

PRIVATE ISSUES IN PESAT IN LATE COLONIAL JAVA

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ABSTRACT

Pesat was a local newspaper in Semarang published in the 1940s during the late colonial era. The establishment of Pesat could not be separated from the couple of I.M. Sajoeti and S.K. Trimurti, the owners of the newspaper, who were best-known as activists of Political Party and senior journalists in Semarang at that time. As a local newspaper, the content of this publication differed considerably from the other local newspaper which mostly focused on news and advertisements. Pesat continuously published some information that had not been addressed by the media anywhere before. Pesat published transparently on the problems of family life and household. In particular, Pesat pointed the problems of marriage which placed women in domestic area in which they were not permitted to speak about the problems they were facing to other people in the public domain. This meant that a matter concerning the life of household which was previously considered private space was now published as news available to newspaper readers.

Keywords: Pesat, private, colonial, Semarang, Java.

ABSTRAK

Pesat adalah sebuah koran lokal di Semarang yang diterbitkan pada 1940-an selama era kolonial akhir. Pembentukan Pesat tak lepas dari pasangan IM Sajoeti dan SK Trimurti, pemilik surat kabar, yang dikenal sebagai aktifis Partai Politik dan wartawan senior di Semarang pada waktu itu. Sebagai koran lokal, isi dari publikasi ini berbeda jauh dari koran lokal lainnya yang berfokus pada berita dan iklan. Pesat terus menerbitkan beberapa informasi yang belum ditangani oleh media manapun sebelumnya. Dalam publikasi mereka, Pesat dipublikasikan secara transparan pada kehidupan masalah keluarga dalam rumah tangga. Secara khusus, diangkat masalah seputar pernikahan yang menempatkan perempuan dalam ruang domestik dan perempuan tidak diperbolehkan untuk berbicara tentang masalah yang mereka hadapi kepada orang lain dalam domain publik. Ini berarti bahwa masalah yang berkenaan dengan kehidupan rumah tangga yang sebelumnya dianggap ruang pribadi yang ada di luar keluarga diizinkan untuk tahu tentang itu sekarang telah diterbitkan sebagai berita tersedia bagi pembaca surat kabar.

Kata kunci: Pesat, pribadi, kolonial, Semarang, Jawa.

INTRODUCTION

In the beginning of twentieth century, some newspapers were published in Semarang. The best known papers were *De Locomotief*, *Tambur Melajoe*, *Sinar Hindia*, *Pandji Timoer*, *Daia Oapaja*, *Pesat*, and there were still many others. All newspapers contained news about government information as well as ad-

vertisements. *Pesat*, however, presented the public with content that was totally different from the others. As a local newspaper, *Pesat* continuously published a column that discussed family problem, especially marriage problems that could not be solved, such as polygamy and the fate of illegitimate children who were born outside marriage. Those problems traditionally were

placed on the domestic sector, so that would never be brought to public. The case for keeping family problem in the domestic sector were due to the assumption in Javanese culture that speaking about household problems was considered to be washing dirty linen in public and therefore shameful. The rules of Javanese family about household problems being part of the domestic sector were written in some Javanese texts, such as the nineteenth century *Serat Piwulang* (Paku Buwono IX 1983: 119).

Even though there were strict ethical rules about keeping family secrets private in the past, the expression of family problem was over done by some Javanese women. Raden Adjeng Kartini was one of those who expressed a family problem to public, especially about her private experiences, as a second wife in a polygamous marriage to Adipati Ario Singgih Djojo Adiningrat (Coté, 2008). The same case also happened to Partini, a daughter of Prince Mangkunegara VII Surakarta who expressed her marriage life problem to other people in the form of book (Partini, 1989). But all those expressions of domestic sector were only done personally and it was different from that expression done by *Pesat* which expressed by a community.

The condition is worth analyzing in this article, how *Pesat* brought up domestic sector to surface in 1939, why the problem could be discussed in public in that period, and how society gave response about giving place a domestic sector to public that was previously kept secret. Historical approach is used in this paper by observing Semarang as a public space that is prone to change about private life to become discussion, also how the awareness of privacy in family could exist in Javanese family and finally by looking at closely how *Pesat* brought up the problem to surface.

