



Moral Values in Religious Myths of Bantenese Society

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Abstract

This article discusses moral values in various religious myths spread on several areas of Banten. How Bantenese society understands and believes in religious myths that spread out and are still maintained from generations to generations becomes one of the main focuses of this article; besides, it also tries to analyze the meaning and functions of religious myths for Bantenese society; and the moral values contained in religious myths of Bantenese society.

This article is a field research using ethnographical method based on anthropological perspective. Library research, participant-observation, and depth-interview are methodes used to collect the data.

Religious myths are one of Islamic literatures that still survive in Banten up to now. For Bantenese society, religious myths are considered having moral message and moral values. Religious myths, in some cases, also play significant roles and function for Bantenese society because they frequently contain moral values. Hence, many Bantenese people still maintain and transmit these religious myths to the young generation.

Keywords: Moral Values, Religious Myth, Culture, Banten

Introduction

Myth is one of treasures of oral traditions that almost appears in every culture and every place of the societies all over the world, Banten is not exception. This oral tradition is frequently connected to the sacred and holy thing, and is frequently related to supernatural being that is logically difficult to observe and to understand, and it is also difficult to be proven scientifically. Moreover, its writer is often anonymous. Myth is considered

having moral message and moral values. Hence, taking care of moral and attitudes become one of the functions of myth. Moreover, the belief and the conviction on it shows that modernity and the development of knowledge and information technology which is rapidly developed can not at moment's notice remove magical and mystical dimensions of the thoughts and behaviours of modern society. It is indicated by the facts that the belief and the conviction on myths are not only believed and practiced by laymen (ordinary people), but also by educated people.

Religious myths are one of Islamic literatures that still survive in Banten up to now. A few of these religious myths have ever been written and published both in fiction and non-fiction books. However, Many religious myths are still stored in the collective memory of Bantenese society, especially the older people.

Various religious myths are spread out and still believed and maintained from generations to generations in most of Bantenese society. Many of daily events and daily activities of Bantenese society are frequently covered by religious myths. The myths of the holy people or saints, sacred places, sacred objects (sacred cows), the parentage of villages, supernatural animals, supernatural beings, genie, and evil spirit are several kinds of religious myths that are often available in Bantenese society.

This article tries to discuss several main questions as follow: how Bantenese society undertands and believes in religious myths that spread out and are still maintained from generations to generations? What are the meaning and functions of religious myths for Bantenese society? and what are the moral values contained in religious myths of Bantenese society?

Theoretical concept of Myth

Myth is a fiction story that exists in almost everywhere, in every era, in almost every society; and that it appears in many cultures. Many researches, especially conducted by the West researchers, show that myths always appear in various socio-religious activities of the society, especially in primitive society. Almost no society that is not covered by myths which have the sacred values for its adherents. Both primitive and modern societies often make use of the sacred myths as the symbols of strengthening and authority. In performing various socio-religious activities, indeed in conducting economic and political activities, there are always mythes emerged to make people convinced that what they believe has actually the sanctified values that could not be disparaged or destroyed.

People attempt to explain the unknowable by constructing a supernatural world; they also talk about the world. They tell folktales about supernatural creatures. They tell myths about the origin of the world and of people and their social groups. They tell the religious myths of how God gave them lucky and blessing. They tell stories about holy people, the sacred places, the magical objects, and others in order that their children can take the moral values of the stories. In this regard, Belcher, as quoted by Rosman, Rubel and Weisgrau, states,

'In this collection of stories, the historical element regains its importance...and the stories could be called 'traditions of origin' leaving out the word 'myth'...[though they]...describe cultural origins for the people involved...[and] have been handed down from one generation to another , although always with changes and adaptations to keep them relevant to their contemporary audiences" (Rosman, et.al., 2009: 259).

Many experts argue that human, both individually and collectively, could not live without myths or mythologies. It means that the existence of myths is very vital and important for the existence of human life, especially dealing with religious myths and the belief systems. In this regard, Roberts states that myths are stories or belief systems that help people understand the nature of the cosmos, the purpose and meaning of life, or the role and origin of evil and suffering (Roberts, 2006: 77). Moreover, Madjid argues that myth is a kind of depictions on the realities that are unreached by human both relatively and absolutely in the simplified format so that it can be understood and comprehended by many people. Due to only through an explanation that can be understood, someone or society is able to have a description on his position in the structure of cosmic so that human, based on such a description, can perform his life and conduct his activities (Madjid, 2000: 176).

