MEDIA AND ETHNIC CONFLICT IN WEST BORNEO
A Case Study of the Conflict between the Madurese and the Dayaks in 1997
Media dan Konflik Etnis di Kalimantan Barat; Studi Kasus atas Konflik antara Dayak dan Madura Tahun 1997
Zaenuddin1 dan Irwan Abdullah2
Program Studi Ilmu Perbandingan Agama
Sekolah Pascasarjana Universitas Gadjah Mada

ABSTRAK

Bagaimana media itu menyajikan keterlibatan etnis dalam konflik, dipaparkan dalam tesis ini. Sumber utama dipaparkan dari Akarya Pontianak Polda dan Komaps Data dikumpulkan secara kualitatif dan diamalkan melalui kajian literatur. Dalam teks ini, disajikan fenomena penting mengenai isi konflik dan perspektif orang-orang dalam konflik, meski masa yang lalu yang dimasuk dalam media, situasi masa lalu usaha-usaha penyelidikan konflik, empat fakta yang menyebabkan konflik. Pengetahuan dan pendekatan yang digunakan adalah teori discourse. Secara serius, tesis ini menanggapi dari fenomena mensajikan konflik antara etnis Dayak dan etnis Madura di Kalimantan Barat pada tahun 1997 serta yang diungkapkan dalam media.

Kata kunci: konflik etnis, Kalimantan Barat, Dayak, Madura, Melayu.

1. B.S Suprapto Komplek STAIN Pontianak No. 19 Pontianak.
INTRODUCTION

This work attempts to analyze and evaluate conflicts among ethnic groups that have broken out several times in West Borneo. The conflicts have caused people to pay attention because they have left many problems for human life both among the people who were involved in the conflicts and the people in West Borneo in general. The conflicts involved not only two ethnic groups but also other groups in West Borneo such as the Chinese, Malay, Madurese and Dayak. The conflicts have broken out since 1950s, and the last conflict was the conflict between the Malayans and the Madurese which broke out in the year 1999. Some researchers worked on this conflict and analyzed it from different perspectives such as Munawar, Bokran Suni, Syarif Ibrahim Al-Qadry, Ibrahim, and Ria Hayatun Nur Taqwa. Ethnic conflicts in West Borneo need to be taken seriously in order to understand and subsequently be able to prevent the emergence of such conflicts. This topic becomes ever more important to be discussed and observed in order to be able to help people who were in the conflicts and all people in West Borneo to rebuild and create better relationships and mutual understanding.

The media plays an important role in the modern world. Almost all people in this world use different types of media which have become important means of communication with others. Media today are marked by rapid developments in all countries in the world including Indonesia. People rely on the media to get information to satisfy their daily needs in all aspects of life such as economic, social, political and other individual and group needs. Print media are one type of media that is used by people to find information about issues related to all aspects of human life. Reading the press, people obtain information about other people and their activities. Because of this, the press affects human life in many different ways. The impact of the press on the dynamics of human life depends on many factors such as economics, culture, politics, society, place, and time.

Analyzing issues presented by the media is one way to understand people's activities and social phenomena. This kind of analytical model has not only been used by people who are in "communication" studies but also by other scholars in a wide range of disciplines. It is interesting to work on the issues of conflict as presented by media, especially print media during the New Order Era in Indonesia, because the situation of print media during that time involved, at times conflicting, allegations, that is, professionally to serve the people or to be loyal to the government that had oppressed the media with their power. The government had dominated all aspects of human life including social institution like the press. For that reason this work attempts to analyze the role of the press.
in presenting cases of conflict in Indonesia, especially in West Borneo, in order to know the ideology of certain press media and how far the government of the New Order controlled the press, this work attempts to describe and analyze the issues of the conflict presented in the press media.

Media Construction of Ethnic Conflict

There are two major issues which emerged in the news about the conflict between the Dayak and the Madurese in West Borneo in 1997. First and foremost, the two newspapers reported the situation of the people and the areas of the conflict during the time of the conflict. Second, the two papers reported about the efforts of people, both the government which was supported by the ABRI, and the people from the ethnic groups, who were involved in the conflict, to resolve the conflict.

The situation of the conflict was described as consisting of many aspects such as the factors affecting the conflict, process of the conflict, the appearance of the conflict in many different places around West Borneo, and the people who are involved in the conflict including refugees. The efforts of people consisted of different ways to resolve the conflict such as gathering the ethnic and religious leaders in a peace meeting, performing Aidil rituals as the way to calm down the people, the announcement of the local government and the ABRI to the people who were in the conflict to stop and avoid fighting and not to bring any "sharp weapons" as well as the declaration of peace pledges by ethnic and religious leaders of both sides.