METHOD OF RESEARCH

Method of historical research applying gender approach was employed in this research. Accordingly, gender analysis was not only initiated when the conceptual framework was constructed, but also when reading of the sources was performed. Therefore, sensitivity to all collected data became important. It is due to the fact that problems related to private matters, particularly within family life, were often difficult to obtain (Charter, 1991: 1). Such difficulty occurred because data related to private problems in family were associated with problems of woman who were subordinated in patriarchal society (Scott, 1988).

The strongest reason why data regarding private matter, particularly associated with woman, was hard to obtain because the existing historical data to date seemed that they were written only for men. As a result, data regarding private matters were considered unimportant and was not necessary to be written so that historical writing applying this perspective also became limited. Such assumption emerges because the influence of historical canonization on historiography in Indonesia is still strong (Legene, 2007: 188-204) so that historians often find problems in obtaining the desired sources. The canonization in history, particularly myth of the difficulty of obtaining private sources associated with problems encountered by women, according to Legene and Waaldijk, can be conducted if historians are able to do critical reading on every source found (Legene, 2007: 188-204).

The primary sources of this research were archival sources, statistical data, newspapers-magazines, and memoirs. Information from newspapers and magazines would mean nothing if historians only pay attention to the narration presented. Therefore, information

on the writers, background of the owners, date and year of the publication, circumstances during the publication, and the target market of society were some of the questions that should be answered beforehand.

Likewise, the treatment of historians for memoirs would also profoundly determine the narration produced because memoirs basically presented deeper and more expressive information which contribute to create historian's imagination on the conducted study. However, memoirs were often full of the dramatization of events so that an event which was actually ordinary was often exaggerated. Therefore, limiting the imagination that existed after reading the memoirs was important to perform by comparing the memoirs with the formal sources. The entire data were then gathered, read, interpreted, compared, and then narrated. In such process, circumstance and narration produced by men and women, of course, should be treated equally. Like men, women had also their own history so that historians should accommodate circumstance and narration recorded in those data (Scott, 1986:1053-1075).

Furthermore, it is also important to pay attention on clear concept to explain the scope associated with private life in this research. Thus, the following quotation is important to discuss. "Is it possible to write a history of private life? Or does the notion "private" refer to different periods to such different states and values that relations of continuity and difference among them cannot be established?" (Charter, 1991: 1)

According to Charter, historical writing on private life can be performed through important changes occurring in society because the changes of private life actually occur along with the surrounding social changes. In line with Charter's concept, important concept in

this research began with an idea that private life was a historical reality, having different characteristics in different time and space in human life. As a historical reality, private life can be observed in the historical traces produced such as narration in particular work (Prost, 1991: 3).

On different occasion, Waaldijk emphasizes that in the process of industrialization, modernization and capitalization the awareness of private life is an important matter which often experience many changes (Waaldijk, 1993: 16-17). However, changes hidden in social changes were often unobserved (Goffman, 1974). Using sharper sentences, Prost and Vincent, also studying the history of private life in Europe, explains that private life is actually a part of historical processes which may experience changes. As a part of historical process, changes will occur along with the changes in the social life itself (Prost, 1991: 3).

RESULT OF RESEARCH

Colonial City of Semarang, a Place where *Pesat* was First Issued

The developing of awareness of the private domain of family life becomes important in the social life of Semarang at the beginning of the twentieth century. Industry in Semarang in the early twentieth century gave an open opportunity for women to take part as female workers. The condition brought about significant change, many women worked in industrial area and they did not only stay at home like they did in the previous period. Moreover, Semarang in the beginning of twentieth century was an important industrial city due to the development of heavy and light equipment industries. Industrial

activities increased as the city was the centre of Dutch colonial government in the northern coast of Java. Accordingly, Semarang grew as a centre of trade, and several companies were established to produce a wide variety of personal necessities, especially for European people. Some industries that were important to note were industries of European clothing and accessories, cosmetics, textiles, ice, drinking water, mosquito coils, and cigarette packs which had been previously unknown.