Myths, according to Tihami, are stories of nations, gods, and heroes in the past periods that contain interpretation on the origin of the nature, human, and nations that has deep meaning expressed magically (Ismanto, 2006: 36). Based on this interpretation, it seems that myths are the sacred and magical stories. We may also conclude that the origin of a community or a society can be revealed through myths existed in that society.

Some dictionaries defines myth as stories telling about the origin of the nature, gods, human, and many things in the World, and it deals with any magical action and supernatural beings happened in the past. In this regard, *the Dictionary of Religious* defines myth in the same point of view. This dictionary states that,

“Myth is narrative, usually traditional, in which, events are described as deeds of god, heroes, or other super-human beings; i.e. events in the realm of nature or history are attributed to causes not acceptable in current scientific or historical explanation” (Hinnels, 1984: 225).

Moreover, Salomon Reinach in *Orpheus: A History of Religions* defines myth as a collection of stories that is not found its author precisely (anonymous), but it is combined and spiced by actors who could not be subjected to check the truth of a history (Reinach, 1931:1).

Based on the definitions of the myth above, it can be concluded that myth is stories on gods, nature, human, or certain objects in which their truth cannot be scientifically verified, and its truth cannot be used to examine the history of a nation or a society because those stories are merely fiction that frequently contains something sacred and magical, and it is difficult to understand by logical reasoning.

The word myth derives from Latin *mythus* or from Ancient Greek *mythos* or *muthos* that means stories or fable (folk tales). This term of myth in our language is sometimes defined as something false or imaginary. According to Nurcholis Madjid, mentioning something as a myth indicates that it has no values or it beckons the lowering of its values so that it does not have to maintain or believe in by human. In this sense, myth in his view has the same meaning as *takhayul* (in Arabic means fantasy), folk tales or superstitions (Madjid, 2000: 74). However, myths are not merely folk tales or fairy tales, but also stories involving the deeds of gods, ancestors, spirits, and other supernatural beings. In short, myth is stories dealing with the activities and adventures of such supernatural beings. In this regard, description on myth stated by Mircea Eliade, as quoted by Jack David Eller, can be possibly one of our references on myth. Mircea Eliade states that:

Myth narrates a sacred history; it relates an event that took place in primordial Time, the fable time of the beginnings. In other words, myth tells how, through the deeds of Supernatural Beings, a reality came into existence, be it the whole of reality, the Cosmos, or only a fragment of reality—an island, a species of plant, a particular kind of human behavior, an institution. Myth, then, is always an account of a ‘creation’; it relates how something was produced, began to be. Myth tells only of that which *really* happened, which manifested itself completely. The actors in myths are Supernatural Beings. [. . .] Hence myths disclose their creative activity and reveal the sacredness (or simply the supernaturalness) of their works (Eller, 2007: 83).

There is a general agreement among the ethnologists that myth deals with supernatural domain and super-sense of the reality, and refers to the prehistorical period. Based on this assumption, myth is defined by Galey on his work '*the Classic Myths in English Literatur and in Art*', as quoted by David Badney, as 'stories in which their origin are anonymous, which usual among the primitive people, and are received by them as 'true', dealing with supernatural beings and supernatural phenomena, or the natural phenomena and the beings that are influenced by supernatural agents'(Badney, 1976:1). This conception, if we analyze it, connects myth to a story that has magical value and *supersensuous* believed as 'true' and be considered as something usual among the primitive society.

We can find many stories spread out both in primitive society and in our modern society. Some experts consider folk tales, myths, legends, fables, allegories, and other ones are similar. Dealing with this, Muller, a linguist, considers that myth as a story deals with gods, and he believes that the origin of all folk tales and fairy tales are myths that have blurred meaning because of the changes of language. Hence, he views that it is not necessary to separate myth from other kinds of stories or folk tales, but for one fact that myth is older than other stories (Malefijt 1968: 173).