Drawing on above, I suggest that the news of the conflict in 1997 presented by the two newspapers are consistent in terms of continuity. The two print sources reported the situation of the conflict every day in order to inform people of the condition of the conflict. The Akasia Pontianak Post as the biggest and oldest local newspapers reported the news of the conflict in more detail than Kompas. The Akasia Pontianak Post, on the one hand, always put the news of the conflict which covered important issues in the headlines of the newspaper. This was because the Akasia Pontianak Post seriously paid attention to helping the resolution policies of the local government which was supported by the ABRI. Kompas, on the other hand, also presented the news about the conflict, but not always in the headlines. Kompas is leading national newspaper that reports not only the news from West Borneo but the news from all areas in this country, even international news. Nevertheless, Kompas seriously paid attention to the conflict as we can see from the continuity of its reporting and the content of the news about the conflict.
The news of the conflict presented by the two newspapers was helpful for the readers, especially for people in West Borneo. Information about the efforts to stop and handle the conflict were needed by the people who were in the conflict. The local government and the ABRI were supported by the newspapers that reported their announcements, the reconciliation pledge of ethnic leaders and many other issues that supported the efforts at reconciliation. Those issues presented by the media made the readers, especially those who were in the conflict, learn about and understand the conditions of the conflict not only in their own place but also in other places. The presentation of the issues was meaningful for as it allowed them to decide to stop the fight soon because they knew that their leaders had agreed to peace already. These are the positive aspects of the coverage of conflict as carried out by the two newspapers.

From the issues presented in the two newspapers, I also identified some groups of people who were presented as the actors in the conflict. Moreover, they had vested interests in the conflict. The actors were those who provoked the grass roots and young people from the two ethnic groups to attack and to expel their opponents. The actors were also from both the Dayak and the Madurese who had individual interests such as their social position and political support. These actors were also related to the political situation under which the conflict broke out before the election in 1997. Besides those actors there were also local actors who had group interests such as expelling people from their areas and banning the newcomers from coming back to the area again. That people did these actions was because they were provoked by those actors that used the issues of ethnic and religious solidarity. In this conflict, ethnic and religious issues were used and politicized by the elite actors for their vested interests.

The second question concerns the interests of the media presenting the news of the conflict. Most of the news of the conflict presented by the two papers addressed the situation of the conflict. It can be seen that almost all of the news supported the local government and the ABRI policies in solving the conflict. Moreover, the two newspapers backed the government and the ABRI which caused them to look like the voices of the government and the ABRI. The news mainly talked about how the government would or had already solved the conflict, how the ABRI organized the ethnic and religious leaders to be in peace, how both the local government and the ABRI invited the Dayak and the Madurese to stop fighting and other similar news. This kind of news shows us that the two media were controlled by the government and thus supported the political powers.¹
The two newspapers tended to be the government and the ABRI’s voice because of two reasons: the political atmosphere and interests of the media itself. The conflict broke out at the time of the general election in 1997. During that time, the New Order Regime under President Suharto was still strong. The government had a history of controlling the media, including the press. The government that was dominated by Golkar tried to gain the votes of the people in the election and supported President Suharto to be the president again. For that reason, Golkar attempted to get the sympathy of the people in Indonesia in general and, in this case, in West Borneo more specifically. By showing the power of the local government through the role of the ABRI, which was politically a part of Golkar, in resolving the conflict, the government hoped to gain the sympathy of people in West Borneo. Because the government and the ABRI (read: Golkar) knew that the Alhaji Foktanak Post was the most influential and the oldest newspaper that possessed a lot of readers in this province and that *Kompas*, as a national newspaper, had a large number of readers throughout Indonesia, they tried to use and force the two newspapers to present the news of the conflict as they wanted in order to further their interests. This condition forced the two newspapers to consider their situation in order to put themselves in the right position.

The own interests of the two newspapers are also strong reasons for them to intensively present the news about the conflict. Both newspapers had strong interests in placing themselves in a position between the political powers and society. They wanted to get the support and trust from the people as their readers, on the one hand, and the support and guarantee of their further existence from the government, on the other hand. The two newspapers decided to get both the support of the government and the people at the same time. That’s why they presented the news about the conflict in a way that supported the government policies and gave as much as possible information about the conflict so that the readers understood that they gave factual information and data of the conflict to the readers. Analyzing the content of the conflict, I argue that the two newspapers got political benefits and market advantages presenting the issues of the conflict between the Dayak and the Madurese in West Borneo the way they did. The market advantages were not only of an economic nature but also concerned the trust of the readers which would become “fanatical” readers who would trust them even more than they did initially.