Industrialization in Semarang commenced when the colonial government was established as the centre of colonial administration in the northern coast of Java in the eighteenth century and a governor was appointed to perform the administrative function. As time went by, this industrialization grew stronger when the colonial government implemented the liberal economic system, giving private industrialists more opportunity to establish companies. The most important development was the establishment of the sugar industry in suburban areas, and also metal, steel, and brass industries (Koleksi Arnas, 1977: xiii). In addition, a wide variety of industries making products for both the office and the household were established. This occurred due to the increasing requirement for modern products. Moreover, colonial society started to use a wide variety of modern household appliances to meet their demand (Yuliati, 2005: 265). These conditions directly contributed to the change of people's life style. The change of habits not only occurred in the utilization of more modern household appliances, but also in the habit of wearing factory produced clothing, the use of cosmetics, and the habit of enjoying night entertainment, and so on.

Along with growing industrialization, education in Semarang also experi-

enced significant developments. Semarang was an important place for education in different strata, from village schools to secondary schools. The *Koleksi Arnas* archive explained the various kinds of educational establishments in Semarang. There were public schools consisting of European schools such as *ELS (Europeesche Lagere School)*, *MULO (Meer Uitbreid Lager Onderwijs/secondary schools)*, *HBS (Hogere Burger School)*, and *HIS (Hollandsch Indlandsche School)*, local schools (the *2de klasse* schools), village schools, and finally vocational schools (carpentry schools and advance course for family skills) (Koleksi Arnas, 1977: xlv-xlviii). As well as carpentry schools for boys, Kartini and van Deventer schools for girls were also established in Semarang.

These educational institutions not only met the demand for bureaucrats and workers in industry, but also educated teachers for the expanding educational system. The establishment of educational institutions was also an important part of colonial policy as formulated by ethical thinkers. One course for training teachers, especially female teachers, was developed in the Special School for Ladies (*Meisjes Volgs Schoolen*) (Locher-Scholten, 2000: 38). In this special school, knowledge of children's education and domestic skills, including sewing, embroidery and making *batik* became the main focus. Unfortunately, the establishment of all formal institutions was only responded to with enthusiasm by members of upper-class society such as bureaucrats because they wanted to educate their children so that they would then find employment (Brugmans, 1987: 179). Meanwhile, motivation of study in formal education was still inadequate in the lower-middle class.

Along with the development of industry and education in Semarang, as

time went by, there were some important political developments. Beginning with the establishment of village schools, education for women was developed through the establishment of Van Deventer School by van Deventer's family in 1912. The establishment of this school contributed significantly to the development of Semarang women, especially upper-middle class girls, such as the daughters of bureaucrats, who studied formally in this school (ARA collection, no. 2.20.38.03).

In addition to the educational field, Semarang was also an important arena for the development of organization and political parties. Some organizations that had previously existed in big cities in Java on 1920s, such as Budi Utomo, the organization of young intellectuals in Java; Serikat Islam, the organization of Muslim traders, Perindra (Persatuan Indonesesia Raya) and Marhein Indonesia, the organization of nationalist people, which expected man and women to be a participant. Meanwhile, the women organization established in Semarang since 1930s like Isteri Indonesia, the organization of nationalist women, Aisjiah and JIBDA (*Jong Islamienten Bond Dames Afdeeling*), the organization of Muslim women, which then joined on Perikatan Perempuan Indonesia Semarang (P3S/Semarang Women's Organization) (*Keoetamaan Isteri*, 1941).

It was in Semarang that Serikat Islam, a socio-political organization composed of Javanese traders, changed its direction from Serikat Islam 'Putih' to Serikat Islam 'Merah'. This happened in 1920, along with the increase of intensity of political direction in the circle of Javanese intellectuals in Semarang city, had started to introduce a revolutionary political dimension to their activities. Such revolutionary organizational background grew easily in Semarang com-

pared to other cities because there were a wide socio-economic discrepancy in society due to industrialization, and high social mobility. Serikat Islam 'Merah' then performed various important political activities, such as mobilizing labor strike, which increased significantly from the 1920s to the 1940s. The mobilization of laborers in strike action occurred easily because the majority of Serikat Islam Merah sympathizers in Semarang were laborers in train companies and industry in Semarang at the beginning of twentieth century (Yuliati, 2005: 278). Indeed, Semarang was often called "the Red City" at this time.