Based on the above explanation, it is clear to demonstrate that a story is called a myth if it has the sacred element within it, and it is believed and considered 'true' by the society, or it is considered having ever been happened in the past. It means that stories or tales that have no the sacred values, or society considers them merely as fairy tales or entertaining tales, are not considered as myth. They are possibly regarded as folklore, folktales, or legends. Based on the above description, it can be concluded that at one period, a tale can be regarded as a myth by a certain society because of its sacred values and being considered as 'true story' by that society. However, on another period or on another culture, the tale is no longer considered as a myth because its sacred values have been faded or completely lost, and the society only considers them as a fiction that functions for entertaining only.

The Meanings and the Functions of Religious Myths

There are several meaning and functions of religious myths for human. Religious myths attempt to portray the essence of humans existence and in so doing to display a pattern of behaviour which can be constantly rediscovered. In particular, the myths represent their own meaning and function in their constant description of a man's search for morality, for immortality, for the nectar of the gods. The story sets forth

man's awareness of his own finitude and his need for infinity. The myths represent the most complex form of the symbolic models. The myths also use a symbolic time. It is one of their characteristics that they relate events which are said to have taken place in primordial time, in the time of beginnings (Fawcett, 1971: 108-110). The myths are invariably connected with creation. In this regard, Mircea Eliade states that 'myth is always an account of creation or cosmogonic' (Eliade, 1963: 5).

To understand the meaning and the function of myth, we can approach it from different perspectives. Each perspective may result in different views on it. An anthropologist, for example, will analyze and observe the phenomenon of myth based on anthropological perspective. He will not judge whether myth is permitted or forbidden by the religious rules because it becomes the theologians' responsibility to express it. In this regard, Malefijt argues that 'myth consists of language; it appears in the form of a narrative with a plot; it has style and, often, beauty; it has a history and cross-cultural distribution; it is a cultural institution and, as such, possesses psychological, social, and religious functions and meanings. Thus, a linguist will analyze the language of myth; the folklorist is interested in its motifs and plots, the literary critic focuses on its style and aesthetic value, the psychologist searches for its emotional content, the theologian examines its relationship to religious truths, and the social scientist concentrates on its social and functions' (Malefijt 1968: 172).

Many experts argue that human, both individually and collectively, could not live without any myth or mythology. It means that the existence of myth is very vital and important, especially dealing with religious myth. The sociologists, especially anthropologists, try to explain and develop various interpretation, meaning, and the function of myth. According to them, myths are regarded as something needed by human to seek the intelligibility or the clarity about their realm as well as their origin history. Dealing with this, Roberts states that myths are stories or belief systems that help people understand the nature of the cosmos, the purpose and meaning of life, or the role and origin of evil and suffering (Roberts, 2006: 77).

Myth, according to Malefijt, functions to create opinion and public identity and to strengthen the social solidarity. Malefijt states that myth is beautiful literature stories which have its own style, contain history, and play a great role in cross-cultural understanding. It contains cultural institutions. Hence, it has psychological, social, and religious functions and meaning so that the linguists, psychologists, theologians, sociologists and anthropologists are interested in studying it based on various perspectives and different methods and approaches (Malefijt 1968: 177).

A Variety of Religious Myths in Banten

This part discusses several kinds of religious myths existed in the culture of Bantenese society. This classification is made based on the field data the writer collected in Banten.

➤ The myth of the sacred and holy figures

Myths of the holy and sacred people who have died are probably the most typology of myths found in Banten. In almost every area in Banten is found various myths about the humans or figures who are considered having supernatural powers. The stories about their *barokah*, their charisma and their magical powers whether during their life or after their death, are still kept in the collective memory of the society. Their *barokah* and their supernatural powers are believed having been witnessed by several older people who lived when the figures lived. The stories of their *barokah* and their sacred are also frequently maintained and transmitted by the figures' offspring and disciples who still live at the present day. Because of such a belief and conviction, the cemeteries of the holy and sacred figures are often visited by many people both from inside Banten and outside Banten for many purposes to ask the *barokah* of the sacred figures for them.