Answering the last question, this work attempts to describe the statements and perceptions of the people regarding the conflict between the Dayak and the Madurese in West Borneo in 1997 as presented by the
two newspapers. Referring to the detailed analysis in chapter four, there are six points that represent the perception and knowledge of the people represented by the two newspapers. First of all, the people perceived that the conflict was an ethnic conflict although religious issue emerged later in the conflict as well. The religious issues were used by the elite actors of the conflict to provoke their supporters in order to raise their religious solidarity. Because they experienced difficulties and a loss of influence and power, they tried to get support from other people provoking them by saying that the conflict was a religious conflict. Second, there was an infraction of human rights by the actors of the conflict. The people perceived that the conflict involved the violation of human rights such as the right of life, the right to live in the world free from fear and intimidation and the right of children and women to have access to education and health services. The actors should be judged in the court of justice. Law should be empowered in Indonesia, especially in West Borneo. Third, there were the intellectual and elite actors in the conflict who had vested interests. The elite actors used the moment of the conflict to get political support in the social structure and secure their political position. Those actors were the "provocateurs" of the conflict so that the conflict increased in intensity and became the largest conflict of the conflicts between the Dayak and the Madurese in West Borneo. Fourth, the commitment to stop the conflict had to come from the two ethnic groups. People understood that the conflict could be stopped only if the people who were involved in the conflict wanted to stop it. Fifth, the conflict affected many aspects of human life. As presented almost everyday in the two newspapers, the people perceived that the impacts of the conflict involved human and material loss. The damage couldn’t be estimated with absolute precision because there was no accurate data available. Finally, the conflict was seen as the accumulation of the culture clash between the two ethnic groups. People perceived that the culture clash between the newcomers and the local people in West Borneo had started since the first conflict broke out in 1950 between the Dayak and the Madurese. These grievances had accumulated in their hearts over a long period of time and finally erupted when there was an incident between two young people from both sides. The incident was only the final cause which triggered the emotions to overflow. The local people felt that they were culturally oppressed by the newcomers.

This work differs from other studies on the same theme. Studies on the conflicts in West Borneo such as the conflict between the Dayak and the Madurese, the Malay and the Madurese, the Chinese and the Dayak and between the Dayak and the Malay have already been undertaken by some researchers, both local and other scholars, but they used different
ways to analyze the conflicts. This study attempts to analyze and compare the content of the news presented by the two newspapers on this topic. I propose that this work comes to different results of its particular methodological approach. As I proved in previous section, the Akemya Pontianak Post was more complete and detailed than Kompas in reporting the issues of the conflict. This is because they have a different market and scope for presenting the news about the conflict. Although the Akemya Pontianak Post is more detailed than Kompas, they both tended to be the government voice in presenting the news about the conflict. This was beneficial to some extent, but today, they should be free from the government power. They should be independent and responsible in presenting the news, as the freedom of the press is an integral element of democratic societies.4

The Freedom of Press

When the political power successfully uses the press as the way to control and dominate society, it means that the owner and the journalists are also part of the success in forcing the freedom to diminish. Because of the monopoly of presenting information as truth, the people are oppressed and don’t have the freedom of getting accurate information. Structural factors such as political power and the economic system are the most significant factors affecting the freedom of the press. Those factors have influenced journalists in making news during the time of the New Order in Indonesia.5 The oppression of the press was not only related to the process of writing and publishing the news, but also to limited access to certain events so that the journalists were not able to get enough sources to give factual information. This is what I call “structural interaction”. Moreover, this affects not only the journalists but also to the people as the readers and society as a whole.

The people in society also have an important role in establishing and maintaining the freedom of the press. How much does society demand true news about events in society? If the people in a certain society are content with the condition that the powerful control the press and the people don’t demand to get proof of the facts presented by the press and accept the domination of press activities, the freedom of the press is truly in danger. Freedom of the press will be very difficult to be implemented in such a society.

Indonesian press has experienced a long time of oppression by the political powers. Political power which was represented by Golkar had controlled and dominated the Indonesian press for more than thirty years. There were so many actions taken by those in power that killed the seeds
of the freedom of press in this country. The New Order Regime had been successful in using the press to legalize and sustain their power for a long time before its downfall in the year 1998.10

The freedom of the press is a manifestation of one dimension of human rights, that is, the right to make and organize one's views and thoughts. The moral mission of human rights inspires the professionalism of journalism. The professionalism of journalism mandates for human rights to be implemented by the people, both by those who are involved directly in the process of making news and the readers and controllers of the freedom of the press itself. In other words, the freedom of the press is not only the responsibility of the journalists but also the responsibility of all people as the consumers and as those in power in the society.