Developing Public Awareness

The development of education in the beginning of twentieth century evidence in the establishment of village schools, industrialization, and job allocation in Semarang as well as political dynamics from 1920 to the 1940s, increased public awareness of the private and public domains in the life of Javanese family. Through education, industry, and politics, society recognized the importance of providing space for women in the public domain and the importance of family private issues to be resolved as community issues. Social change in the city significantly influenced and empowered private awareness, but this empowerment had so far been unexpressed in newspapers and other publications. An interesting example is family life. In the Javanese family, women traditionally possessed a very special position in the domestic domain. Moreover the position of women in domestic space could be seen not only from the patterns in how children were treated but also the different opportunities for men and women to actualize themselves in public. The same thing

happened in education. Generally the education curriculum both in public school or vocational school gave clear evidence that there were imbalanced opportunities for men and women, who had much more limited choice of roles. The worst thing in marriage life was that a woman was never permitted to propose a divorce. If any problems occurred in the household, only the husband could file for divorce. This meant that women could remain trapped in difficult marriage. It means that the divorce issue was an interesting construction in Javanese society in Semarang in the early twentieth century because there was not any marriage institutions that formally regulated process of marriage (Amini, 2009). As a result, women did not have any way of filing for divorce. Such conditions were made worse by the phenomenon of arranged marriage which still often occurred.

On the other hand, Javanese families strongly emphasize the importance of maintaining harmony in their relationship. Therefore, every problem emerging in family life was silenced so that it would not be recognized by the others. There were various methods to muffle the problem, such as discussing problems only with the spouse or closest relatives, or passing over the emerging problem so that no one would recognize it. However, societal changes occurring in the beginning of twentieth century through industrialization, education, employment, and activities of socio-political organization had changed the private awareness in the family domain.

Therefore, it was not surprising that awareness about private issues in the family colored socio-political organizations' policies and their outcomes. Evidence of a growing awareness of the need to improve family life was the establishment of *Badan Perlindungan Perempuan Indonesia dalam Perkawinan* (BPPIP/

Agency of Indonesian Women Protection in Marriage) by Mrs. S. Mangoen-sarkoro (Anon. 1939) and *Badan Perrindungan Perkawinan Anak-anak* (Agency of Children Marriage Protection) by Dr. Soetomo (1928). Both agencies paid special attention to marriage problems that were not resolved in BPPIP, or child marriage problems which were common in Javanese society at the time (BPPIP, 1939).

In Semarang, the condition of women was an important social issue for the activists belonging to the various social and political organizations. They struggled hard to bring matters from the private domain to the public. Since it was first established in Semarang in 1932, this branch of *Isteri Indonesia* had done some replayed efforts about the importance of women to get opportunity in public space. The results were successful. In 1939 Soekaptinah Soenarjo Mangoenpoespito was designated as the first woman in the City Council in Semarang in 1938.

Semarang women activist then gathered in *Perikatan Perkoempoelan Perempuan Semarang* (P3S/Semarang Women's Organization) established in Semarang in 1938, (*Keoetamaan Isteri*, 1941), and S.K. Trimurti through their publications expressed their struggle. The most significant influence on the establishment of P3S was the improvement of the spirit for women to do their role (Salim, 2007; Soebajio, 1982). It was also because of various kinds of woman organizations that joined P3S, like *Isteri Indonesia*, *Aisjiah*, and JIBDA, they contributed some improvement of skill for women. Such programmed or activities as sewing, cooking, training, and doing art activities became main programmed of P3S, so that the role of P3S for the development of thinking and skill for women become crucial.