For this kind of myth, the myth of *Wali Beji* or *Kyai Beji*, a sacred and holy saint who was buried in Kampung Terumbu, Serang, Banten, may be a good example. His name is popular for Bantenese society, especially for the Terumbu society, as a saint who was delegated by Sultan Hasanuddin to disseminate Islam to the Terumbu society at the Sultan Hasanuddin period. He was believed having got married with a daughter of an Islamic genie (*Jin Islam*) with a treaty that during their home life, *Wali Beji* might not see his wife cooking in the kitchen; on the contrary, his wife was also forbidden to take rice by herself in the rice barn. After 1 year marriage, they have a beautiful daughter. However, *Wali Beji* was, then, eager to know what his wife did during cooking. Therefore, when his wife was not in the kitchen, he went into the kitchen and opened the pan (a tool for cooking rice), and looked into the pan. Instantaneously, he was very surprised after he knew that what his wife cooked was not rice, but several stones. His wife, then, knew that her husband had broken their treaty. She was very sad. Furthermore, when her husband went out for fishing, she went into the rice barn to know what his husband had hidden. After a few minutes looking for something hidden by his husband in the rice barn, finally she could find her clothes that make her unable to return to heaven (*kayangan*). She, then, took her clothes and fled to the heaven as her origin place after entrusting her daughter to her servant.

When *Wali Beji* came from fishing, he was shocked because he couldn't find his wife at his house and leaving his daughter with his servant. He was, then, aware of his wrongness by breaking his agreement. Then, he decided to look for and to bring back his wife from the heaven. Because of his supernatural power, he could find his wife and bring his wife back after solving many hard magical obstacles during seeking his wife. After persuading his wife to return back (to descend) to the world, they finally could assemble to be a happy family with several children for many years.

During his life, *Wali Beji* was frequently asked to help people who came from both around his society and outside his society by using his magical power. Many people from many areas also always came to his house only for asking his *barokah*. After his death, his cemetery was frequently visited by many people for doing pilgrimage (*ziarah*), asking *barokah*, or hoping to get something magical for many purposes. Nowadays, *Wali Beji's* offspring live near his cemetery and keep his cemetery. His offspring become charismatic figures in their society, and they obtain much respect from the society because they believe that *Wali Beji* was a holy saint who had spread Islam in this village (Munawir, 2013).

➤ The myths of the sacred places

In Banten. There are many sacred and holy places which are believed by both some Bantenese society and many people from outside Banten as places that can give them *barokah* and luckiness for their live. Because of this belief, these places are always crowded by many people who wanted to look for *barokah* and any magical science. One of the sacred places is Banten Lama where Sultan Hasanuddin (the first sultan of Banten Sultanate) and his family and his offspring are buried. Almost everyday, especially on Fridays, this place was always crowded of many people for performing *ziarah* for various purposes.

At another place in Banten, there are a myth of *Batu Qur'an* (the stone of Qur'an) and a myth of *Tujuh Sumur* (seven wells) that are believed as the sacred and the holy places. These places are also always visited by many people from inside and outside Banten for performing *ziarah*, asking *barokah*, seeking magical sciences, and so on. People believe in the story or myths about both of these places as something true and have ever been happened in the past. By performing *ziarah* to these places, they hope they succeed in obtaining their desire and hopes because of the *barokah* of these places (Katrin, 2013; Nurnissa, 2013; Ending, 2013).

➤ The myths of supernatural animals

One of religious myths that is spread out in Banten is myths on supernatural animals. Some Bantenese people believe that several people,

especially the sacred and holy people such as saints and kyai, and certain charismatic figures, had supernatural pets which always accompany them both during their life and after their death. Some people also believe that these magical animals will keep and protect their offsprings and will appear and show themselves at a certain time, especially when the people they protect need their help. Lions, tigers, and snakes are kinds of supernatural animals which are believed being possessed by certain people. The myths of these supernatural animals exist in almost every area in Banten. One of the myths on supernatural animals is available in *desa Ciomas*, Serang Banten in which some of the people in this village have ever witnessed a supernatural animal showing itself in the form of a big lion. They believed that this animal was K.H.Halimy's pet. K.H.Halimy was a charismatic ulama who established and led a pesantren in this village. He was believed having *karomah* and several magical sciences as well as a supernatural animal which always accompany him both during his life and after his death (Hayati, 2013; Sa'adah 2013; Sabar, 2013).

➤ The myths of supernatural beings or spirits

Almost in every place, in every society and every culture in Indonesia is found myths on ghosts, spirits, evil spirits, the ancestors spirit, genies, and such a like. Stories on *wewe*, *dedemit*, *jintomang*, *buto ijo*, and other kinds of supernatural beings always appear in the society's gossips. Some of the people believe that these supernatural beings can help or disturb human. Because of this belief, some people prefer visiting *kyai* (a religious figure) or *dukun* (traditional curer) to visiting doctors to cure their diseases when modern medicinal treatment or doctors could not cure their diseases.

