of the Religious Courts and inheritance disputes that are included in the authority of the District Courts are detailed through laws and regulations that can provide legal certainty for law enforcers and justice seekers.

REFERENCES