Figure 1. *Pesat* Newspaper

Pesat in the Middle of Changing Society

When various important changes were presented in social life, media (especially in Malay language) served as very important tool for mass propaganda, because printed news was a new form of modernization that was so far not presented and was still in Dutch language. So, when newspaper was in Malay language made it easier for Javanese to absorb the content of the news (Serikat Penerbit Surat Kabar, 1971). Moreover at the same time education was growing significantly. The process of education for people in society was proved by the emergence of schools for the elementary level in every part of city in Semarang. Therefore, newspapers were warmly welcomed in this city, almost all newspaper were printed in big numbers of papers. The reading interest society grew significantly, and reading became a new lifestyle where people always waited expectantly for newly published newspapers to get the latest news and better information than before. The data of literacy level in society, especially on native people was 5%. (Volkstelling, 1920) In Semarang, the newspapers owners varied, starting from communities of Europe, Japan, China, the Middle East and Java. All newspapers were presented in various languages: Dutch (*De Locomotief*), Malay (*Pandji Timoer*), and Javanese (*Pasowan*), for example.

On 9 February 1939, *Pesat* published at the first time. As a local news paper, *Pesat* published on a wide variety of topics, including business, trade, and science. However, there was one characteristic that difference from the others: there was a special space for family issues.

From its first publication in 1939, the content of the newspaper focused on family issues, particularly problems that arose in marriage. Some articles that appeared were about issues on mixed marriage (between native and foreigner), women's right in marriage and, most importantly, a column on the resolution of marriage issues. Of course, a discussion of marriage issues entering the public domain through publication became significantly important.



Figure 2. Household rubric in *Pesat*, 9 February 1939, 1st year. No. 20. P. 2

Oedjian Hidoep.**K O E M A R I A H**

(Autobiographie seorang gadis anak seorang B. B. ambtenaar).

Oleh: Penderita.

Bab III.

Insjaf atas kekliroannja.

Koemariah, jang telah terdjang kit penjakit sombong itoe, ta' ta roe, bahwa perboeatannja itoe menjakitkan hati orang lain.

Ja! Ini boleh dikatakan, boeah dari pendidikan, dan timangan iboenja. Dia merasa lebih tinggi, lebih mulia dari lainja. Merasa bahwa dia masih dapat menjajap derajat dan kemoelaaan hidoep, lebih baik dan lebih enak dari sekarang, soal ia berkawin dengan seorang anak-timoer jang berpangkat tinggi, bergadjih besar, hidoep dalam seba keenakan. Soeratoe kemilikan jang di jawan dihatinja moela ketji, roepanja telah termakan betoel-betoel dihatinja.

—„Ja, teampi lidak sejara som bong.”

—„Sombong? Sekaliz tidak!” djawab Koemariah dengan air moekanja makin merah.

—„Dik” kata njonjah Soemo lagi, dengan sabar, „saja kasih tahoe kepada adinda, haraplah adinda terima dengan hati tenang, dan tidak lekas marah. Adinda soelah menjadi orang toea, boekan? Maka dari itoe adinda tra' boleh lekas marah, dan mengambil kepoatoesan dengan tergesa2, sebagai lakoenja anak ke- jil.”

Koemariah doedoe, sekarang mendjadi reda amarahnja. Bak-

(bastard). In Javanese culture, children who were born outside marriage bond known as bastard (illegal child). The term of bastard would create stigma in society all of his life that he was born from man and woman without legal status. Therefore it was very crucial for *Pesat* to discuss about the matter and how to deal with the children with illegal status from the discussion emerged a conclusion that the birth of bastard was the negative impact of free sex and adultery done by adults. Therefore it was urgent for *Pesat* to prioritize morality improvement for adults so the birth of bastard could be prevented.

During this period, the discussion about bastard became an important controversy. Some women activist, like Maria Ulfah Sarjono, woman activist in *Isteri Indonesia* once suggested government to make a clear and definite law concerning with the fate of bastard. The suggestion was based on the idea that becoming bastard was not his fault but he fault done by his parent. Therefore by applying a comprehensive policy about the right of illegal child would make them more protected from the existing social stigma. Up to the end of co-

Figure 3. Record of Autobiography in *Pesat*, 24 Feb. 1939, 1st year. No. 22, p. 2

Beside opening marriage consultation bureau, *Peat* also published autobiographies of women from Javanese anonymously. The autobiography was published regularly as a regular feature, with different name and content in every condition.