How Bantenese People Understand and Believe in Religious Myths

Myths deal with something believed as sacred or holy. Hence, treatments toward something sacred are different from those of something profane. In doing socio-religious activities, there are certain ways that should be done by the people that should be appropriate with both the holy texts (the Qur'an) and the social norms and customs held by the society. Moral values contained in religious myths are also frequently used to control their ritual and behavior.

When they are asked why they believed in the certain religious myths, some of the Bantenese society generally argued that these myths were sacred stories they obtained from their parents and their ancestors. Hence, they believed that the religious myths that derived from their parents or ancestors must contain *hikmah* (wisdom). They worried something bad

would be happened if they did not believe them. For them, the belief on religious myths was a part of their respectfulness to the spirits of their parents and their ancestors who had died. By believing these religious myths, they also hope they may get *barokah* and happiness for their life. According to them, our ancestors and our parents in the past were usually honest so that their words and their stories usually contain *hikmah* (wisdom) and contain good advices for human.

Even though the majority of the Bantinese society did not understand the reasons and rationalisation of the religious myths, the belief on the religious myths was still high in the society, especially for the older people who live in the villages. It was indicated from the fact that many people still visited several sacred places for doing *ziarah*, performing meditation and asceticism to reach their practical goals, and many people still maintained these for guiding their behaviour and their socio-religious activities. Indeed, some of them keep them in their mind and transmit them to their generations to maintain their social prestige.

The Moral values in Religious Myths of Bantinese Society

Apart from the lack of their understanding about the reasons and rationalisation of the existence of the religious myths, the belief on this oral tradition is still alive among the culture of Bantinese society up to the present day. The raising genres of popular culture that develop rapidly among the society through all kinds of media that are easy to access by all society do not make this kind of myths lost and eliminated from Bantinese people's belief, at least, up to the present day.

The onslaught of popular culture, especially the West culture, that is frequently not appropriate with the norms, customs, moral and religious values of Indonesian people, less and more, have influenced the life style and behavior of our young generations. Many programs and information that show the West or Korean cultures that give priority to liberalism, consumerism, hedonism, free-sex, and other negative values are provided daily in all kinds of media such as internet, television, newspaper, novels, magazines, and so on. We can now witness the negative impacts of this popular culture in which many Bantinese people imitate various West styles. It influences all ages of Bantinese society, from children until the older people. They feel rightfully proud and more confident when they can act and dress as the West or Korean people. They no longer care whether it is appropriate with our religious and moral values or not. They worry if they do not act and dress like the modern people, they will be out of fashion.

Due to the rapid development of information technology and modern sciences that facilitates the access of information from all over the world through internet and television in the future, it is something possible that this oral tradition will be left by the Bantenese people. These religious myths will be lost from the collective memory of Bantenese society because they are eliminated by the modern and popular culture pervaded until the village societies.

Religious books provide with religious lessons as well as moral lessons through spiritual knowledge and information. Many myths show how knowledge can be applied too. We came to know about ideas of moral teachings such as truthfulness, forgiveness, service towards others, dutifulness, brotherhood, etc and related exemplary myths along with their teachings. There are some ideas of moral values such as sacrifice, patience and kindness as well as some related religious myths and their teachings (Mandal, et.al., 2012: 43).

Myths, whether old or new, have influenced the various cultures of the world since ancient times. Myths are not merely stories used for entertainment but they also teach history in an entertaining manner that people will remember longer than an objective historical documentary. Students learn historical facts while imagining how those events affected the people who were there. Consequently, one of the main reasons for teaching history is to inform people of the past so that they can avoid making the same mistakes in the future. In this regard, Patai states, "The mythical historiographer writes or tells of great, weighty, fateful, and decisive events which are relevant to the here and the now." (Patai 1972: 67). By reading a character's personal account of that past world, students can relate the events more to the current world around them. Through learning the mistakes that people or characters made in the past, students can learn from them and hopefully, make better choices. Thus, mythology corresponds with the fundamental elements of history.