Having experienced the New Order Era, the Indonesian press such as the Akuasa Pontianak Post and Kompas should learn from the previous conditions of strong control by the power in order to develop ways to make the freedom of the press come to fruition. Freedom of press means the freedom to express and form the news and information of social facts with responsibility. In other words, the press should develop such freedom in responsible ways. The right to know and the right to express oneself should be guided by a responsibility to know and express the news. The government, supported by journalists and press organizations, is most responsible for starting and supporting the empowerment of the freedom of the press.

CONCLUSION

The conflicts between the Dayak and the Madurese in West Borneo received much attention and elicited high costs from those who were directly involved in the conflicts and from the people of West Borneo in general. The conflicts, as shown in this work, have affected people's lives in many ways such as economics, social structure, education, development programs, politics, cultural and ethnic relations. Parsudi Suparjan argues that the local ethnic groups had had negative experiences with the Madurese in West Borneo, especially in Sarawak. The bad experiences resulted from the long and failed interactions between the two cultures. The Madurese have not successfully integrated them into the local culture because they like to ignore and neglect Dayak and Malay cultures as the local culture.11

The conflict between the Dayak and the Madurese in West Borneo which broke out in 1997 was the accumulation of the cultural clash be-
tween both the Dayak and the Madurese cultures. The trigger factor caus-
ing the conflict, the killing case by a Madurese of a Dayak, showed people
that such a case had been repeated many times and thus ended up as a
big riot and conflict. If such cases cannot be prevented by both ethnic
groups, especially the Madurese, which always started the fight, con-
flits such the conflict that broke out in 1997 will break out again. There
should be a way to facilitate dialogue among them in terms of religious
and cultural dialogue. Dialogue requires a continuous program coordi-
nated by representative of the people from both religious and ethnic
groups in this province. Supported by the local government, the board of
the organization must run programs on religious and cultural dialogue
such as discussions, publications of the program, training and educa-
tion. All members and institutions in this province should support such a
program.

Why religious and cultural dialogue? This work has shown that the
issues which emerged in the conflict between the Dayak and the Madurese
in West Borneo that broke out in 1997 were many, including the religious
and cultural issues. Religious issues were used by those who were in-
volved in the conflict as a significant issue to stir up religious and ethnic
fanaticism. The reconciliation efforts used religious and ethnic leaders
because the government and the ABRI knew they had significant
power and authority over their people. Therefore, religion and culture in
the people of West Borneo, especially the Dayak and the Madurese are
two elements that cannot be separated. They should be combined when
developing dialogue between the people of West Borneo.

Finally, religious and cultural dialogue will not only facilitate and
help the Dayak and the Madurese but also help the people of West Borneo
to develop new and better relationship among groups of people that live
together in West Borneo. On the one hand, religious and cultural dia-
logue is the way for religious communities to interact in order to under-
stand and respect the other. On the other hand, religious and cultural
dialogue is the place to communicate and discuss ethnic and cultural
differences and to find ways to solve cultural problems. In this respect,
religious and cultural dialogue needs support from the media both local
and national, such as the Alkmaer Post and Kompas.31 By maxi-
mating the ethnic and cultural resources such as the ethnic leaders who
are based on the grass roots, the resources of religious communities such
as religious leaders who have religious legitimacy from their followers,
the followers itself, as well as the role of the press in supporting such
programs through reporting the activities and progress in developing
dialogue programs, religious and cultural dialogue will be very helpful
and successful in developing and building religious and ethnic understanding in this province. Moreover, a lasting harmonious relationship and better understanding may emerge from there efforts among the people of West Borneo in the future.

FOOTNOTES
1 The Center for Religious and Cross-cultural Studies Gadjah Mada University
4 See also the role of the government in controlling the press media in D.N. Susilawati. Ibid. p.223
5 The power of the New Order Regime was so strong during this time. See also Sudibya, Agus. 2000. Absennya Kajian Ekonomi Politik Media di Indonesia, In Jurnal Ilmu Sosial dan Ilmu Politik Volume. 4, No. 2. November 2000. p.115-134. Yogyakarta: FISIPOL UGM.
8 See Siregar Ashadi. Ibid. p.183-186

BIBLIOGRAPHY