It also happened with controversial issues like baby born illegally

KI TJOKRO**Melindoengi anak haram.****Menolong mentjarikan bapanja anak zina.**

Tiada sedikit djoemlahnja anak-anak jg. terlahir diloea pagar pernikahan. Anak haram jg. djadi tanda-alamat dari keroesakan mo-reel masjarakat. Diantarania ada jg. teroes djalan kekoeboer, terboenoeh oieh iboe-bapanja, dan ada poela jg. teroes hidoep. Dari toehan dia mendapat hak hidoep, tetapi dari pergaolan ramai, dia tetap anak-haram jang terlahir diloea pagar perkawinan jg. sah.

zina, terdesak soepaja mentjarikan bapanja anak-haram.

Peladjaran Keristen pada awalnja memandang, bahwa mentjarikan bapanja anak zina djadi soeatoe ketjemaran bagi kesopanan, atau sekoerangnja djadi memandang loemrah hasilnja perboeatan haram, dengan tiada langsoeng meloemirahkan pokok pangkalnja, jaitoe perzinaas dan pertjampoeran diloea perkawinan. Negeri Be-

mata-mata. Orang bergaoel lelaki perempoean dengan perantaraan kerk atau tiada dengan perantaraan kerk toch sama sadja, asal soeka sama soeka. Achirnja dapatlah djalan perdamaian, jaitoe timboelnja atoeran kawin kerk dan kawin wet.

Oersoesan memberikan perlindoengan, kepada anak-anak zina mendjadi soal. Mr. Maria Ulfah, berasa amat kasihan kepada anak-anak-zina dan kepada iboenja. Ia ingin meminta kepada pemerintah soepaja diharoeskan dinegeri ini mentjarikan bapanja anak itoe, agar bapanja toeroet menangoeng djawab bagi keselamatan anak zinanja. Systeem pergoendi-

Figure 4. Record of Autobiography in *Pesati*, 25 July 1939, 1st year, No. 40, p. 2

lonial government, however, the solution about the improvement of the fate of illegal child was still unsolved. Among the debate on illegal child, the role of *Pesat* became important since it could present the reader open discussion about the matter.

Pesat also provided a column of correspondence. The letters were from men and women with diverse problems about marriage and household problems, as shown in table 1.

At this table shows, a variety of family issues that had been previously

restricted to the private domain were now being expressed in the public domain. From the problem that was considered taboo and placed in private domain then it could be brought up to surface in public. Although most problems were about marriage faced by men or women but the way of approaching the opposite sex was also discussed in this marriage bureau. So many matters on marriage problems published by *Pesat* were mostly experienced by women, only some cases were about men's problems.

Table 1. *Pesat* Advice on Marriage and Household Problem, 9 February – 8 December 1939

Type of problem	Identity of questioner	Solution
A Wife abandoned by husband by means of divorce	Woman	Should prioritize children's interests. The questioner was guilty because of giving full freedom to her husband without any supervision Should improve soft skills, such as smiling, well-dressed, fashionable, gentle, entertaining. Do not trust too much in organization. Do not have a very suspicious mind.
A student who wanted to get married soon, but still studying at school	Man	Should start to restrict intercommunication, reduce watching movies. Do more exercise and heavy work outs.
A woman who started to fall in love to a man, how to express it	Woman	Should investigate the identity of the partner If it was without expectation, it meant a true love. Questioner should be grateful. Woman should be straightforward, not bashful.
A teacher had an inter-communication-limited, illiterate, rural wife	Man	Do not get divorced. Teaching wife reading and etiquette.
A young man who wanted to get married soon, but did not have a partner. Besides, his older sister had not gotten married yet	Man	Be straightforward to parents in order to find partner for him. Get married in advance or wait.
Ways to get along with woman	Man	Get along with woman comfortably, and a beautiful woman was a woman who could attract her partner's desire.
A mature, working, unmarried young woman	Woman	Simply because she had not found

The Way *Pesat* Overcome Gender Construction which so far Happened

Looking at closely the presence of *Pesat* especially in first year of its edition, there were some cases to discuss. First, the problem of 'perselingkuhan' (love affairs) happened in family life. In this construction, the role of women to expose the problem to public was considered taboo. It appeared that women didn't have any chance to expose if they were surrounded by the problem. Husband having other 'wife' was so far kept secret from public discussion. And also about women who want to propose a divorce when her husband had a love affair outside. In this case woman were not allowed to propose a divorce, it happened until the rule of marriage became effective in 1955. The marriage problems that were underground so far could be presented regularly by *Pesat*. Narration of *Pesat* on love affairs problem could be observed as follow.