In addition to its historical elements, mythology also portrays the values and morals of society. For example, Stawinski remarks, "Through myths we gain an understanding of our place in the world and how we are to live in it." (Stawinski, 2005: 75). Knowing the mistakes and background of our existence leaves many questions unanswered. We desire to know how we, personally, can affect the world and make it a better place, and we need guidelines in order obtain that goal. Mythical characters often possess those values we find important, and those who possess poor qualities are often punished.

Several communities where their people still believe in the sacred values of myths, myths function as a means to control their moral and behavior. Various examples of myths in Indonesia can possibly become a concrete sample how great the role, function, and meaning of myth in controlling behavior, attitude, and moral values of the society. The story of Malin Kundang from West-Sumatera, for example, contains moral values that want to be delivered by the author of myth to the people that they have to respect and love their parents, especially their mother. Deviation and violation on the moral values as implied by such a story will cause serious consequences for everybody who hurts his mother heart. In this story, Malin Kundang who has hurted his mother's heart was, then, condemned or sworn to be a stone. Other myths containing moral messages and moral values for human beings are spread out in every areas all over world, Banten is not exception. Dealing with this, we may quote Malinowski's opinion about the functions of myth based on his analysis on ideas, tradition, behaviours as well as typical culture of Melanesian society where he conducted a research. In his first paragraph of his work *Myth in Primitive Psychology*, Malinowski states that "I propose how deeply the sacred tradition, the myth, enters into their pursuits, and how strongly it controls their moral and social behavior' (Malinowski, 1955: 96).

Myths play a great role in social life. Myth functions to create social solidarity of the society who posses it. With the existence of myth that they believe having the sacred and moral values transmitted from their ancestors for many generations, someone who leave his vilage to live in another region either temporarily or permanently will keep the sacred values and moral values of myths derived from his origin area. He will also will transmit it to his children and his generation in his new place. So that, when there is a ritual that should be performed dealing with the myth that he has obtained from his ancestors.

Malinowski's view in the following paragraph may possibly explain comprehensively how the function and the role of myth for the society is. He states that:

Studied alive, myth, as we shall see, is not symbolic, but a direct expression of its subject matter; it is not an explanation in satisfaction of a scientific interest, but a narrative resurrection of a primeval reality, told in satisfaction of deep religious wants, moral cravings, social submissions, assertions, even practical requirements. Myth fulfills in primitive culture an indispensable function: it expresses, enhances, and codifies belief; it safeguards and enforces morality; it vouches for the efficiency of ritual and contains practical

rules for the guidance of man. Myth is thus a vital ingredient of human civilization; it is not an idle tale, but a hard worked active force; it is not an intellectual explanation or an artistic imagery, but a pragmatic charter of primitive faith and moral wisdom (Malinowski, 1955: 101).

Based on Malinowski's view above, it is clear to demonstrate that myth is not merely a told story, but a live reality. It is not a basic nature of fiction as we read in contemporary novels, but it is a live reality that is believed having ever existed in prehistoric period and continuously transmitted to influence the World and human. Furthermore, he also concludes that myth should not be subjected as merely an explanation or as a symbol, but on how myth motivates people and builds their life and their reality. Than being considered as a factual description, myth is a plan, a model, (a 'model for' in a Geertz's term), or in Malinowski's term itself as a 'charter' or 'a live guidance' (Eller, 2007: 84-85).

The Functions and Roles of Religious Myths for Bantinese Society

The existence of religious myths in Bantinese culture, to a certain degree, have influenced the socio-religious activities of the Bantinese society. Myths, in several cases, play a great role and have significant functions for Bantinese society.

Based on the data analysis to the religious myths spread out in Banten, there are at least four function and roles for socio-religious life of Bantinese:

➤ Religious myths functions to educate the morality and behaviour
It means that religious myths can be used to teach humans (especially children) how to live, to act, and to have behaviour as the holy people do during their life time. By imitating their behaviour, all people will respect their life because they have good moral and behaviour. Many lessons that can be learnt by humans from religious myths such as sacrifice, patience and kindness.

Generally sacrifice means shaking off or avoiding something. But sometimes it means sacrificing self interest, enjoyment, happiness, or benefits. Sacrifice is a special quality of human characteristics. It is a part of religion. A person, who sacrifices own interest or happiness for the cause of others, becomes adorable to others in the society. Everybody respects him. Without sacrifice one cannot perform religion. In fact, there is no limit of enjoyment. The more one enjoys, the more his or her desire spreads. And this desire makes a human being greedy which leads the person to

destruction. It results in social conflicts, envy, and hatred. On the other hand, sacrifice makes one great. It brings about peace in the society. The stories and myths in the holy books in Islam uphold the strengths of sacrifice.