"I am a woman who has been abandoned by my husband by means of divorce. Two months have passed by, and I'm living in a house with four children. Nine years ago, my parents forced me to marry a well-educated man. They said that this man would be a good, responsible husband and a leader through all my life. I loved my husband very much. We had lived together for nine years, and we have four children. A few years ago, we moved to Semarang. At the beginning, everything was running well. But, after my husband became an activist in a political organization, he started to come home after midnight, sometimes at 2. When I asked him, he always said that he had just come from the organization. Then, I realized my mistake; I had let my husband have relationships without any supervision." (*Pesat*, 9 February 1939,

1st year. No. 20, p. 2).

After sending in letters about their marriage problems, the letter writers would receive answers from the editorial staff in the following months. The editorial staff would only give answer and solution if the questioners provided evidence of their identity. Questions without the name of the sender indicated that s/he was not asking the question seriously. This is shown in the reply of the editorial staff as follows.

"Dear 'wife' in Semarang,
Your question cannot be posted and cannot be answered. This is because you did not provide your real name and address. Because of this your letter seems like an anonymous letter and you do not seem to be asking serious and honest question." (*Pesat* March 1939, 1st year, No. 26, 24, p. 4).

From marriage problem presented by *Pesat* seemed that the paper not only brought up the problem to surface but also the answer from redactor about how to deal with the matter.

The second problem discussed in *Pesat* was about illegal child. In the existing social construction, illegal child (bastard) got stigma as the one born from illegal relationship outside marriage and woman and also the child were considered guilty. The example of stigma for woman was in the form of isolation or being isolated as a consequence of delivering baby from illegal marriage and she was considered immoral. The same thing happened to the child, considered immoral, a child with no good moral. The problem was kept secret since it was seen as social stigma, then illegal child belonged to private domain that must be prevented from exposing. The way *Pesat* discussed the problem was in the form of open writing or article. In this way, writer and

newspaper redactor made intensive communication continuously. Discussion about illegal child shown in two letters as follows. First from reader named Mbok Merto and Sadarilah. They wrote in their letter that a child born from illegal couple must be guided to find who father was. The child should then get his right as a child and it was not only woman who was found guilty about the case (*Pesat* 7 August 1939, 1st year, No. 42, p. 2-3).

In responding the letter, S. Tjokro wrote about the protection of illegal child, one thing could be done was finding the father of the child. If they could meet each other then there would be communication so that the child would get his right. Meanwhile about social stigma on woman who delivered the illegal child, S. Tjokro further explained that it was the parents who were considered guilty. That was the social problem that needed correcting to prevent illegal child form being born (*Pesat*, 23 August 1939, 1st year, No. 44, p. 10).

From the problem brought up by *Pesat*, it was clear that S.K. Trimurti and the editors of *Pesat* were very sensitive observing the marriage problems that so far unsolved. The topic chosen by S.K. Trimurti and the editors by focusing on those two problems indicated that the problems were social stigma in that period and it was an indication of unbalance gender construction. From the problems of marriage by *Pesat*, we could see how the imbalance was tried to be solved by *Pesat* editors.

CONCLUSION

For the women in Semarang, newspapers were important for communicating households issues to other people. The social construction of gender previously positioned family issues in

the private domain, and other persons were not allowed to know about any problems that were encountered. Therefore, through the *Pesat* newspaper, Javanese families actually obtained space to narrate important problems which were normally unexpressed in the public domain. Narrating household issues in the media did not occur accidentally, but was a part of the historical background.

The important point is that the awareness appearing in *Pesat* was a metaphor of the existing phenomenon of societal change. The three important elements in the transfer of private issue to public one were Semarang as the space, society as the media readers, and the editorial staff of the newspaper as a provider of the communication channel. In other words, the transfer of marriage issues from the private to the public sphere eventually could not be separated from the significance of these three components and the way they changed existing gender construction.

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