Patience or forbearance is another quality like sacrifice. It is also a part of religion. It has an important role in shaping up morality. It too brings peace in the society. It also develops inter-personal and friendly relations. Its absence causes inter-personal conflict. A society is developed collectively by being respectful and patient to other's opinions and thoughts. If anyone is not patient, it's impossible for him or her to do social activities smoothly. It's really hard to develop in personal life without the ability to bear sufferings. This is why patience is an important aspect of human life. So this word is always used with sacrifice. In fact, these two terms are inseparably inter related. Without patience, the result of sacrifice may be lost. The holy books of Islam narrate many stories of patience. The story of the Prophet of Ayub is a bright example of it.

The stories of the great personalities regarding their sacrifice and patience inspire us. By doing similar things human beings can elevate themselves to the status of gods. Sacrifice and patience are two of the best qualities of human beings which can establish us in the society as great persons. These two qualities lead human beings to the ways dignity and honor. These are the great qualities of human life. Everybody respects a selfless person (Mandal, et.al., 2012: 43-45). We get upset seeing others suffering. We opt to lessen the suffering. This desire of mind is called kindness. Kindness is a moral quality. It is an essential component in a society.

- Religious myths functions to maintain cultural identity and social solidarity

Myths often evoke the same emotional feeling among the society. People who come from the same area or the same village and have the same religious myths that are believed by all of the society, will maintain their solidarity among them wherever they live. Indeed, when they have moved to another village or another region, they will keep and believe in their religious myths that they have and get from their origin village. They also tell and transmit their origin religious myths to their generations in their new places as a form of social solidarity toward villages where they were born and grew. These religious myths also frequently become identity symbol of their origin. The Bantenese, especially, generally do not want

change their identity as a Bantenese even though they no longer live in Banten.

➤ Religious myths function to it maintain the prestige and social status

For some of Bantenese society, the existence of religious myths, especially myths of the origin of their villages and the myths of the sacred figures who become their ancestors, are considered having certain values for them. It is often happened that people who become the offspring of the sacred and holy figures, especially the offspring of charismatic and sacred figures who had islamized or converted the society into Islam in the past, obtain great respect and higher appreciation as well as higher position and social status among the society. This condition can be found in *desa Terumbu Serang Banten* where the offspring of *Wali Beji* is regarded as honourable people and obtain higher social prestige and social status in the society.

Conclusion

Religious myths are one of the treasures of oral tradition that is spread out and still survive in every culture and every society all over the world, and Banten is not an exception. This belief on these religious myths frequently relates to something sacred or holy and deals with supernatural beings that is difficult to understand by our logical reasons. They are also difficult to be proven scientifically and their creators are anonymous. Religious myths are regarded containing moral values. Hence, one of their functions is to maintain moral and behaviour of the society.

Moreover, the belief and conviction to these religious myths can show that modernity and the rapid development of sciences and information technology can not immediately erode and eliminate the mystical and magical dimensions of the modern society's thought and behaviour. It is indicated by the fact that the belief on these religious myths are believed and practiced not only by the common people, but also by educated people.

Various religious myths are spread out, still believed, and transmitted from generations to generations among the Bantenese society. Many events and socio-religious activities of Bantenese society are often covered by religious myths. The raising genres of popular culture that develop rapidly among the society through all kinds of media that are easy to access by all society do not make this kind of myths are lost and eliminated from Bantenese people's belief, at least, up to the present day.

Endnotes:

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Interviews:

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Interview with Sabar (50), Kp. Petapan, Ds. Negara, Kec. Kibin, Serang Banten, 13 September 2013.

Interview with Hayati (50), Kp. Masigit, Ds. Ciomas, Padarincang, Serang, 20 Agustus 2013.

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Interview with Hj.Sulkah (61), Barugbug Ciomas Serang Banten, 15 September 2013.

Interview with Ending (63), Ds. Tambak Baya, Lebak, 26 September 2013

Interview with Katrin (45), Ds. Cipare Ranjeng, Serang Banten, October 13th 2013